

## LAKE JAMES LOOP TRAIL UPDATE

The Lake James area in western Burke County has provided recreational amenities for local residents and visitors since the lake's creation in the early 1920s. Water based recreational activities and hunting have been the primary uses of the lake and surrounding lands. More recently, expansion of Lake James State Park has allowed valuable public access to this recreational asset, and it has created additional recreational opportunities, including hiking and future mountain bike trails. Bicyclists and runners also use the roads

that travel around the lake on a regular basis.

In the past, county planning documents and various groups have discussed and explored creating a natural surface trail that circles the lake. Burke County Community Development staff and various stakeholders are currently creating a master plan for this 20 plus mile trail. The purpose of the master plan is to determine the most sustainable alignment for a multiple-use trail that provides pedestrians and bicyclists of all abilities a safe

and legal route to circumnavigate Lake James, incorporates multiple access points and facilities, and allows users to experience the natural diversity of the area. The creation of this community and regional asset will provide recreational opportunities and alternative transportation options for local residents and visitors and promote tourism and low infrastructure economic development within Burke County and the surrounding region.

*For more information contact the Burke County Community Development Department at 828-764-9030.*

If you would like to receive our monthly events list, contact Nora Coffey at [nora.coffey@ncparks.gov](mailto:nora.coffey@ncparks.gov). Please note: In an effort to reduce idle time, please make a reasonable effort to arrive a few minutes before the times set for programs.

**OVERMOUNTAIN VICTORY TRAIL HIKE - Saturday, Feb. 1**

Come meet Park Ranger Clay Veasey as he leads a hike along the nationally recognized Overmountain Victory Trail. The hike is rated as easy and will be under 2 miles in length. Please meet at the Paddy's Creek Bridge, located in the Paddy's Creek Area of the park. Bring appropriate hiking gear and be prepared to start at 10 a.m.

**WATERFOWL HIKE - Sunday, Feb. 2**

Many bird species call Lake James home during the winter months. Meet Park Ranger Clay Veasey as he leads a group on a 2 mile hike to discover the waterfowl that spend the winter months on Lake James. The hike begins at the Holly Discovery Trail parking area at 10 a.m. Please bring appropriate clothing and footwear for the hike.



**LAKE CHANNEL OVERLOOK HIKE - Saturday, Feb. 8**

One of the things that makes Lake James State Park such a wonderful place, are the views of the lake, in addition to the beautiful Linville Gorge that feeds the lake itself. Meet Park Ranger Earl Weaver as he leads a hike along Lake Channel Overlook Trail. The hike is rated as easy and will be under 1 mile in length. The hike begins at the park office located at in the Catawba River Area. Bring appropriate hiking gear and be prepared to start at 11 a.m.

**SANDY CLIFF OVERLOOK HIKE - Sunday, Feb. 9**

Lake James State Park is a wonderful place to view the beautiful Linville Gorge, which feeds Lake James itself. Meet Park Ranger Earl Weaver as he leads a hike along Lake Channel Overlook Trail. The hike is rated as easy and will be under 1 mile in length. Please meet at the park office located at in the Catawba River Area. Bring appropriate hiking gear and be prepared to start at 2 p.m.



**PREDATORS OF LAKE JAMES - Sat, Feb. 15**

Predators come in all shapes and sizes. Those with feathers, those with scales, those with fur, each are unique in their own way. Meet Park Ranger Kevin Bischof to discover some of the predators and their adaptations that make them so successful in their hunt for food. This program will be held indoors and will include a craft to design your very own predator. So bring your creativity and enthusiasm to the park office located in the Catawba River Area. The program starts at 10 a.m.

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### **FIRE ON THE LANDSCAPE - Saturday, Feb. 22**

Join Park Ranger Jamie Cameron for a tour of the burn units of the Catawba River Area. Lake James State Park has recently begun a prescribed fire program to reduce dangerous fuel levels and improve habitat diversity after decades of misinformed wildfire suppression. We will discuss how low-intensity fire nourishes the forest and paves the way for dozens of fascinating fire-dependent plants and animals. Meet at the Catawba River Area breezeway at 10:30 a.m.

### **EAGLES IN WINTER - Sunday, Feb. 23**



Lake James has a healthy population of bald eagles and we're going to look for them today from some of the best overlooks in the park. In between sightings we'll discuss eagle biology, identification and the story behind their inspiring return from the brink of extinction. Meet Park Ranger Jamie Cameron at the Catawba River Area breezeway at 2 p.m.

