



VOLUNTEERS RETURN OBETH CEMETERY TO PROMINENCE

By Andrea Bennett Kiser, Daughters of the American Revolution, Catawba Meadows Chapter



Obeth Cemetery has been important to me since I was there with my dear grandmother in the 1950s. I remember going into the small white church with windowpanes out, leaves on the floor and an old dusty organ on the left side at the front.

Grandmother's precious daughter, my aunt, that died at 20 years of age and her dear parents are buried there as well as many other family members.

In past years, visiting the cemetery was not easy and you had to do so at your own peril, as the site stood within the boundaries of a hunting club. It was the most wonderful news when my son Pat told me that it was now safely within the Paddy's Creek Area of Lake James State Park. The joy it brought to be able to visit and know that it is safe ... well, I have no words to

describe it. This sacred ground holds until Resurrection Day the remains of my four grandfathers and three grandmothers, as well as many other family members.

A lot of the graves are in sad need of repair. There is a whole community of us, across the county and the U.S., with descendants buried here. At age 80 and in the midst of the pandemic I decided to try and do something. Along with Susan Houck, Janie Matthews and some Daughters of the American Revolution ladies, we decided to do what we could to clean and straighten headstones and remove some of the small ground cover. We want to preserve what is there and prevent further deterioration when possible.

With the help of Edwin Norman, the location of the old church has been

found and it is my dream to erect a permanent marker identifying it as the site so that it will not be lost to time.

I've started a Facebook page called "Lest We Forget.....Obeth Remembered," with around 50 people that have joined. We have had good response to our workdays. I have had wonderful support from the park staff. I am so thankful for all at Lake James State Park who are helping protect this cemetery. These people lived and loved and had families. They should not be forgotten. A favorite quote: No-one ever really dies until the last person forgets to remember them.

Editor's note: This article has been excerpted and modified from a more lengthy and complete description of the history, restoration and future of the Obeth Cemetery as Mrs. Kiser sees it.

NATURE NOTES



It seems like a relief to finally turn the page on the year that was. Here's to hoping for a healthy and happy 2021.

If there's one constant everyone can rely on it is Nature's unwavering march through the seasons.

For instance, if we were to go hiking today on the Paddy's Creek Trail we would almost certainly run

into a mixed feeding flock of songbirds. A "mixed feeding flock" is the term birdwatchers use to describe a loosely-associated group of birds comprised of different species. These congregations typically happen during winter and around these parts will often include Carolina chickadees, tufted titmice, northern cardinals, downy woodpeckers, white-breasted nuthatches and both ruby-crowned and golden-crowned kinglets.

While the saying "birds of a feather stick together" is often the case, these diverse flocks come together in cooperation to benefit all. As a mixed feeding flock moves through the woods, its individual members are on the lookout for food and predators. Discovery of either is critically important for survival of all during these coldest and hardest months of the year.

Our hike would also include plenty of opportunities to see white-tailed deer. Deer are common throughout the park, but they are especially visible during winter when food abundance is low and they spent more time and energy on their feet looking for it. By now most of the acorns and all the soft fruits like persimmons and crabapples have been consumed and the deer must make do with grasses and browse. In particularly harsh winters, deer will go so far as to eat rhododendron leaves and other hard-to-digest plant material.

The days are short, but here at the park you can experience so much in the peace and solitude of Nature. We're all sick and tired of being cooped up so why not tie on your hiking boots and take the family on a stroll? Just make sure you respect your fellow hikers and keep your distance. There's room for everyone. See you on the trail.

WHO WE ARE

A group formed in 2010, made up of dedicated people work 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
- Robert Hunter - Vice President
- Mike Sewell - Secretary
- Annette Bryant - Membership Coordinator
- 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
- Jim Williams - Member at Large
- Mickey Lewis - Member at Large
- Charles Abernathy - Member at Large
- Bryant Lindsey - Member at Large
- Blair Melton - Member at Large
- Pete Colwell - Member at Large
- Nancy Connelly - Member at Large

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

YEAR OF THE BEETLE



A new year means a new opportunity to learn about the natural world around us. For more than a decade, North Carolina State Parks has dedicated an annual campaign to some fascinating group of critters, plants or natural process and given it “Year of ...” status. Welcome to 2021, Year of the Beetle.

If one were to consider all known animal life forms on planet Earth, beetles would make up about a quarter of them. There are approximately 400,000 species of beetles described by science and new ones are frequently discovered and added to the incredibly diverse family known as Coleoptera.

Some beetles are familiar and easily recognized, like fireflies, lady bugs, weevils and click beetles. Many, many others are strange and mysterious. In eastern North America there are estimated to be 14,000 different species of beetles. They can be found in virtually every habitat type; from pine forests to open grasslands to underground to lakes and streams. There are even beetles that exist only on oceanfront beach sands.

All beetles share some characteristics in common. Beetles are insects. They have six legs and three body segments; the head, thorax and abdomen. Beetles are wrapped in a hard outer layer called an exoskeleton, that serves as both skeleton and skin. Nearly all beetles, at least in their adult phase, have hardened wings that cover and protect the more delicate, membranous flight wings.

Depending on what they eat, beetles sport a variety of mouthparts to grasp, chew or capture their food. Predatory beetles have sharp, scissor-like mandibles while other types sip tree sap through straw-like appendages.

