



FRIENDS GROUP ICE FESTIVAL SUCCESS



In the hours before a major winter snowstorm, the Friends of Lake James State Park hosted its most successful public fundraising event since the group formed in 2010. The inaugural Lake James Ice Festival welcomed 250 patrons to the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway and took in around \$5,000 for trail improvement projects.

The draw for such enthusiastic support was ice sculptor Aaron Costic and 34 of his nature-inspired, frozen works of art. The gallery of sculptures set the backdrop for a wintery evening of celebration, complete with roaring bonfires, local catering and excited anticipation for the impending snow.

All but three of the sculptures, weighing more than 100 pounds apiece, were created and shipped from Costic's Elegant Ice Creations studio in Ohio. To complete the gallery, Costic

sculpted the final pieces in front of festival-goers in a dazzling choreography of lights, music and clouds of flying frozen crystals.

"The festival came together in large part because of personal connections that led the Friends group to Aaron and his wife, Sarah, who recently joined our board of trustees," said Lake James State Park Superintendent Nora Coffey. "Once we established the concept and decided to move forward with it, the response we got from our supporters was overwhelmingly positive."

Readers can anticipate the Ice Festival to become a regular event in the coming years as organizers look to expand and improve on what has been a most auspicious start.

NATURE NOTES

After a decidedly “normal” winter, complete with a major snowstorm and extended periods of nighttime lows in the 30s, it’s understandable for folks to be excited about spring.

The natural world is excited about spring too. Birds are migrating North and it seems like new species are arriving at the park on a daily basis. It started with the first



vanguard of purple martins that reached western North Carolina nearing the end of February. These large, iridescent swallows are much-beloved for their well-deserved reputation for eating harmful bugs. Humans have forged partnerships with these birds since before European colonization of the continent, when native American tribes would string hollowed out gourds between poles to attract them to nest. Martins, which nest in colonies, rely on access to some kind of cavity in which to lay their eggs. Modern bird enthusiasts still use gourds to encourage purple

martins to take up residence on their properties, but they also deploy large “condo” style birdboxes to give the birds the high-density housing they prefer.

As they wing their way from the wintering territory in the Amazon, it’s the male martins that arrive first. The males will locate and claim prime nesting sites and have everything ready for the females to get there a couple of weeks later.

Ospreys are another early spring migrant that are especially visible around the lake. Although they are similar in appearance to the region’s nesting bald eagles, ospreys are decidedly smaller, with white underparts and a bold, dark stripe through their eye. Like eagles, ospreys predominantly prey on fish, which they snatch from the surface with their long and wickedly sharp talons.

The shoreline around the lake is getting greener as dormant trees and plants soak in the longer days and warming soil. Red buds and dogwoods are leading the charge, with red maples and tulips poplars filling in behind them. By mid-May, the transformation from winter grays to summer greens will be complete.

It’s time to throw off your winter coats and grab your hiking stick. What a wonderful time of year to be on the trails at Lake James State Park. Hope to see you there.

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

Mike Sewell - Secretary

Annette Bryant - Membership Coordinator

Robert Hunter - Ex Officio Member

Randall Conley - Member at Large

George Milner - Member at Large

Greg Norell - Member at Large

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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