### **LATE WINTER ON THE MILL CREEK TRAIL - Saturday, Mar. 1**

One of the longest trails in Lake James State Park, the Mills Creek Trail winds along the banks of the lake, offering ample opportunities to view wildlife. Meet Park Ranger Kevin Bischof for a hike which will explore the wildlife that lives in and around Lake James. Bring proper footwear, as the 2.5 mile hike may be muddy and will spend time along the banks of the lake. The hike begins at 10 a.m. and meets at the West Shelter near the bath house in the Paddy's Creek Area of the park.

### **SPRING IN THE AIR - Sunday, Mar. 2**

With Spring only a couple weeks away, park visitors are anxious to see the cold Winter temperatures succumb to the warming promise of Spring. As the temperatures change, so do the behaviors of the resident plants and animals. Meet Park Ranger Kevin Bischof for a hike along the Fox Den Loop trail to discover the early Spring activity of the park. The 2.5 mile hike will leave at 3 p.m. from the park office located in the Catawba River Area of the park.

### **TREE ID - Saturday, Mar. 8**

When the leaves have fallen off the trees for the year, tree identification can be the difficult. If you have ever wondered how to identify trees without their leaves, this hike is a perfect time to learn. Meet Park Ranger Clay Veasey at the Paddy's Creek concession area as he leads hikers into the wonderful world of tree identification. The hike leaves at 10 a.m. and lasts for about an hour. Please bring appropriate clothing for the weather and don't be late!



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**WETLANDS HIKE - Saturday, Mar. 15**

What is a wetland? Come discover what makes a wetland, and what types of animals thrive in this type of environment. Meet Park Ranger Earl Weaver as he leads a hike to some of the wetlands within Lake James State Park. The hike starts at the park office located in the Catawba River Area. Bring appropriate hiking gear and be prepared to start at 10 a.m.

**WATERFOWL ON THEIR WAY NORTH –  
BOAT TOUR - Sunday Mar. 16**

What better way to see waterfowl on Lake James than to see the lake by boat? Join Park Ranger Earl Weaver as he guides

a boat tour looking for the waterfowl that call Lake James home as Spring arrives. Pre-registration is required, as there are only 7 spots available on the boat. Please bring appropriate clothing for an afternoon on the lake. Life jackets will be provided. This program leaves from the law enforcement boat ramp at the east end of the Paddy's Creek Area promptly at 2 p.m. Meet at the East Picnic Shelter several minutes prior to the program starting. To register, please call 828-584-7728.

**EARLY SPRING PHOTO SAFARI - Saturday, March 22**

Capture the moment Mother Nature shakes off the blankets of winter through the lens of a camera. Join Park Ranger Jamie Cameron, an award-winning photographer and former newspaper editor, on a woodland hike in search of compelling images that evoke emotion and tell a story. Wear clothing appropriate for the weather and bring whatever photography equipment you think you'll need to help you in your quest. Meet at the Paddy's Creek Area breezeway at 9 a.m.



**EARLY ARRIVALS – MIGRATION - Sunday, March 23**

Late March is the time when the first migrating birds of spring move through the Lake James area on their way to the northern breeding grounds. Park Ranger Jamie Cameron will lead the group in search of northern parula, blue-gray gnatcatcher, black-and-white warbler and a host of other early migrants. Wear clothing appropriate for the weather and bring binoculars and a field guide if you have them. Meet at the Holly Discovery Trail parking area at 9 a.m.

**WETLANDS HIKE - Sunday, Mar 30**

What is a wetland? Come discover what makes a wetland, and what types of animals thrive in this type of environment. Meet Park Ranger Clay Veasey as he leads a hike to some of the wetlands within Lake James State Park. The hike starts at the park office located in the Catawba River Area. Bring appropriate hiking gear and be prepared to start at 2 p.m.



## NATURE NOTES

The weather in 2014 has certainly come in like a lion. Sure, there have been some warm stretches, but they seem to be few and far between the frigid nights and blustery days accompanying this season of “Polar Vortexes.”

Regardless of the temperatures, wildlife needs to find food to survive. Cold weather often forces birds and mammals to remain active throughout the day, making for some great sightings for those brave enough to go out and experience Lake James State Park during winter.



Waterfowl in particular have been plentiful this year – perhaps not so much in numbers, but diversity. Ranger Earl Weaver has noted several uncommon species on the lake recently, including greater scaup, common goldeneye, white-winged scoters and even a small group of long-tailed ducks near the Paddy’s Creek Dam.

It’s a great time of year to spot hawks and owls as they hunt for prey. Cold weather forces small mammals like mice and voles to eat more calories in order to stay warm and that means exposing themselves to predators like red-shouldered hawks, northern harriers and great-horned owls. Hawkwatching is also made easier with the leaves off of the trees and a hike through the forest could reveal a Cooper’s hawk or a screech owl.