Right now, many beetles are stashed away underneath piles of dead leaves, behind tree bark or buried in the ground to avoid the killing freezes of winter. We’ve got a couple of months to learn a few fun facts before these incredible insects reemerge when the air and earth warms.

It’s going to be a fun journey.

TREES FOR TRASH



On December 12 a dedicated crew of volunteers set about planting 50 native trees and shrubs throughout the Paddy's Creek Area of Lake James State Park. Representing the Lake James Area Wildlife and Nature Association (LAWNS) and the North Carolina Wildlife Federation, these 15 hard-working folks rolled up their sleeves and put in 60 work-hours to beautify the grounds and improve habitat for wildlife.

The donation of trees and shrubs came through the Trash for Trees program, administered by the NCWF, which credits volunteer organizations with one native planting for every 25 pounds of trash removed from a public space. The annual Lake James Clean-Up, hosting in March, accounts for the large number of plants awarded to LAWNS.

CLAY'S CORNER GROWTH AND CHANGE

Things are changing at Lake James State Park, just as things always seem to do. In the past couple of years, the park staff family has seen retirements, promotions, new employees, births and deaths. Possibly the biggest change we are undergoing as of late is the construction of a 6,000-square-foot visitor center that will house new offices, an exhibit hall, gift shop and classroom.

The rules and regulations enforced by rangers within the park have also seen some important changes during the past several years.

Since 1988, North Carolina State Park Rangers have been commissioned as law enforcement officers. They receive the same training and carry the same powers of arrest, search and seizure as any other state or local law enforcement agency. Rangers are charged with the protection of natural resources and facilities within the state park, as well as visitor protection and safety. When necessary, rangers have access to any general statute on the books in the state of North Carolina, as well as a special set of rules and regulations strictly governing state park property. Falling under the North Carolina Administrative Code, these rules govern such things as the protection of plants and animals within the park, the use of alcohol inside the park, carrying firearms in the park, and when and where you can have a fire or camp. These are just a few of the regulations rangers must be familiar with, clearly communicate to visitors and enforce. Enforcement is most often



accomplished with simple warnings or citations when necessary.

Since their inception, a violation of these regulations has been a Class 3 misdemeanor, carrying a noticeable fine and court cost. While the occasional violator needs some hard-hitting consequences, that is not the case for the vast majority of interactions that rangers have with the general public each year. Education and verbal warnings far exceed any other actions that are necessary to protect the park and its visitors. Even when a verbal warning does not suffice, it's often possible to avoid charging someone with a misdemeanor. We have long recognized this and thankfully, at our recommendation, state legislators have as well. With guidance from NC State Parks, the legislature recently voted to reduce several park regulations to infractions rather than misdemeanors. This action in no way reduces the importance of the regulations affected, but it does significantly reduce the fines and court cost for violating them.

Some of the regulations you'll see as infractions now are: parking, fishing and swimming in undesignated areas, taking glassware onto the beach area, washing animals, clothes or vehicles within the park and operating your boat or canoe inside the swimming area. All are common offenses that rangers encounter throughout the park system. While usually not a problem at Lake James State Park, parking is a hot commodity at some parks throughout the state. Arrive early if you plan to visit, especially on a summer weekend or holiday, and park in a designated parking space – not on the grass, on the side of the road or in a way that would impede traffic in any way. All other violations of park regulations still remain a misdemeanor. For some light reading, you can review them at www.ncparks.gov/parkrules.

As times change, visitation increases and technology improves it's sometimes necessary that we add regulations. We've recently added or are considering rules regarding drones, electric bikes, carrying concealed firearms and visitors entering or remaining in the park after posted operating hours. Issuing citations is not a task that rangers take lightly, but we will not hesitate to protect the people's park. Protecting these naturally wonderful and wild places for generations to come is an endeavor that is well worth it. We hope you enjoy your state parks. We rangers certainly do enjoy protecting them. One thing is certain regardless; growth and change will always be a part of the equation.

VISITOR CENTER UPDATE



PROGRESS:

- Exterior wall framing is mostly complete
- Interior wall framing is mostly complete
- Electrical wall rough-ins are well underway
- Plumbing rough-ins are well underway

COMING NEXT:

- Complete interior light gauge framing
- Pour amphitheater middle seat wall
- Arrival of bridge

TRAIL BOSSES



During the fall and winter of 2020, Lake James State Park benefitted from the hard work and expertise of a Conservation Corp North Carolina trail crew. During it's 16 days laboring at the Paddy's Creek Area, the CCNC crew assisted park trail maintenance mechanic Andrew Carswell in cutting out a new, 1.3-mile multi-use trail that will connect the new Fonta Flora State Trail bridge to the existing mountain bike trail system. CCNC engages motivated young adults to complete challenging and impactful conservation service projects.

Pictured from the left are: Alexis Silva, Madeline Coggins, Igor Galiev, Luke Knight, Andrew Carswell and Emily Kersher.

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 January are 7 a.m. until 8 p.m and for February are 7 a.m. until 7 p.m.
- At the time of this writing, the swimming area at Paddy's Creek remains closed. Concessions and canoe/kayak rentals are suspended.
- The Paddy's Creek Area office and gift shop is open everyday, from 9 a.m. until 5:30 p.m.
- The Catawba River Area office and gift shop is open Monday - Friday, from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. and is closed Saturdays and Sundays.

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.