



# VISITOR CENTER UPDATE!

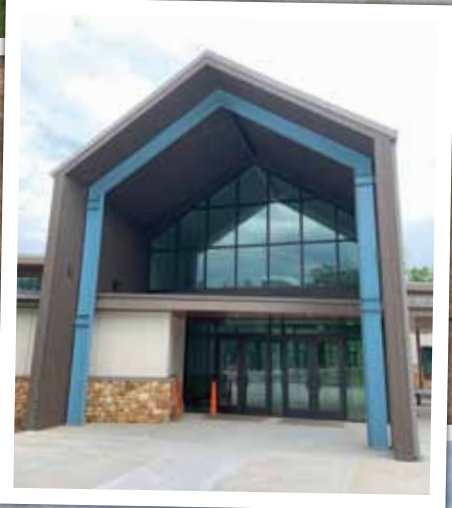
*Opening*  
~~Spring 2021!~~  
*(We are mostly pretty sure.)*

*Opening*  
~~Summer 2021!~~  
*(We mean it this time.)*

*Opening*  
~~Fall 2021!~~  
*(Ummm...we think.)*

*Opening*  
~~Winter 2022!~~  
*(No. Really. We're serious.)*

*Opening*  
~~Fall 2022!~~  
*(We hope.)*



The long-awaited visitor center is nearly complete. Finishing touches to the interior and exterior will be completed throughout the summer and staff offices will transition to the new building as soon as an occupancy permit is approved. We can't wait to show you this exciting and innovative center for education and interpretation of Lake James State Park's incredible natural and historical story. Please be patient and continue to respect the closure of the visitor center roadway, building and Mills Creek bridge.

## NATURE NOTES

As we enter the busiest season of the year at Lake James State Park, it's a good time to soak up the last few days of spring before diving into summer. The last two months have been kind to the plants and animals living in the part. The trees leafed out on schedule with the songbird migration, providing those weary feathered travelers with the caterpillars and spiders they need to fuel the rest of their journey north. Not all



neotropical migrants continued onward. Several species stayed behind to nest and rear their young within the boundaries of the park. A morning hike will reveal them singing their territorial songs and though they are harder to find now that the canopy has leafed out, it's still possible, with some persistence and keen eyes, to spot northern parulas, hooded warblers, Louisiana waterthrush, wood thrush and great-crested flycatchers.

White-tailed deer will begin dropping their fawns by early June, so motorists inside the park need to be especially careful driving the winding roads. Where there are does, there will be fawns, so be equally aware of the deer you don't see when a doe crosses the road.

Hikers should also keep baby birds and animals in mind during their treks through the woods. Fawns, turkey hatchlings, baby birds and froglets are out and about, learning how to walk, fly, hop, feed themselves and everything else that goes into being a wild critter. Every year, well-intentioned folks pick up unsuspecting babies with the idea they've been abandoned by their natural mothers or fallen from their nests. In some rare instances that may actually be true, but the majority of the time these babies are perfectly fine and simply waiting for Mom to come back with some food or emerge from hiding after the humans leave. It is always better to leave these babies in their natural environment where they belong, and it is in fact illegal to disturb, move or harm any rock, plant or animal within a state park.

Reptiles and amphibians are active this time of year and it's not uncommon to cross paths with a black rat snake, eastern box turtle or toad when you're out hiking the trails. These animals are living proof of the healthy environment we all enjoy at Lake James State Park. Make sure you're being a good steward of the land and animals by packing out your trash, staying on the established trails and keeping your dog on a leash. Enjoy the season everyone. Hope to see you out 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

**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

**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

**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](mailto:info@lakejamesstatepark.org).

## YEAR OF THE TREE LIFE-GIVERS IN DEATH

Who doesn't love a tree? Trees provide shade from the sun. They protect soils from erosion with their roots. They soak up rainwater and minimize flooding. Trees produce leaves, berries and nuts that other organisms eat to survive. They store carbon dioxide and release oxygen into the atmosphere. And, while accomplishing all of these important functions for the environment, trees are just darned beautiful to look at.

The importance of trees to the environment doesn't end in death. Dead and dying trees play a critical role to myriad creatures, both great and small, and it's time we start recognizing that.

When a tree dies the process of decay softens the wood fibers and curls the bark away from the trunk. The resulting conditions are ripe for home-building for a variety of critters, starting with the decomposers; insects and fungi (see related article on page 6). Beetle grubs, ants and termites are in turn food for insectivores like woodpeckers, fence lizards, tree frogs and black bears.

Woodpeckers also use dead trees to chip out cavities in which to lay their eggs and raise their young. Once the woodpeckers move on, their nest holes remain and provide critical real



estate for an incredible variety of critters that can't make their own cavities, but need them for nesting or shelter.

A short list of animals that take advantage of abandoned woodpecker cavities includes; wood ducks, great-crested flycatchers, screech owls, eastern bluebirds, southern flying squirrels, black rat snakes and some types of bats – and that's barely scratching the surface.