Teena Fox - Member at Large

Pete Colwell - Member at Large

Nancy Connelly - Member at Large

Sarah Costic - Member at Large

Shane Prisby - Member at Large

Beth Heile - Member at Large

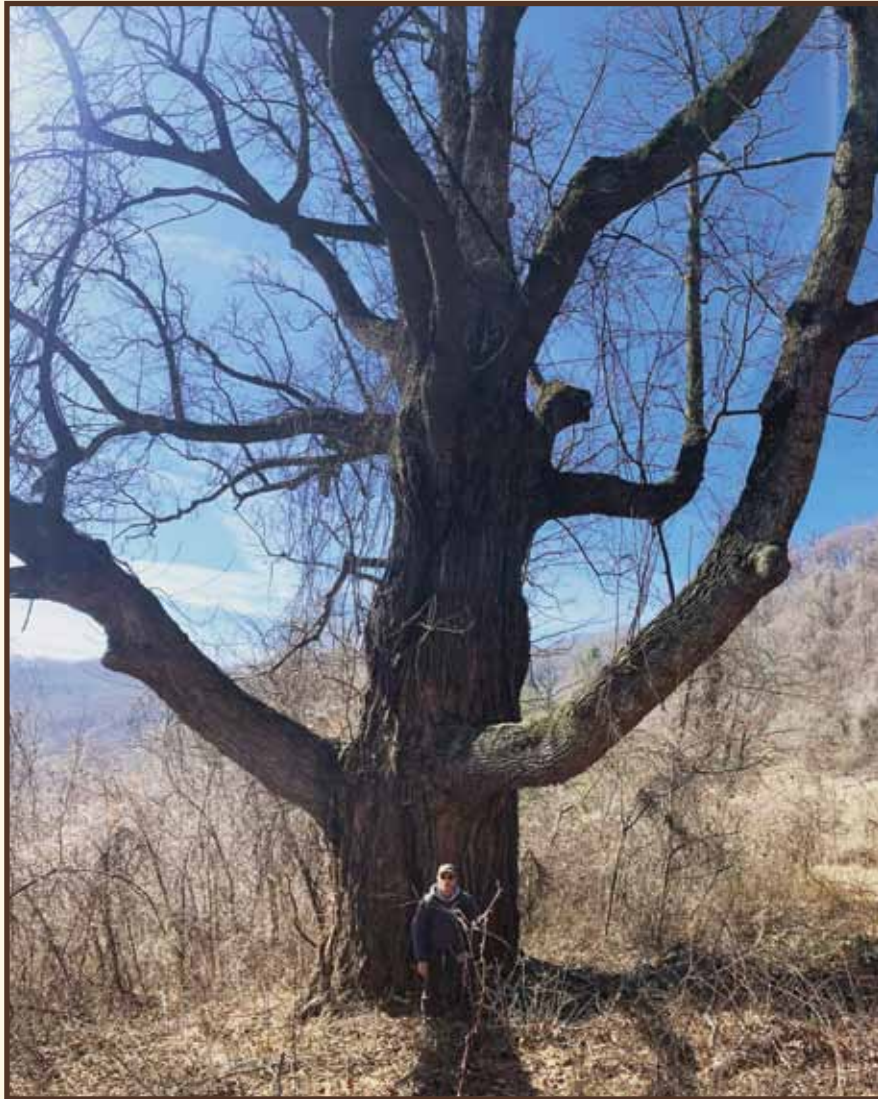
To contact the Friends of Lake James State Park Group please email info@lakejamesstatepark.org.

YEAR OF THE TREE

In case you didn't notice it in the most recent state budget, North Carolina has plans to open several new state parks and natural areas in the coming months. That's good news for the habitats and ecosystems that will be protected and preserved and for the people of North Carolina who will have new opportunities to access these areas of natural and cultural significance.

New property means new land surveys and clearly marked boundaries to convey what is and is not state land.

During a recent boundary marking effort at a new state park unit in western North Carolina, this writer and the work crew he was attached to was introduced to a tulip tree, or yellow-poplar, of such exceptional size and stature that it brought up the question – what's the largest poplar tree in North Carolina? The answer, according to the N.C. Forest Service champion tree registry is a 144-foot behemoth in Greene County with a circumference of nearly 23 feet. The boundary marking team was not equipped to measure the specimen before it on the Buncombe/Haywood county line, but it very well could give the currently recognized state champion a run for its money.



In the eastern United States, hardwood forests can achieve “old growth” status in 150 years without any human disturbance, and locations that meet the criteria have become exceedingly rare. In the Blue Ridge Mountains of the Southeast, only 1.5% of the landscape is considered to be old growth.

Not all old trees grow within old growth forests. Many are found in urban environments, cemeteries and family-owned pasturelands. The NCFS champion tree registry identifies the largest individuals of hundreds of native and naturalized species. The list can

be found at ncforestservice.gov/Urban/nc_champion_big_trees_database.

Recognizing old trees gives them value for their ties to the past. The oldest known tree in North Carolina is a bald cypress on the Black River that radio-carbon dating shows to be around 2,624-years-old – that's 605 B.C. The fact that we live among such ancient organisms is a sobering reminder of the briefness of human life and the duty we have to preserve and protect these living emissaries from the past.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT WHY CAMPING MATTERS

For the past two years I have had the honor and fun of introducing readers to recipes I felt may enrich their camping experience. As an ode to the possibilities for cuisine, I have scoured books and memories to bring forth a recipe for your culinary enrichment. As a humble devotee to the outdoors, I would like to now shift our focus to the broader world of camping and everything else it entails beyond the cook fire. I hope to share tips and knowledge I have obtained first hand through trials and many, many errors. As I type, I recall these experiences...

