

Oak Island Man Attempts to Break Mountains-to-Sea Trail Record in Support of North Carolina Wildlife Federation

BRUNSWICK COUNTY, NC, UNITED STATES, January 20, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Cross-country runner Luke Bennett will attempt to beat the fastest known time of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (MST) in early April while raising awareness about protecting, conserving and restoring North Carolina's wildlife and habitat.

The 22-year-old's [Hiking for Habitat](#) trek benefitting [North Carolina Wildlife Federation](#) (NCWF) will span 1,175 miles from the Great Smoky Mountains to the Outer Banks. Bennett will run and hike the trail over 27-28 days with a small support crew of friends and family to assist him along the way. His record-breaking journey coincides with the 45th anniversary of MST, first proposed in 1977 at Lake Junaluska.

During the hike, Bennett hopes to shed light on issues threatening habitats and wildlife, the risks to their survival and ways to give them a fighting chance. NCWF will track his efforts through an ongoing blog and social media posts.

"North Carolina's wildlife, outdoors and adventures are the foundation of my life. Hiking for Habitat will be a culmination of all my outdoor experiences and serve as a tribute to our state," Bennett said. "After taking a deep dive into the diversity of habitats and wildlife throughout the state, it's time for me to give back, and I'm thrilled to partner with NCWF."

Bennett, who lives in Oak Island, said he was "itching for a challenge" when he set his sights on MST. "It connects North Carolina's three distinct regions and offers rugged terrain and a chance to experience the state's geographical diversity," he said. "I've lived in all three areas of North Carolina, so hiking the MST will feel like an adventure in my backyard."



Luke Bennett, 22, is Hiking for Habitat in early April when he attempts to break the fastest known time of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail while raising awareness about protecting, conserving and restoring North Carolina wildlife and habitat.

Growing up in Durham, Bennett developed a sense of wonder and appreciation for the outdoors while spending his childhood fishing, swimming and exploring the Eno River. He started running cross-country in 7th grade to get in shape for his middle school's basketball season. His first race - a two-miler at Eno River State Park - ignited his passion for running and exploring opportunities to push himself physically and mentally.

Bennett, who graduated last May with a bachelor's degree in biology from Appalachian State University, estimates he's traversed more than 20 thousand miles since he started running a decade ago. Shortly after graduation, he completed the entire 2,193-mile Appalachian Trail Thru-Hike, a feat accomplished by only one in four of the thousands of hikers who attempt it each year. While it typically takes thru-hikers 5 to 7 months to complete the trail, Bennett finished in less than 100 days.

His training for MST includes a 30-mile run later this month, a 40-mile Uwharrie National Forest trail race on Feb. 5, a 40-mile trail race up Mount Mitchell on Feb. 26 and possibly a 50-mile MST endurance race on March 19.

"I'll have my 23rd birthday on the MST and can't think of a better way to celebrate than experiencing the peace and clarity that comes with a long day of hiking towards complete exhaustion," Bennett said. "I'm eager to find new gears in my body and mind that I didn't know existed - new gears that will help me reach my full potential as an athlete and as a person."

He added, "I want to raise awareness about the diversity of habitats and wildlife and push myself on their behalf. Hiking the entire MST will reinforce my connection with North Carolina, so I never forget where I came from no matter where I'm heading."

To learn more about Bennett, visit <https://ncwf.org/blog/hiking-for-habitat>. Anyone interested in sponsoring Bennett's Hiking for Habitat goal can [pledge online](#) for \$10 per mile. Follow Luke's journey on Facebook (@NCWildlifeFederation), Instagram @ncwildlifefed #hikingforhabitatnc and LinkedIn (@nc-wildlife-federation).

About North Carolina Wildlife Federation

Since 1945, the North Carolina Wildlife Federation (NCWF) has worked on behalf of all wildlife and habitat - from the Great Smoky Mountains to the Outer Banks. The nonprofit organization brings together citizens, outdoor enthusiasts, hunters and anglers, government and industry to protect the state's natural resources. NCWF's work is centered around conserving wildlife, restoring habitat, getting people outside, celebrating conservation, conservation policy and climate resiliency. Learn more at <https://ncwf.org/>.

Kristine Goodyear, Director of Communications
North Carolina Wildlife Federation

kristine@ncwf.org

Visit us on social media:

[Facebook](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

[Other](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/561031248>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2022 IPD Group, Inc. All Right Reserved.