

Forest and Plow: Box Turtle Survival Skills

- Program type: role playing activity/storytelling
- Ages: 2nd – 5th grade
- Subjects: history, biology, science
- Duration: 30-45 minutes
- Group size: 20 – 30 students
- Setting: open area outdoors or indoors



The name of the game is Forest & Plow: Box Turtle Survival Skills. We're going to learn about the many changes to Umstead State Park, through a Box Turtle's eyes!

In this game everyone is going to be North Carolina's state reptile, a BOX TURTLE!

There are a few rules of the game

1. Do box turtles talk? NO, so there will be no talking in this game unless I ask you a question.
2. And how fast do box turtles move? Slowly! So you must creep along slow during this game (demonstrate a slow turtle walk and ask if they understand)
3. How do they get the name Box Turtle? Because they are the only turtle that can close itself up in a shell, like a "box". They do this to escape predators and they feel safe inside their strong shell. In this game you can crouch down and place your hands over your head to simulate being in your "box". If you hear me say "BOX UP" everyone get in their box. (practice a couple of times) When you come out of your shell look around carefully and poke your head out slowly to make sure it's safe

We will start 400+ years ago and we're going to say that our play area is Wake County. Bison, elk and wolves used to live right here!

- Now where do box turtles live? In the forest, so we have these green areas (hula hoops or other on the ground markers) that are forests scattered around the County. I want you all to practice walking like a box turtle and everyone move to a forest home. To start there can be no more than 3 turtles in each forest.
- "A herd of Bison are out in a pasture, they get scared and start to stampede, everyone BOX UP!" (Stomp your feet on the ground) Okay, as soon as you can't hear the sound anymore you can come out of your shell. (slow down and then stop stomping)
- (Let them get into their forests and you stand in the center) Everyone be quiet, there is a wolf pack around the edge of the forest. I'm going to point at them; if I point in your direction you must "BOX UP!" (point in one direction and then slowly spin in a circle, reverse directions and then go really fast!)
- Okay the wolves are gone. Now that you are all safely in your forest you will need to eat, what do Box Turtles eat? Mushrooms, worms, small insects, so everyone (pretend) munch and get some food. There is plenty of food and you are all full and happy! (everyone smile and rub their bellies or say yum, yum, yum)
- The sky above you grows dark and water begins to fall from the sky. You're thirsty and you take a big drink. The sky gets darker and you hear loud booms you've never heard before, it's THUNDER. The sound gets closer and you get scared everyone "BOX UP". The sound stopped and so did the rain, you can come out of your shell.
- Along with Thunder comes what? Yes, lightning. Lightning struck a tree in this forest and started a fire and burned the forest down (select and remove on forest). All turtles in this forest must "BOX UP" until the fire passes. Can turtles survive a fire? Only if it's fast and doesn't burn too hot. We'll say that these turtles survive and must move to another forest.

We're going to move forward in time; 300 years ago in the 1700's Native Americans were living in the area. Two trading paths came through this area Occoneechi to the north and Pee Dee to the south.

- (Lay out the rope paths) Right now you see several mammals walking on their hind legs down the trail, everyone that can see the paths must "BOX UP!" You're scared. You've never seen mammals like this, they are wearing the fur of other mammals. Once you can feel the vibrations in the ground have stopped, you can come out of your shell. (walk the rope paths or stomp) You are right to hide, some native Americans used to make turtle soup!
- It's quiet for a while and you keep eating food. Then you see one of these mammals along the path carrying a stick with an orange ball on top. You remember this as FIRE! They burn open areas so they can catch smaller mammals easier. One of the fires gets close to this forest and you all "BOX UP!" Again, this forest is gone, these turtles must move to another forest. (remove another forest)
- So forests that have more than three turtles, are you still able to find food? It's a little tougher but yes you spread out and find food. Sometimes you share even. (everyone eat, smile and rub their bellies or say yum, yum, yum)

Now 200 years ago, in the 1800s you start to see more mammals walking on their hind legs. They have other large mammals called mules and horses. They all drag large pieces of something shiny across the ground. What are they doing? They are preparing the soil for planting, they are farmers. Some mammals use something shiny to cut down trees to do.

