



GRAND OPENING

VISITOR CENTER RIBBON-CUTTING CEREMONY • MARCH 10

Come one! Come all!

The visitor center at Lake James State Park is officially open to the public following the ribbon-cutting ceremony, held March 10.

Esteemed guests included N.C. Dept. of Natural and Cultural Resources Secretary Reid Wilson, N.C. State Representative Hugh Blackwell and N.C. School of Science and Math Vice Chancellor Kevin Baxter, while members of the community took seats in front of the grand entryway.

In her opening remarks, Park Superintendent Nora Coffey said the visitor center is realization of a tremendous collaboration of architects, exhibit designers, artists and craftspeople.

“Today I am grateful and excited about this facility and how it will play a role in the future of this park and the community that surrounds it,” she said. “This center of discovery and learning and adventure epitomizes the North Carolina State Parks’ mission to teach about, interpret and foster a sense of stewardship for the wild and wonderful places we are so lucky to share with people from across the state and beyond.”

Money for the project was designated in the 2016 Connect NC bond by the state legislature. Then-Gov. Pat McCrory signed the measure and groundbreaking took place back in 2019. Additional funding for exhibits and teaching space came from the Rostan Family Foundation, Duke Energy, the National Park Service and Friends of Lake James State Park.



Photo Credit: Jacob Hanlon



Photo Credit: Annette Bryant

The 7,860-square-foot visitor center, with exhibit hall, retail space, classrooms, offices and outdoor amphitheater is open every day except Christmas, from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m.

- By Ranger Jamie Cameron

NATURE NOTES

In a poll of citizens across the United States, Spring runs neck-and-neck with Summer as the second-favorite season of the year (Autumn is the overwhelming winner). It might be the overall runner-up, but Spring sure feels like a welcome change to Winter to my sun-starved face and cold fingers and toes.

Plants and animals around Lake James are feeling the same way. Early wildflowers have been popping since late February, though the daffodils and crocuses are not native, but escaped ornamentals that have gone feral across undeveloped landscapes.

Spring brings out the best in several understory tree species, including dogwood, redbud, serviceberry, silverbells and fringe tree. Wild azaleas add to the fireworks and the resulting splashes of color amid the backdrop of fresh green buds is a sight for sore eyes after a winter of greys and browns.

Migrating birds are returning to Lake James, either to take up residence and raise their young or as a stopover for destinations further still. Broad-winged hawks, purple martins, spotted sandpipers

and black-throated green warblers are just a few of the species birdwatchers are excited to welcome back. I'm especially looking forward to spotting the first indigo bunting of the year. These small songbirds prefer early successional habitats, which the park has an abundance of after the



last decade of appropriate prescribed fire applications. The male indigo bunting is an electric blue color and picks the tops of trees and shrubs from which to belt out his lusty song.

It will be interesting to see if the famous red foxes of Fox Den Loop trail raise another litter of kits in their well-worn burrow beside the trail. Someday that site will become unsuitable for one reason or another, but up until now generations of foxes have been born and raised there, to the delight of many early morning hikers.

Come out to the park soon and hit the trail. The weather's fine.

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
- 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

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

YEAR OF THE TRAIL



It's the Year of the Trail for NC State Parks and we are excited to see that other members of the outdoor community have taken the theme in stride!

If you're not too far from Morganton, make sure check out the Discover Burke Trails Day! at the Municipal Auditorium, Mar. 11. This event is for all ages and will include food trucks, an inflatable obstacle course, and different exhibitors and presenters. Also, Foothills Conservancy of NC will have a guided hike at the Oak Hill Community Park and Forest on Mar. 10.

Here at Lake James State Park, we are hosting the first ever Paddy's Creek Challenge. This three-day event is for all ages and will include prizes. "We want to encourage people to get outdoors and go hiking and biking in an attempt to complete as much of the nearly 30 miles of trails in the Paddy's Creek Access as they can," said event organizer, Ranger Robert Townsend.

Later this Spring, on April 15th and 16th Park Rangers will be leading guided hikes on the Overmountain Victory Trail and the Fonta Flora State Trail.

If you're on the other side of Lake James, the McDowell Trails Association has a full schedule of hikes, cycling events, and clean-ups. A few of their upcoming events include the Spring Trail/Greenway Clean-up, Mar. 25, a hike on the Fonta Flora State Trail, Apr. 1 and the Rock-n-Roller Cycling Event in Old Fort, Apr. 29.

If you happen to not be near our lovely lake for the events above don't fear! Across North Carolina, the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources and The Great Trails State Coalition will be hosting different trail days and other fun events throughout the year.

FOR MOR INFORMATION AND EVENTS CHECK OUT THESE LINKS:

Burke County: <https://www.discoverburkecounty.com/events/discover-burke-trails-day>

Foothills Conservancy of NC: <https://www.foothillsconservancy.org/volunteer>

McDowell Trails Association: <https://mcdowelltrails.org/YOTT2023/>

The Great Trails State Coalition: <https://greattrailsnc.com/events/>

Lake James State Park: <https://www.ncparks.gov/state-parks/lake-james-state-park/events-list>

NC State Parks: <https://www.ncdcr.gov/programs-services/featured-programs/path/year-trail/trail-days>

CLAY'S CORNER SPRING EDIBLES

An abundance of green, succulent, edible life will soon emerge from the ground as the clouds give way to sunshine and the earth warms in the early spring. Narrowing down this list of wild table fare is tough, but there are a few that stand out as both common and particularly desirable. I hope some of these will find their way to your kitchen:



MORELS

Just the thought of stumbling upon a hidden patch of Morel Mushrooms makes the foragers heart race. I don't know whether it's the mushroom's elusiveness, the short harvesting window or the mouthwatering, earthy flavor, maybe all three that makes them so. Locally, morels are harvested from late March through mid-May, but that time can fluctuate with the temperature. When you start seeing warmer nights and wet ground, the time is right. They are most commonly found in hardwood forests. Always cook morels before eating. That's accomplished by deep frying, sauteing or mixing them with some scrambled eggs. Either way you won't be disappointed.

