



SAVE THE DATE: THE ICE MAN RETURNS

The Friends of Lake James State Park is thrilled to announce the return of the Lake James Ice Festival.

Scheduled for Jan. 21, 2023, the second annual ice sculpture gala will take on a new extravagance within and around the recently opened visitors center. Sculptor Aaron Costic and his blazing chainsaw is planning to bring as many as 40 unique, themed works of ice art. The resulting menagerie will be revealed in all its glory as the sun sinks low on the horizon and a rainbow of LED lights glow through the cold, clear sculptures.



Look for updates on ticket and sponsorship information on the Friends of Lake James State Park Facebook page.



NATURE NOTES



You don't need a calendar to know Fall has arrived. The season for sleeping with the windows open and walking the dog in shorts and a tank top is rapidly coming to a close, with hooded sweatshirts, thick socks and knit caps coming to the front of the wardrobe closet.

Here at the park, the Paddy's Creek Area swim beach has closed for the year, marking the end of the busy Summer and beginning of the most-anticipated season for wildlife-watchers.

Fall is the time many species of birds migrate South to spend the winter. Lake James is strategically

located near the Eastern Continental Divide so that many birds following the front range of the Blue Ridge Mountains find their way here, where they can rest and refuel before taking up their journey once again.

During October, a wide variety of migrants are apt to stop in. Swainson's thrushes, red-headed woodpeckers, Tennessee warblers and sharp-shinned hawks are but a tiny sample of the diversity. It's not unusual for experienced birdwatchers to tally more than 50 species in a morning's hike around the park. The fact that this mass-movement of feathered travelers is taking place during the peak foliage season just makes it all the more wonderful.

Birds will continue to migrate through the end of November, though the cast of characters will change. Late season migrants include red-tailed hawks, gray catbirds, yellow-rumped warblers and a variety of ducks.

The peak of the breeding season for white-tailed deer also occurs this month. The antlered males will be on the prowl during all periods of the day and night in search of receptive does. The most visible activity happens during the final week of November.

This is the time of year when food is in its greatest abundance for many animals. Hard and soft mass producing trees and shrubs will provide the sustenance for critters like black bears, gray squirrels, cottontail rabbits and deer to survive the scarcity of Winter.

It's a perfect time to be outside and enjoy Nature, whether you're a seasoned naturalist or a first-time hiker. Hope to see you on the trail.

WHO WE ARE

A group formed in 2010, made up of dedicated people working together to help Lake James State Park meet its mission of providing opportunities for public enjoyment and education while still protecting the natural beauty and historic integrity of the State Park.

BOARD MEMBERS

- Eric Jenkins** - President
- Annette Bryant** - Vice President
- Mike Sewell** - Secretary
- Robert Hunter** - Ex Officio Member
- Randall Conley** - Member at Large
- George Milner** - Member at Large
- Greg Norell** - Member at Large
- Molly Sandfoss** - Member at Large
- Jeff Stark** - Member at Large
- Mickey Lewis** - Member at Large
- Charles Abernathy** - Member at Large
- Bryant Lindsey** - Member at Large
- Teena Fox** - Member at Large
- Pete Colwell** - Member at Large
- Nancy Connelly** - Member at Large
- Shane Prisby** - Member at Large
- Beth Heile** - Member at Large

To contact the Friends of Lake James State Park Group please email info@lakejamesstatepark.org

YEAR OF THE TREE



It's hard to get excited about trees during summer. That expansive blanket of green leaves covering the landscape is proof that the natural processes of photosynthesis are chugging along, but for many folks there's no "wow" factor when they gaze upon the various shades of green.

Mother Nature is about to change the blankets. The practical summertime greens are getting replaced with the vibrant mosaic of reds, yellows, oranges and purples of autumn. It's the time of year people schedule vacations to the mountains of western North Carolina. It's Leaf Peeper Season.

The color change everyone hopes for is a product of several factors. Deciduous trees like oaks, maples, beeches and sweet gums contain the yellow pigments in their leaves through the spring and summer, but it is only during fall, when the green chlorophyll breaks down as the trees prepare to go dormant, that the yellow is revealed. For some types of trees, the yellow then turns to red as those pigments are last to be synthesized by the leaves before they drop or turn brown.

By combination of these few colors; green, yellow, red and brown, the rest of the spectrum of fall foliage can exist as orange and purple, in varying shades and vibrance.

Weather also plays a roll in how bright or drab a particular fall might be, with temperature and moisture playing significant rolls.

During the late summer and early fall, a stretch of warm, sunny days in conjunction with cool, but not freezing nights allow for a lot of sugars to be produced in the leaves which in turn convert into the beautiful reds that make for a colorful autumn palette.