- As they approach this forest you get scared and "BOX UP!" (pretend that you are using a crosscut saw to cut the trees down and remove them). Once the forest is gone they PLOW the ground and plant some seeds. These turtles must move on to another forest. (**repeat until only 3 or 4 forests remain outside of the area you will make Umstead)
- Now the remaining forests are crowded, can you still find food? It's getting tougher, turtles who have been in the same forest the entire game know where all the food is and they eat and smile and rub their bellies or say yum, yum, yum. The rest of the turtles that crowded in are having a tougher time and they may be hungry, make some tummy growling sounds.

Now 100 years ago, in the 1900s there was not much forest in this area was there? And more changes are coming!

- All the mammals around you are called farmers, and to connect their farms they created a lot of paths they call roads. One day you hear a strange sound and see one of these mammals in a huge shiny animal going down the road! It has big eyes, doors on the side and a horn that says "ah-woo-ga". It's a car, you've never seen one before, you get scared and "BOX UP!" (pretend to be driving a car and drive around the forests)
- In 1934 federal and state agencies united to buy 5,000 acres to set aside as a state park. (Line out the park area). This area was farmed heavily and rain storms washed a lot of the dirt away. It took a while, but forests started to grow there again. (place a few forests inside the park)
- Outside of the park the mammals now had something to cut down the forest quicker, they are very loud and call them CHAINSAWS. The sound scares you and you all "BOX UP!" And this forest is gone, all the turtles here must move to another forest. (remove remaining forests outside of park and place new ones inside the park as the box turtles wander)
- You hear a loud sound in the sky and see a shiny object in the sky making a loud noise "BOX UP!"
- In 1966 the park was pieced together and called William B. Umstead State Park, in honor of a NC governor who was very conservation minded. He protected a lot of forests!

Today, 2000+, what would you see inside the park that might scare you and make you BOX UP?

- Runners, bicycles, cars, roads
- Dogs – that’s why dogs must be on leashes at all times in a state park
- Kids – some kids like to take turtles home as pets, this is ILLEGAL and very bad for the life of the turtle!

Congratulations! You have all proved your box turtle survival skills and lived through all the changes to the Umstead State Park Area. Now you all survived, but what hazards could have hurt real box turtles throughout the game? Bison, wolves, fires, being eaten, run over, plowed, tree falling, etc.

STEWARDSHIP

In a state park all the forests and all the turtles and other critters are protected. Our philosophy is to “let nature take its course”. We are stewards of the land, who knows what stewardship is? Are girl scouts good stewards of the land? What can we do help the forests?, the turtles?

Litter is very harmful to box turtles and all other wildlife. (See trash n turtles program)

