



**Coalition for Education in the Outdoors
17th Biennial Research Symposium
February 6 – 8, 2026; Black Mountain, NC, USA
Pre-Symposium Session, Keynote and Research Presentations
Early Bird Registration Deadline: November 1, 2025**

Pre-Symposium Session (Friday, February 6, 2026 from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm)

Character Education through Outdoor Education

Facilitated by Pete Allison (Penn State University)

Character has a long history in outdoor education. – sometimes contested, sometimes popular, sometimes unpopular! Notwithstanding semantics of terminology, it is abundantly clear that character, or components of it, is essential and has gained increasing attention in the last decade. This 4-hour pre-symposium session will provide an overview of current conceptual approaches to character education and recent research. One example that will be detailed is a recent four-year study of Outward Bound as a Character Building Organization emphasizing cross cultural approaches, similarities and differences (supported by the John Templeton Foundation). The session will provide ample opportunity for dialogue around character, character education outdoors and potential implications for research and practice.

Keynote Address

Toward a Pedagogy of Rewilding: A neo-Aristotelian Interpretation of Outdoor Education

Jamie Brunsdon (University of Memphis)

It is without contestation that one's conception of and ability to flourish in life is positively correlated to their relationship with nature, the outdoors, and the people with which they share community. Unfortunately, most theories of flourishing – and most notably that of neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics – have ignored or failed to make the connection between human flourishing and the natural world. Thus, stunting the potential technical, moral, and ecological impact of outdoor education for learners, educators and institutions across the globe. In response to this predicament, the purpose of this presentation is to explore a neo-Aristotelian interpretation of outdoor education on the basis of developing a *pedagogy of rewilderingment*. Aligned with this goal, I will first *attend* to the need for developing a philosophy of human flourishing in the outdoors. I will then clarify a pluralistic interpretation of human flourishing before critiquing how, why, and in which ways the theory, research and concepts need to be expanded, developed or re-developed to accommodate for outdoor spaces (esp. curriculum, teaching, learning and evaluation). Lastly, I conclude by defining, exploring and providing examples of a *pedagogy of rewilderingment* in the hope of recapturing the world's potential for cultivating human goodness.

Accepted Research Presentations (listed in no particular order):

Exploring the Role of Touch Perception, Thermo-Reception, Proprioception, and Force Detection in Outdoor Behaviors That Promote Nature Connection and Self-Transcendent Positive Emotion; Mark Harvey (UNC Asheville)

Nature-Based and Immersive Interventions to Enhance Socio-Emotional Competencies in School Bullying Victims: A Scoping Review; Ann Joma Jobb, Denise Mitten (Prescott College)

Beyond Entertainment: Exploring Humor as a Response to Stress in Outdoor Education Programming; Adam Arno (Elon University), Evan Small (Elon University)

Network Analysis of Outdoor Academic Programs in the United States; Brent Bell (University of New Hampshire), Jeff Turner (Georgia College), Jeremy Jostad (Eastern Washington University), Kellie Gerbers (Westminster College)

Exploring the Trust Decline After COVID? Ten Years of Trust Data from Outdoor Orientation Programs; Brent Bell (University of New Hampshire), John Henkelman (University of New Hampshire)

Adolescent Literacy in Action: Outdoor Literacy Events and Adventure Composition; Kristie Camp

Connection to Nature and Community: Assessing the Impact of a Multicultural Environmental Education Affinity Group on BIPOC Adults; Lauryn Cartee

What Do You Mean I Can't Bring My Phone?: Assessing the Impact of an Electronic Device Policy for Extended Outdoor Experiences; Qwynne Lackey (SUNY Cortland), Amy DiRenzo (SUNY Cortland), Katherine Hovey (SUNY Cortland), Jason Page (SUNY Cortland)

What is "Core Outward Bound?" A Global Contemporary Look at Staffs' Perceptions; Nick Rushford (University of Utah)

Place Loss as a Result of Natural Disaster: A Multi-Site Examination of Outdoor Water-Based Recreators; Anthony Deringer (Texas State University)

Nature Interaction Assists with Coping and Resilience: An Interaction Pattern Approach with Adolescents with Histories of Trauma in a Youth Group Home Participating in Outdoor Education, Daily Nature Interaction, and Adventure Excursions; Chrystal Dunker

Examining Outward Bound Students' Most Valued Outcomes and Corresponding Learning Mechanisms: A Global Perspective; Nick Rushford (University of Utah), Soumya J Mitra (University of Utah), Jim Sibthorp (University of Utah), Sarah Wiley (Outward Bound International)

Experiences of Recreational Therapy Students' Repeated Brief, Intentional Nature Exposure; Jennifer Hinton (Western Carolina University)

Autoethnography as a Pedagogy in a Wilderness Literature Seminar; Bruce Martin (Ohio University)

Why Do Some Return? Understanding Reengagement After Outdoor Accidents; Kelli McMahan

STEM Learning in Outdoor Adventure Education: Instructor Perspectives; Lisa MeertsBrandsma (University of Utah), Kim Weaver (University of Utah), Regina Frey (University of Utah)

What I Wish I Knew Before Teaching Outdoors: Interviews with In-Service Teachers; Becky Schnekser (Prescott College), Michael Riley (Prescott College)

Outdoor Recreation as an Informal STEM Learning Context in Rural Communities: A Mixed-Methods Study; Jayson Seaman (University of New Hampshire), Amanda Bastoni (CAST), Andrew Coppens (University of New Hampshire), Cindy Hartman (University of New Hampshire), Courtney LaChaine (CAST), Kate Moscouver (Ohio University)

Cultural Inclusion in the Outdoors: A Social Cognitive Analysis; Jim Shores (Asbury University)

Phenomenological Conditions of Sublime Encounters in Outdoor Adventure Education: An Autoethnographic Study; Amy Smallwood (Colorado Mountain College)

An Investigation into Outdoor Adventure Program Participant's Sense of Community and Resiliency; Jeremiah Stanton-Rich (Appalachian State University), Andrew J. Bobilya (Western Carolina University), Joy James, (Appalachian State University), W. Brad Faircloth (UNC Asheville)

Sail Training: Investigating Youth Perspectives and Process Factors in Positive Youth Development; Anita Tucker (University of New Hampshire), Katherine C. Rohn (University of New Hampshire), Diana Gonzalez (University of New Hampshire), Casey Blum (Martha's Vineyard Ocean Academy)

A Qualitative Analysis of What Motivates Young Adult Birders; Sarah Wood (University of Wisconsin – Steven's Point), Kendra Liddicoat (University of Wisconsin – Steven's Point)

You Can't Pour from an Empty Cup: Integrating Mindfulness into Experiential Curricula; Ryan Zwart (University of Tennessee at Chattanooga), Alexandra Frank (University of Tennessee at Chattanooga)

For the 2026 CEO Symposium Information and Registration Visit [2nd Nature TREC](#)

Earlybird Registration Deadline; November 1, 2025

Final Registration Deadline: December 15, 2025

Visit the [Coalition for Education in the Outdoors](#) for information including previous symposia Book of Abstracts and access to past issues of *Research in Outdoor Education*