My head was covered in spaghetti sauce and I was lying at the bottom of a large dumpster in Glacier National Park. My wife, whom I had married one month prior, was standing outside the garbage bin rolling with laughter. I was in a state of disbelief because she was supposed to have been holding my feet as I reached into the dumpster to retrieve a camping dish I had just dropped inside. We were at the park on our honeymoon, camping our way across our dream road trip. It was from the bottom of this dumpster, in between my own fits of laughter, that I reminded her of our current situation. Northern Montana in late September sees a beautiful spectrum of color in the leaves, a crisp cool breeze foretelling of the winter to come and an incomparable need to gorge on calories for *Ursus horribilis*, aka Grizz, aka the Grizzly Bear before hibernating. Grizz would be out there looking for food that night and she was sharing a tent with me.

Early spring in Grand Tetons National Park at a campsite next to Jenny Lake. An early evening storm had just ripped

through the area. My best friend Dan and I were sitting at a picnic table in the still heavy air. The incense of juniper smoke from the firepit hung over our heads. The shadows from our campfire danced against the canopy of Ponderosa pines towering above our temporary home. Dan had brought an ipod and speaker with him and was softly playing a live album by one of his favorite bands. The lead singer's stage banter was hilarious and we laughed non-stop. We shared stories of what was going on in our lives. We sat in the quiet that is comfortable and familiar to old friends and to the mountains. Dan and I had shared so many camps and fires together throughout our years. It was our routine to meet this way. This night in the Tetons stood over time as one of our finest together. We reminisced on it years later when I traveled to Chicago to say my final goodbye. If only we could go back and share that fire again. The mountains were calling and we needed to go. The hills hadn't aged in the ways that we had and they were still ours for the taking. Dan passed away from cancer 10 days after I said goodbye; seven days after his 40th birthday. It is now only the memory of him that I can talk to anymore.

A life is composed of moments and memories and it is not how a person dies that matters, but rather how they chose to live. Our society, over the last few years, has (hopefully) gained an appreciation for the true meaning of the word "moment." In the blink of an eye



things can change, opportunities can pass. We then find ourselves lamenting on our misfortune in comparison to the good times we had. The vivid memories stand out the brightest. Smells and tastes come to mind yet we can't recall them fully. The only thing that is certain is that we are aware of an insatiable need to experience them again. To go back. A campground serves as a place to not only set up a tent and sleep on the ground. It is the setting for good meals, laughs shared, fears realized and memories to be made. A campsite serves as the launching place of these future memories. Camping matters because it may not be how we spend all our time, just some of our best times. To be able to look back and recall a night spent under the stars can be priceless. With fondness we ruminate on a moment with good food, a friendly breeze, the call of the wild, a laugh or two. These experiences cannot be manufactured. They simply happen. The recipe for this memory needs only a place in nature and a willingness to be vulnerable and open to the moment. A patch of dirt is calling and I must go.

Happy camping my friends.

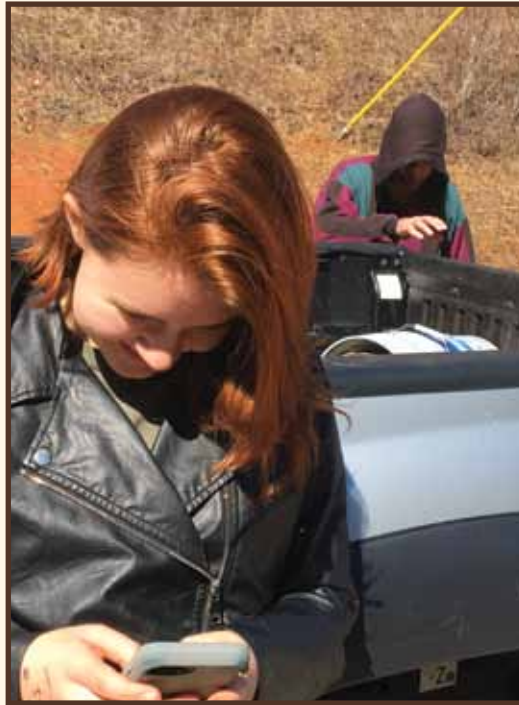
-Ranger Brian Vick

CLAY'S CORNER SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Previously in Clay's Corner we've discussed the fact that we are our own first responders. Because each of us will occasionally face threats that are immediate, we should take the steps necessary to protect ourselves. Today we'll consider a topic that will hopefully help you avoid those threats altogether. I'll explain some simple techniques of Situational Awareness and how you can practice them in a way that is easily maintained. Louis Pasteur told us that "Chance favors the prepared mind," so what can you do today to harden yourself and your family against harm?

Situational awareness is little more than paying attention to what's going on around you in terms of your location and whether anyone or anything is a danger to your safety. It is a general mentality that can be practiced by anyone and is used in daily decision making to identify dangerous situations. Awareness of the potential for threats is paramount. Being oblivious to danger will greatly reduce your likelihood of avoiding it. You must also recognize that no one is more responsible for your safety than you.

