

# An Interpretive Trail to Highlight the Natural and Cultural Significance of Cupids Falls

City of Young Harris  
Towns County



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*“When a place looks cared for, it sends a message to the rest of the world that we have this, it’s ours and we are proud to be here.” (McCormack 2018)*

## Purpose of the Project:

- (1) Collaborate with the City of Young Harris to design an interpretive trail that incorporates place-based and culturally relevant artwork and signage depicting the natural and cultural heritage assets of Cupids Falls Park.
- (2) Design meaningful educational outreach, using art to communicate the value of the park to create a memorable, informative, educational, and inspirational experience for park users.

Students met with the Young Harris mayor and city council, as well as attended placemaking and planning meetings, to engage in community discussions, become informed about future plans, and seek public feedback about the project.



City of Young Harris Placemaking Meeting

Biology and environmental science students surveyed the park to describe the tree, invertebrate, and vertebrate diversity that would inspire the design of signage. The signs can educate users about biodiversity, endemism, stream health, invasive species, and forest protection.

Trees in the park are both culturally and ecologically important. Unfortunately, native species such as the Eastern Hemlock are threatened by invasive plants and insects, and key riparian zones are plagued with invasive Chinese Privet.



Healthy Eastern Hemlock

Photo Credit Guerin Brown

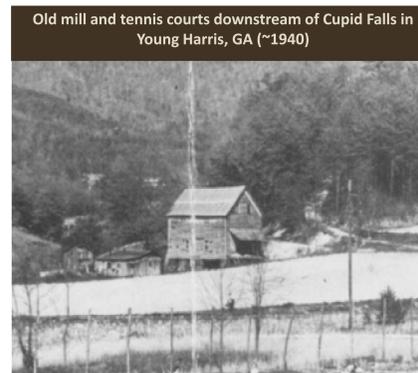
Infested Eastern Hemlock

Photo Credit James Mardell

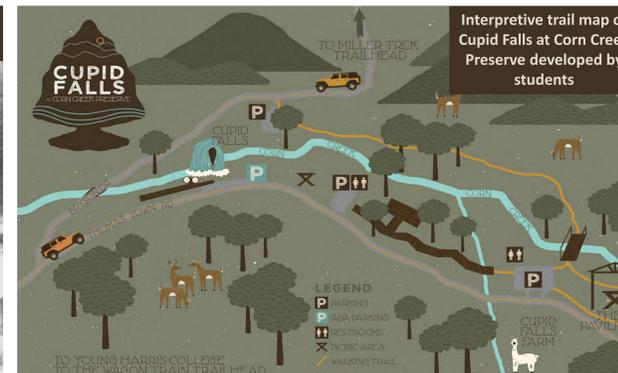


Chinese Privet

Photo Credit James Mardell



Old mill and tennis courts downstream of Cupid Falls in Young Harris, GA (~1940)



Interpretive trail map of Cupid Falls at Corn Creek Preserve developed by students



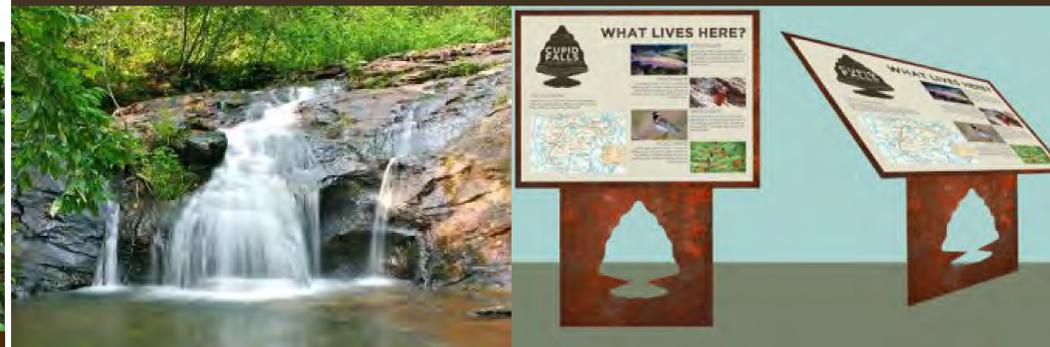
Reflection Riding Arboretum & Nature Center



Tennessee Aquarium



Students visited with designers from the Tennessee Aquarium and the Reflection Riding Arboretum and Nature Center. This informed design of signs, specifically to make them visually appealing and accessible.



Potential logo designs developed for the interpretive trail created by design students.

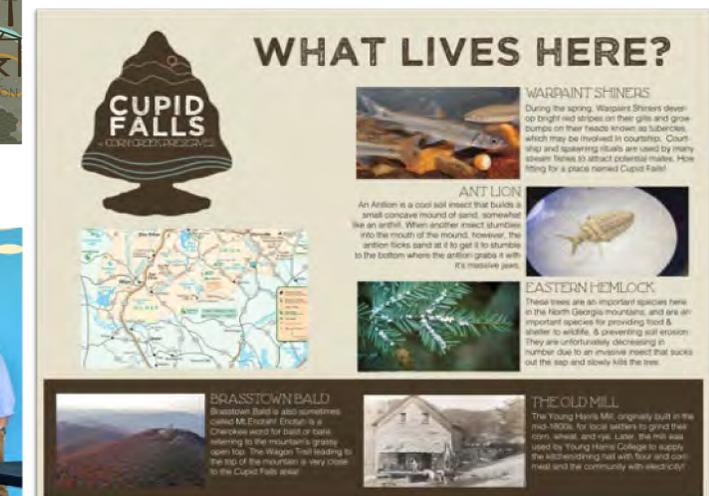


Photo Credit Bob Henricks

Photo Credit Kevin Geyer

Photo Credit Caleb Thompson

Photo Credit Guerin Brown

Aquatic invertebrates of the park are diverse. Stoneflies and caddis flies that are particularly sensitive to pollutants and can indicate stream health. Many native terrestrial invertebrates such as the regal moth are sensitive to disturbance and only occur in relatively undisturbed forests.

## CONCLUSION

This project connects biodiversity, artistic depiction of natural assets, historical investigations, and passive educational displays such that southern Appalachia is displayed in an engaging and representative manner. This project leverages the influence and ability of the arts to shape culture, engage community leaders, and educate the next generation. The work completed this semester serves as a foundation for this project to be carried forward. In the future, work will continue with the Mayor and City of Young Harris, local community members, and potential future Appalachian Teaching Projects to further research, design, and implement educational signs and artwork that celebrate the value and uniqueness of Cupid Falls Park at Corn Creek Preserve.

Many of the vertebrates in the park are endemic species, meaning they are found nowhere else. The Blue Ridge Two-lined Salamander and the Hiwassee Smoky Dace fish are excellent examples of endemic species. They both have very small native ranges and are also visually striking.



Photo Credit Brett Albanese

Photo Credit Rome Wallace

Photo Credit J.D. Wilson

Photo Credit James McKay

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Photo Credit Greg Greer

Photo Credit Amy Boggan