STINGING NETTLE

Stinging Nettles can be a booger to collect but their aggressiveness is quickly subdued with a little heat and the reward is worth it. They are easy to find in the spring in damp, mostly shaded areas. Bring some gloves for harvesting. Nettles are loaded with vitamins and minerals. Cooking easily conquers the sting. Serve them as you would any cooked green or just sauteed in butter. If you'd like to test your culinary skills give stinging nettle pesto a try.



FIDDLEHEADS

While searching for stinging nettles will put you in the same neighborhood as ferns. They grow on the damp forest floor and emerge early in the spring to soak up precious sunlight before it is filtered out by the ever-thickening canopy. Ferns begin each year as delicious, crisp fiddleheads. Snap them off before they unfurl. Leave 2/3 on each individual plant and secure the rest in a bag or basket for stir-fried fiddleheads, pickled fiddleheads, fiddleheads and eggs, or freeze them for a stew on a cold, rainy spring day. They are similar to asparagus and marvelous sauteed in butter and garlic.

CLAY'S CORNER SPRING EDIBLES

GREENBRIAR

This is one of my favorites. Greenbriar is an underestimated, often unpublished, plentiful and delicious wild edible available beginning in spring and lasting into summer. The starchy roots can be cooked and used to thicken other dishes, but are a far cry from the shoots. The young shoots are the most desirable part, tender little thorns and all. Harvest only the newly emerged tips, usually about 12 inches at the most. Snap them off with your hand wherever they break crisply. Enjoy them fresh and raw off the vine or wrap a bundle in bacon and drop them in a hot cast iron skillet.



DAYLILY

Originally from East Asia, Daylilies have become a natural part of the landscape in North America and Europe. They are commonly found in roadside ditches, yielding their less common name – the ditch lily. All parts of this plant are edible. In spring seek out the young shoots and leaves for cooking as table greens with some ham hocks or your favorite seasoning. Get the leaves early, they soon become fibrous. Later in early summer the flower buds and flowers can be eaten raw in salads or cooked. The buds make wonderful pickles. Even the underground tubers can be eaten raw or baked like spuds, just save some to plant in your own ditch for next year.

POKEWEED

I'm hesitant to add Pokeweed to this list. Rarely do we have a plant that is considered edible and poisonous at the same time, but here it is. So, what's the bottom line? ALWAYS consider the roots, berries and mature leaves to be BAD. Don't even try to cook the poison out of them. What we are left with are the delightfully, delicious young shoots and leaves. Anything under 18 inches tall without even a hint of purple is considered fair game for the table. Always cook them in boiling water or fry them in a skillet. My favorite is pokeweed shoots wrapped in bacon but the flavor they add to scrambled eggs will leave you hunting for more.



SCOPE IT OUT



Learning about Lake James State Park can seem like a Herculean task. With nearly 4,000 acres and 33 miles of shoreline to explore, even our well-trained rangers sometimes enlist help in interpreting the park's cultural history and natural wonders to visitors. This can take the form of posting informational displays, recruiting knowledgeable volunteers, or hosting group events.

One impactful method of interpretation used by rangers is to show visitors a new point of view. Technology in particular helps reveal these fresh perspectives. For instance, ground-penetrating radar can reveal a stand of trees to conceal a former church site. Novice field biologists can use apps like iNaturalist to identify species on the fly. For a visually dramatic effect, however, park rangers will utilize optical scopes to bring natural resources into vivid, awe-inspiring relief.

Very close to becoming a Dark Sky Park, Lake James boasts little light pollution, so rangers leading nighttime stargazing programs use telescopes to view moons, planets, stars, and galaxies light years away. Often people remember their first look at the moon's craters or Saturn's rings as a high point

in their early outdoor experiences.

In contrast, rangers focus the park's new electron microscope on objects close enough to touch and

then zoom into their tiniest detail, from the jagged sharpness of an ant's mandibles to prisms of light trapped in a grain of sand. Critters and features unnoticed by 20/20 vision become miniature works of art when a closer look is taken.

With the help of a little technology, rangers can interpret the park's natural and cultural treasures in a striking manner, thereby amplifying the experience of visitors. Even those who bike the trails regularly or have boated on the lake for generations can gain a richer appreciation of the area in this way. We encourage visitors to zoom in to what's near and far and see where their new vantage point takes them.

- By Karen Johnson



SWIM RUN VOLUNTEERS NEEDED



The Lake James Swim Run is in need of volunteers to work both the land and water legs of the April 22 event. Racers will be navigating both swimming and running legs across the state park and the lake. To participate go to www.trisignup.com/Race/NC/Nebo/SwimRunNCLakeJames and click on the Volunteer drop down at the top of the page.



EARTH DAY APRIL 22, 2023 10 AM - 2 PM

2229 LAKE JAMES STATE PARK RD. NEBO
VISITOR CENTER

Meet
Smokey Bear!



A CELEBRATION OF
PRESCRIBED FIRE IN
THE MOUNTAINS!

Activities
Scavenger Hunt
Food Truck!

Learn how prescribed fire is "good" fire in reducing wildfire risk, promoting new growth and healthy forests and how a little smoke from a prescribed burn can prevent a lot of smoke later!

**PRESCRIBED
BURN DEMO!**



WEATHER PERMITTING



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, email info@lakejamesstatepark.org or Scan the QR Code to the right!



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.