In fact, a birdhouse is simply an artificial tree cavity meant to attract and benefit cavity nesters. The cheap, zero-maintenance, natural option to bird houses? Leave dead trees standing and let them do their jobs. Of course, there are times

when safety to people and property take precedence over wildlife habitat, but whenever it's possible, allowing trees to decay naturally over time provides tremendous benefits to critters.

Remember, even in death, a tree hasn't given everything it has to give to the environment and allowing that process to take place is one of the most-beneficial things we can do for the birds and animals we hold so dear.

# — Ranger Poets —

I suddenly found myself looking at my mother.  
It had been fourteen years since her body had let go.  
Her face now gently lit by the campfires glow.  
No more fields with tears for rain  
And in a valley of no pain  
I'd found her.  
Sitting behind her in a chair  
Always content, and just happily there  
was the father of mine gone 12 years prior.  
We locked eyes. He nodded. I knew he was proud.  
The ultimate soul gratifier.  
In this back of beyond kneeling in front of the pyre  
Arms gently stoking the rock encircled fire  
Was my best friend who'd adventured by my side countless years.  
At this time and finally without the agony and accompaniment of tears;  
He stood.  
There was one more there.  
He who the 21 guns had saluted the year before  
Walked over to me.  
We embraced.  
Brothers re-bonded and for ever more.

I awoke.  
My flame still burned.  
The trees kept their leaves.  
My children and wife lay asleep.  
I thanked the wind for bringing me it's momentary breeze.  
Always thankful for the campfire.

—Ranger Brian

The Trees whisper softly to the falling leaves.  
Take heart young men,  
You're sent as soldiers,  
The hungry you will feed.

The branches murmur rhythmically to the  
sprouting seed.  
Be courageous little ladies,  
The leaves will hide you from the frost,  
Much nurture you will need.

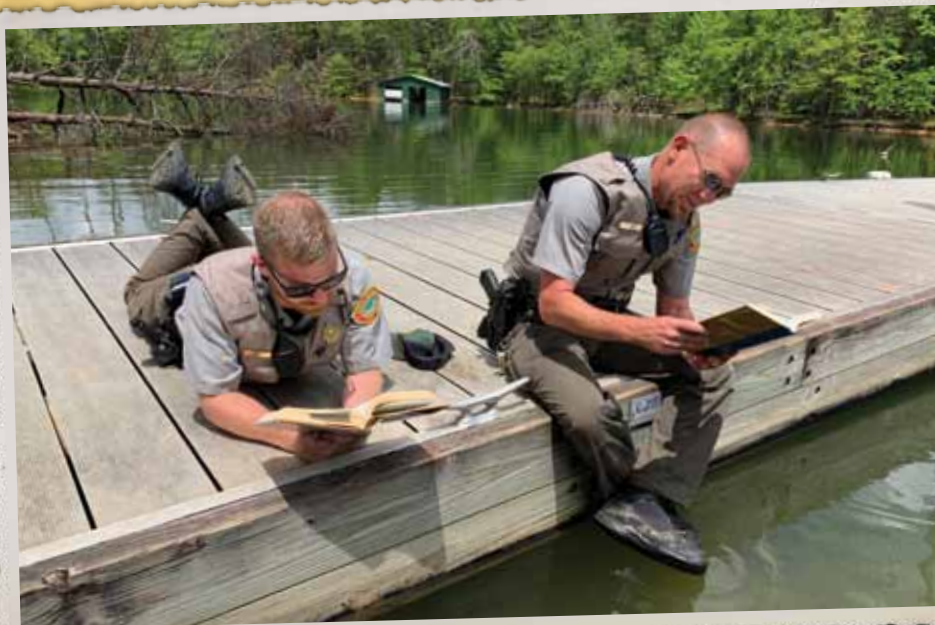
The trees shout out to leaves of old,  
Be bold you sentinels of renown,  
Where you go you go to die,  
And with your lives you will provide.

The leaves shout back,  
If we must die then let it be of noble fashion,  
That we may provide a steady ration,  
To all who follow in our faction.

The seeds reach up from dark and duff,  
Battle hardened noon and night.  
They climb through mangled hedge and fire,  
To reach the canopy of light.

The tree looms tall,  
As her leaves fall.  
Sending soldiers out to war,  
Telling them what they'd heard before.

—Ranger Clay



The Dockside Poet's Society  
(Ranger Brian and Ranger  
Clay) recently held it's round  
table on a rectangular dock.

# Camping with Vick



I like sleeping. It's one of those activities I wish I could do more of, but I never seem to get around to. I also like money. I wish I had more, but I am a park ranger and making lots of money isn't in the job description. Like all of you, I have to make the most of my financial reality as well as what time I have for recreation. As I see the cost of camping gear go through the roof in correlation with people chasing the "bigger and better," I am reminded of the need to keep it simple.



A good understanding of sleeping bags and sleep pads is paramount to a good camping sleep experience (well, that and having considerate camp neighbors). It can all come down to temperature.

A sleeping pad's "R" value measures the pad's capacity to resist heat flow. The higher a pad's R value, the better you can expect it to insulate you. For example, the simple foam sleep pad, which measures around an inch thick, has a very low R value. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being most comfortable, the foam pad falls at around a 1.4. This means it won't hold your body heat. A 3-and-1/2-inch thick, self-inflating sleep pad however, has an R value of 6, meaning it has a higher temperature threshold. For the different seasons of the year a pad's R value should be paired with a temperature-appropriate sleeping bag.