The amount of rainfall also has an influence. A warm, wet spring in combination with normal summertime temperatures and precipitation, capped off by warm, sunny days and cool nights in the fall typically result in memorable Leaf Peeper seasons. Late springs and summer droughts tend to mute the colors of fall.

That being said, we should be in for a colorful fall around Lake James with peak colors around the end of October. Make sure to schedule some time outside to enjoy the show.

**CLAY'S CORNER
AUTUMN WILD EDIBLES**



PASSION FRUIT

Also known as Maypops, both the fruit and stunningly beautiful flowers of this common vine are edible. The flowers are widely used in supplements and are thought to ease anxiety and cure insomnia. However, the real treat is the fruit that ripen in early fall. Once the round or oval shaped fruit have become heavy and turned from green to pale yellow, break them open to reveal candy-coated seeds of a flavor you won't soon forget.

AMERICAN PERSIMMON

American persimmons are abundant in the eastern US, from Texas to Connecticut. The fruit do not require a frost to be edible, as many have prescribed, but they must be ripe. They are ready for recipes or to be eaten from the tree when they are orange, soft to mushy and sometimes with wrinkled skin. Unripe persimmons are extremely astringent and will have a lasting, bitter flavor. Each fruit will have several seeds to be discarded. They can be eaten raw and many Thanksgiving tables have been adorned with persimmon pudding or bread.



CHANTERELLES

Chanterelles are among the most sought-after of the wild, edible mushrooms. Most are orange or yellow, funnel shaped and meaty. They have smooth, sometimes wavy caps. Instead of gills, the undersides have rounded, forked folds that run most of the way down the stem, which tapers away from the cap seamlessly. Chanterelles can be stir-fried, cooked with eggs or added to soups and stews. A level of caution is strongly encouraged here. Mistaken mushroom identification can have severe and irreversible consequences. While chanterelles are easy to identify, they do have some similar look-alikes that are not at all toothsome. You won't regret taking an experienced guide on your first foray for chanterelles.

**CLAY'S CORNER
AUTUMN WILD EDIBLES**

BLACK WALNUT

The Eastern American Black Walnut is a native, deciduous tree growing mostly in stream and river corridors along the East Coast. After a significant drying and shelling process the nuts are enjoyable raw and have a sweet, earthy flavor. They are delightful in a salad or over ice cream. Other recipes involve baking with whole walnuts or grinding them into flour. Custom walnut crackers are available online but my preferred method is with a hammer and an anvil by the woodstove on a rainy, winter day.



PAWPAW

There's a good chance you have never heard of, much less seen or eaten a pawpaw. They may be one of Americas best kept secrets and are only native to the eastern half of the country. Pawpaws are the largest edible fruit native to North America and will leave you wishing their sweet, banana, mango, custard-like flavor was more abundant. They can be found in the understory of lowland forests and are fond of damp areas. The fruit are large, up to 6 inches, and often eaten raw but would make a delightful ice cream or baked dessert.

WHY IS THAT? MILITARY FLYOVERS AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE TRAINING AT LAKE JAMES

Visitors to Lake James State Park often train their eyes up in hopes of spotting a bird in flight. Sightings of soaring hawks and eagles are especially prized, and spying a kingfisher dive-bomb the lake motivates birders and fishermen alike. Some visitors may wish to get a birds-eye view of the park, but according to state law, “park visitors are prohibited from ascending or taking off within or upon any state park area or state park water surface, of any airplane, flying machine (including drones) or other apparatus for aviation.” Still, one park happenstance combines a bird’s gravity defying ability with the expertise of aeronautical engineers: flights of manned aircraft!

Lake James lies along the path of several Military Training Routes (MTRs), so at unexpected moments, park visitors may witness flights piloted by the nation’s armed forces. These operate under instrument flight rules (1500 feet in the air or higher), but compared to silent contrails, the roar can seem startlingly close. Staff report having



seen F-15 fighter jets out of Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, a vertical landing Harrier Jet from Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station, and a C-17 cargo and troop transport based at the Air National Guard’s Charlotte field. The highlight, however, was in 2021 when a B-52 heavy bomber, far from its station at Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana, flew droningly overhead, all eight Pratt & Whitney turbopfans pushing it across the sky.

While flights of military planes create heart-pounding excitement, park staff can become downright giddy when staging a landing zone for the other master of vertical landings: the helicopter. The pilots and crew of these aircraft conduct rescue training exercises and firefighting operations in the park, and

depending on need, staff may even get to climb aboard to convey local expertise or role-play victims. Visitors may have seen the NC Forest Service’s Huey or the NC Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team’s Black Hawk parked at the Paddy’s Creek day-use area, and watching them in flight over a prescribed burn or mock boating accident greatly inspires staff in their own efforts.