Situational Awareness involves being aware of the events and people in your immediate area, so that threats do not go unnoticed, while at the same time carrying on with the tasks of daily life. There are several levels of awareness that you should



be familiar with and practice on a daily basis. On the accompanying chart, they are labeled as colors that indicate the level of attention you are giving to your surroundings or to a specific threat. They begin at White: Relaxed, unaware or tuned out. Next is Yellow: Relaxed, but alert to your surroundings. This is where you should be anytime you are away from your home. Then

there is Orange: You have identified some form of potential danger and are attempting to evaluate or avoid it. Orange is a heightened level of awareness and could quickly descend into Red: A condition in which you have verified that there is a threat to your safety and are actively attempting to neutralize it or avoid harm.

Selecting the appropriate level for your current circumstances is critical. Every human needs rest at some point during the day and it is certainly fine to remain in condition white while sleeping or relaxing in your home. Where we get into trouble is when we choose to stroll around outside our homes while being completely tuned out and unaware of potential danger.

Condition yellow requires little energy and can easily be maintained for an 8-to 12-hour workday. It allows you to enjoy life while also guarding against harm. However, an important point here is that we should never live our lives obsessed about our safety or in a state of paranoia. It is impossible to maintain a level of intensive alertness outside of

short periods. Maintaining condition yellow will allow you to recognize a threat at a distance and avoid it before escalating your response. When we intentionally enter dangerous areas or engage in activities like using an ATM or walking home at night, we should certainly increase our awareness.

White	Relaxed and completely unaware.
Yellow	Relaxed but aware. Minimum acceptable level when in public or carrying a firearm.
Orange	Potential threat identified. Attempt to verify, evade if necessary.
Red	Threat verified. Execute necessary response.

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SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Using situational awareness techniques can keep you out of trouble. This is not only about identifying threats, but deterring them. Stand up straight, keep your head up, glance at others and your intended path. Don't slouch, stare downward or at your phone, or overly avoid eye contact. If you can keep from looking like the perfect victim then maybe you aren't. Remember, avoidance is always your best option.

If you are attacked or threatened with a deadly weapon you have three options: comply, run or fight. There are no hard and fast rules for self-defense, you must decide the best course of action based on your physical capabilities, location, proximity to help and your perceived

chance of success. Your safest options are most likely to comply by turning over valuables to the bad guy or running if help is nearby. Try stalling for more time or distracting the assailant so you have an opportunity to flee toward open businesses or crowds of people for help, all while yelling to attract attention. If you cannot escape you may be forced to fight, but know that a half-hearted attempt at defense here could be worse than no attempt at all. If possible, create distance between you and the attacker and block any strikes with whatever is in your hands, a purse, backpack or umbrella. Attempt to flee behind a hard object like a tree, lamp post or vehicle for some protection.

If you'd like to learn more about situational awareness join myself and Ranger Brian Vick as we discuss situational awareness techniques on April 16 at 1 p.m. in the west picnic shelter at the Paddy's Creek Area of Lake James State Park



*“the true meaning of life is to plant trees
under whose shade you do not expect to sit”*

—Nelson Henderson

VEHICLE BREAK-INS

In addition to our article on situational awareness, the staff of Lake James State Park would like to remind everyone that with the approach of summer comes a season of increased thefts from vehicles. We experience this almost every year at our boat ramps and other remote park areas. The vast majority of break-ins involve a broken window and stolen purse or toolbox that was clearly visible from outside the vehicle. Please secure all valuables in your trunk or keep them with you while visiting the park.

Follow these suggestions to help prevent vehicle theft and theft from vehicles:

- Don't leave valuables in plain view.
- If valuables need to be left in your vehicle, place them in your trunk prior to arriving at your destination.
- Completely close all car windows.
- Take out removable radios and faceplates.
- Lock your vehicle and take the keys out.
- Avoid parking between large vehicles (they provide cover for thieves).
- Try to park in well-lit areas close to your destination.
- Engrave expensive accessories.
- Avoid leaving your vehicle running while unattended (especially while warming the vehicle).



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 March and April are 7 a.m. until 9 p.m. On May 1, the park gates will close at 10 p.m.
- The swimming area at Paddy's Creek is scheduled to open May 1. Concessions and canoe/kayak rentals will reopen sometime during May, depending on staffing.
- The boat access area at Hidden Cove is now open. Gate hours are 7 a.m. until 8 p.m. The area will close at 9 p.m. starting May 1.
- The Paddy's Creek Area office and gift shop is open Wednesday through Sunday, from 9 a.m. until 5:30 p.m.
- The Catawba River Area office and gift shop is open every day, from 8 a.m. until 4:30 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.