WIUM HISTORY BACKGROUND

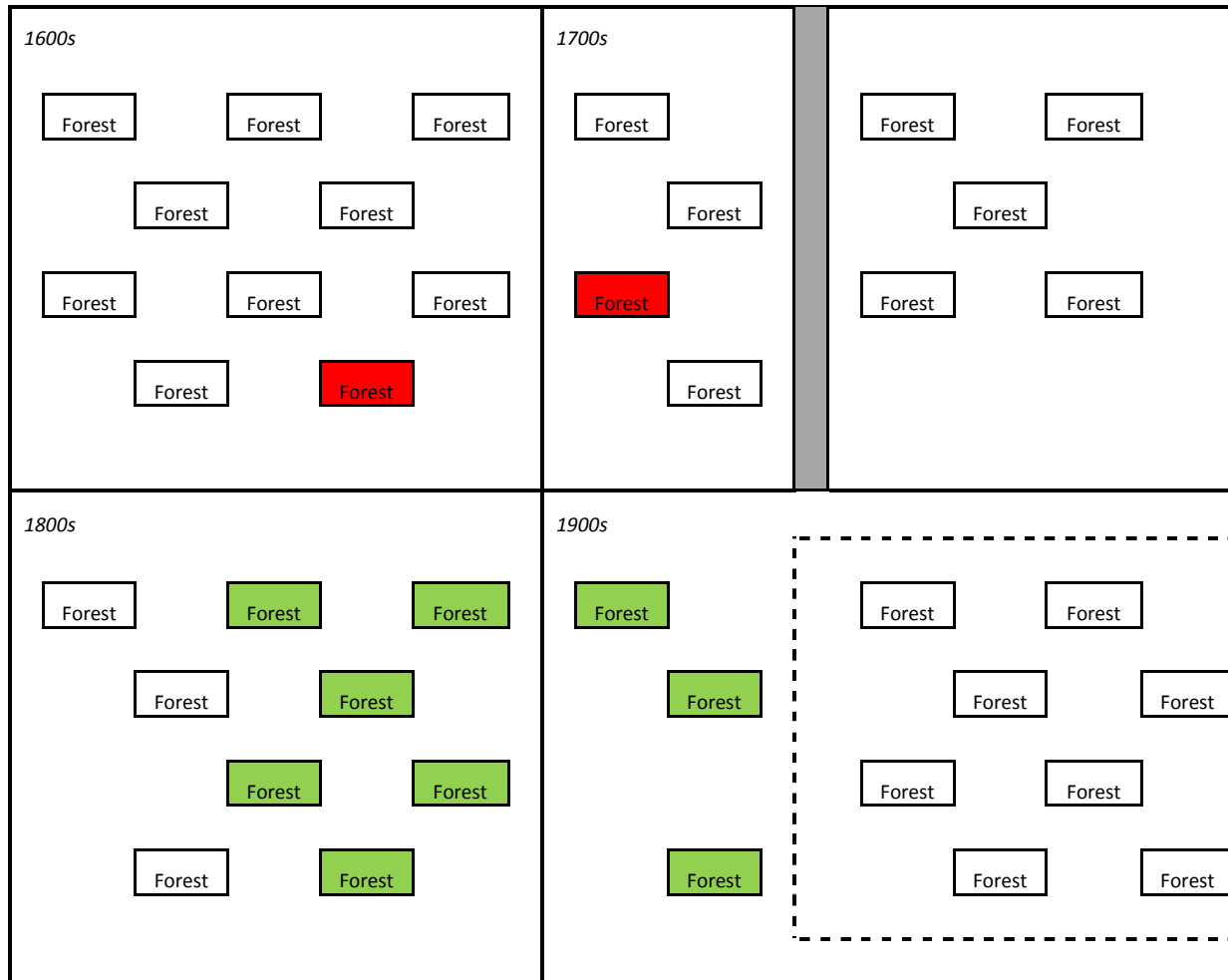
Long before the first settlers, the area now known as William B. Umstead State Park was an untamed land. American bison, elk, bobcats and wolves roamed majestic forests of oak, hickory and beech. Native Americans later inhabited the land and avenues of trade were developed nearby. Such avenues included the Occoneechee trail to the north and the Pee Dee trail to the south. In 1774, land grants opened the area for settlement.





Forests were cleared as agricultural interests sprouted. While early farming efforts were successful, poor cultivation practices and one-crop production led to depletion and erosion of the soil. During the Depression, farmers made futile attempts to grow cotton in worn-out soil around Crabtree Creek.

In 1934, under the Resettlement Administration, federal and state agencies united to buy 5,000 acres of this submarginal land to develop a recreation area. The Civilian Conservation Corps, as well as the Works Progress Administration, helped construct the site while providing much needed jobs. Four camps along with day-use and picnic facilities were built and the park opened to the public in 1937.

The state purchased this area, known as Crabtree Creek Recreation Area, for \$1, and more facilities were built as the General Assembly made its first state parks division appropriation in the 1940s. In 1950, more than 1,000 acres of the park were established as a separate park for African-Americans. This area was named Reedy Creek State Park. Crabtree Creek Recreation Area was renamed a few years later after former Governor William Bradley Umstead because of his conservation efforts. In 1966, the Crabtree Creek and Reedy Creek areas were united under the same name; William B. Umstead State Park was open to everyone.

Forest and Plow: Box Turtle Survival Skills – Game Layout Map



-  - Forest burned
-  - Forest cut and plowed
-  - Indian Trading Path
-  - Umstead State Park boundary