Whether checking off a species on a birding life list, hearing the scream of a fighter jet, or leaning into a helicopter’s prop wash, visitors and staff can experience a variety of serendipitous moments at Lake James State Park. In the future, staff will stay alert for scheduled rescue trainings and prime prescribed burn conditions, and visitors can glance upwards and listen hard—the next bald eagle, B-52, or Black Hawk sighting may be theirs!



Ranger Townsend Receives Full Commission

The wheels of government are slow to turn, especially for anyone waiting for their approval to be commissioned as a Special Peace Officer in the state of North Carolina.

Since his arrival at Lake James State Park back in December, 2021, Ranger Robert Townsend has been singularly focused on the long process of becoming a certified law enforcement officer as is required of all North Carolina State Park Rangers. After graduating McDowell County Community College's 18-week Basic Law Enforcement Training in May and passing the state exam, Ranger Townsend has immersed himself in everything that is being a park ranger except law enforcement.

Now that he's been sworn in, Ranger Townsend has added the duties of enforcing park rules and state statutes, including the power to arrest, to his expanding list of responsibilities.

We congratulate Ranger Townsend on his dedication to the successful completion of this difficult process and thank him for the commitment he has made to protecting the park and its visitors.



LJSP TRAILS



CATAWBA RIVER AREA:

- Fishing Pier Trail (0.3 mile, easy)
- Fox Den Loop Trail (2.25 miles, moderate)
- Lake Channel Overlook Trail (1.5 miles, moderate)
- Sandy Cliff Overlook Trail (0.5 mile, easy)

PADDY'S CREEK AREA:

- Holly Discovery Trail (0.75 mile, easy)
- Mill's Creek Trail (3.6 miles, moderate)
- Overmountain Victory Trail (2.0 mile, moderate)
- Paddy's Creek Trail (2.0 miles, moderate)
- Tindo beginners' mountain bike trail (4.0 miles)
- Wimba intermediate mountain bike trail (11.25 miles)

PARK GENERAL INFO

- Gate hours for October are 7 a.m. until 9 p.m. In November the nightly closing time is 8 p.m.
- The public swimming season is over for the year. As is the concessions stand and boat rentals at Paddy's Creek.
- Park offices and gift shop at Catawba River Area are closed permanently. The Paddy's Creek Area office and gift shop is open seven-days-a-week, from 9:00 a.m. until 5:30 p.m.

FRIENDS OF LAKE JAMES STATE PARK

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Do you have an interest in Lake James State Park? Whether you enjoy hiking the trails, swimming at the beach or just picnicking with your family, there is some part of the park for everyone.

Join the Friends of Lake James State Park group and learn about all the opportunities to help make the park a better place for everyone to enjoy. The Friends of Lake James State Park focus on working together to help Lake James State Park meet its mission of providing opportunities for public enjoyment and education while still protecting the natural beauty and historic integrity of the State Park.

There are a variety of opportunities to get involved from trail work days, to volunteering at RiverFest and other festivals. Become a member of Friends of Lake James State Park, and know that you are helping to preserve the natural beauty and historic resources of Lake James for generations to come.

FRIENDS CONTRIBUTIONS

The Friends of Lake James State Park is proud to support the hardworking staff at Lake James State Park and contribute wherever we can to help improve park operations and offer new recreational opportunities to visitors. If you think these efforts are meaningful, please consider joining our group using the form at the bottom of this page.

- Boat Camping Project; partially funded, purchased equipment including rebar driver and auger
- Stand-up Paddleboards; purchased two for rental fleet and one for lifeguard use
- Funded instructor for Waterfront Safety training for lifeguards
- Linville Overlook picnic area
- Assisted with Overmountain Victory Trail 2 construction
- Holly Discovery Trail; partially funded and dedicated, annual funding for upkeep
- Park of the Year celebration
- Sponsored night rides on mountain bike trails
- RiverFest Sponsor

HOW TO JOIN THE FRIENDS OF LAKE JAMES STATE PARK GROUP

Become a member of Friends of Lake James State Park, and know that you are helping to preserve the natural beauty and historic resources of Lake James for generations to come.

For more information please visit www.lakejamesstatepark.org or email info@lakejamesstatepark.org.

FRIENDS OF LAKE JAMES STATE PARK - MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Be a Friend of Lake James State Park

Select class of annual membership:

- Individual \$10
- Family \$25
- Corporate \$50
- Patron/Industry \$100 - \$999 \$_____
- Lifetime \$1000 (or more) \$_____

I would like to be contacted about volunteer opportunities with the Friends of Lake James State Park

Where did you hear about us? _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

**Return to:
Friends of Lake James State Park, Inc.
P.O. Box 1327
Nebo, NC 28761**

Friends of Lake James State Park, Inc. is a registered 501(c)3 charitable organization. Receipt of membership will be supplied upon request.