Traditionally in the United States, a sleeping bag's temperature rating indicates the lowest temperature at which the sleep sack will keep the average sleeper warm. However, no true temperature standard exists so there is no accounting for variables such as a person's metabolism, what they are wearing to bed and yes, what type of sleeping pad they have. Retailers will often market bags on how many seasons they can be used. A four-season, 10-degree mummy bag in layman's terms means warmth. Lots of it.

It's smart to want to sleep in comfort during that hot and humid, mid-August camping trip. Instead of your super-expensive, uber thick sleeping bag, try pairing that 3 -1/2-inch pad with a simple bed sheet. The price tag and label may not deem it a "camping" sheet, but I promise you, it will work great.

# FUNGUS P.I. TREE HEALTH DETECTIVE

This year NC State Parks is celebrating the Year of the Tree, and we at Lake James State Park are excited to be part of the celebration. We love our trees, even conducting prescribed burns to help native trees, such as hickories and Table Mountain pines, thrive, and we are often on the lookout for hazard trees, photogenic trees, and even champion trees.

For those of us who did not study forestry at school, though, it may be hard to determine how healthy a tree really is. We may assume the best if green leaves shade the trails and if no lightning scars suggest weather-related trauma. An interesting forest ally can help us know the full story, though. Without speaking, a fungus can tell us more about the plants around it than one might think possible.

For instance, take a look at these American Caesar mushrooms (*Amanita jacksonii*). These beauties bring color to the forest floor, and while many mushrooms in this family are poisonous to humans, they are quite beneficial to trees. Trading their minerals and other nutrients for a tree's carbohydrates, the American Caesar is a flashy indicator of good forest health.

Another indicator of healthy trees is the appearance of Dead Man's Fist (*Pisolithus arhizus*). Sure, the nickname is creepy,

but seeing this weird puffball means healthy trees are nearby. These mushrooms fruit in odd places, such as amongst gravel or through asphalt, and they form a symbiotic or mutually beneficial relationship with trees.

On other hand, the Jack O'Lantern mushroom (*Omphalotus illudens*) is a harbinger of doom. Fruiting around Halloween, these mushrooms are a fun find, owing to their bright orange color and green spores that glow in the dark. If you find these poisonous mushrooms in the woods, though, they are most likely attached to a tree that is dying (or already dead).

Likewise, the Hemlock Polypore (*Ganoderma tsugae*) indicates poor tree health in the vicinity. As the name suggests, these mushrooms grow on hemlock trees, or rather, dying hemlock trees. We have lost many Hemlock trees to the woolly adelgid, and the Hemlock Polypore mushrooms sometimes serve as gravestones for once majestic trees.

So, when you visit the park this summer, be sure to look up to appreciate the towering trunks and leafy branches of the many trees protected therein. But also look down to see what forest prognosis our fungal detectives might be sharing.



**AMERICAN CAESAR**



**DEAD MAN'S FIST**



**JACK O' LANTERN**



**AMERICAN HEMLOCK**

## SAVE THE DATE

### June 4-5 – "War at Our Doorstep"

#### – Paddy's Creek Area

Come join the living history reenactment "War at Our Doorstep," to take place June 4-5 at the Paddy's Creek Area day use area at Lake James State Park.

Demonstrators and reenactors will interpret stories from the American Revolution, with characters representing life for those Americans behind the front lines. A period encampment will be erected midday, June 4, and run through 4 p.m., June 5. Interpretive stations throughout the camp will include gunpowder manufacturing, civilian doctors and women in military medicine, and Moravians, Quakers and Pacifist communities in North Carolina during the war.

The event is held in cooperation with the Friends of Lake James Park, the National Park Service and the Overmountain Victory Trail Association.

Lake James State Park Celebrates  
*Juneteenth*  
FRIDAY, JUNE 17

**JUNETEENTH** *Field Day*

**Friday, June 17, 2022**  
**10:00 am - 4:00 pm**  
**Lake James State Park's  
PADDY'S CREEK ACCESS**

7321 N.C. 126  
Nebo, NC 28761

**ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:**

- Story Trail Hikes
- Swimming
- Fishing
- Canoeing
- Kayaking
- Food
- and more!

*Brought to you by: West Marion Community Forum and Friends of Lake James State Park*

## 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 June through August are 7 a.m. until 10 p.m.
- The swimming area at Paddy's Creek is open 10 a.m. through 6 p.m. daily. The concessions stand and canoe and kayak rentals are also operating 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Swimming is \$6 for adults, \$4 for children ages 12 and under.
- The boat access area at Hidden Cove is open from 7 a.m. until 9 p.m.
- Paddy's Creek Area office and gift shop is open 9:30 a.m. – 6 p.m.
- Catawba River Area office and gift shop is open 8 a.m. – 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](http://www.lakejamesstatepark.org) or email [info@lakejamesstatepark.org](mailto: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.*