Typically, white-tailed deer and wild turkey activity is highest during the early morning and early evening, but the weather has these critters moving throughout the day. It has not been uncommon to see a dozen or more deer and a couple of turkeys during a slow drive along the park road at the Paddy’s Creek Area.

It can be hard to keep your New Year’s resolution to get outside more in 2014 in the face of Old Man Winter, but proper layering, good, warm socks and hiking boots, a knit cap and some gloves can make all the difference. The air is crisp and clean and the trails are waiting. Hope to see you out there.

### 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  
**Wendell Shelton** - Vice President  
**Mike Sewell** - Secretary  
**Bob Bielitz** - Treasurer  
**Paul Braun** - Member at Large  
**Greg Norell** - Member at Large  
**Jim Williams** - Member at Large  
**George Milner** - Member at Large  
**Brock Hall** - Member at Large  
**Ashley Wooten** - Member at Large

To contact the Friends of Lake James State Park Group please email [info@lakejamesstatepark.org](mailto:info@lakejamesstatepark.org)

## MEET THE RANGERS

Lake James State Park welcomed Ranger **Kevin Bischof** to the staff in early September, 2013.

Kevin joined the North Carolina Division Parks and Recreation almost seven years ago as a journey ranger at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area. Prior to coming to Lake James, he also worked at Goose Creek and Gorges state parks.

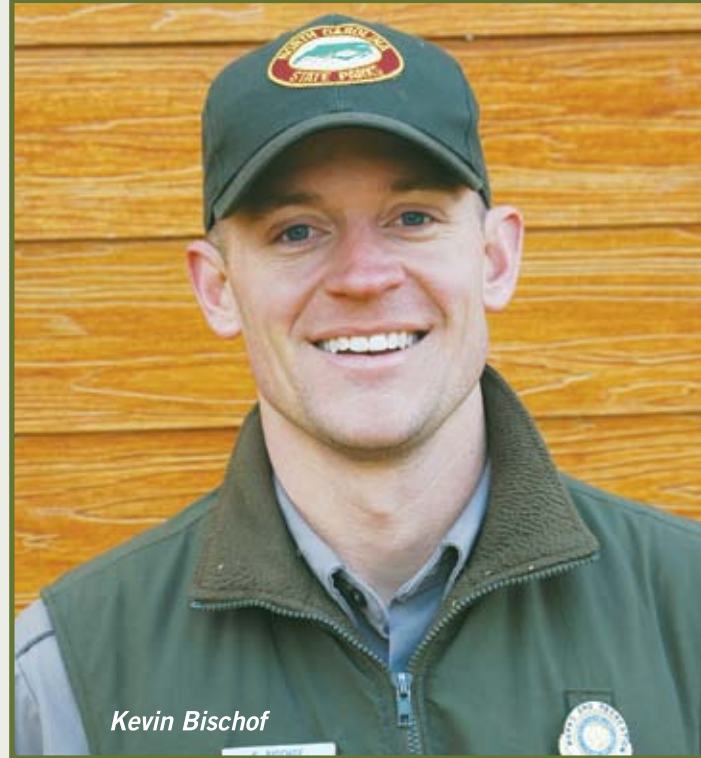
Kevin is a native of Cincinnati, OH, where he graduated from the University of Cincinnati with a degree in sociology. He also holds a masters degree in outdoor recreation, with a focus on education, from Indiana University.

He is also the park's resident expert on reptiles and moths, two animal groups for which he has special interest in.

When asked what part of his job he finds most rewarding, Kevin replied, "I like educating people on anything outdoors. That's why I got into park rangership." Indeed, one of Kevin's main responsibilities is heading up the interpretation and education program at the park. He said the challenging aspect of being a park ranger is tempering his desire to be a true expert in any field due to the necessity of being a jack-of-all-trades. "There's so much involved in being a well-rounded ranger," said Kevin. "You have to be proficient in law enforcement, interpretation and education, search and rescue, first responder, wildland firefighting and more."

As for his impression of his newest duty station, Kevin said he is enjoying getting to know the park and the surrounding community. "I like living, working and being around the lake," he said. "It's exciting to be a part of the park's developing recreational opportunities."

As for the coming spring and summer, Kevin wanted park visitors to be aware of Lake James State Park's robust schedule of educational programs. "We're planning on having a lot more educational opportunities at the park this year."



*Kevin Bischof*

## 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)



## CREATING A BACKYARD HABITAT

Homeowners can create and improve habitat for wildlife in their own backyards by following a few simple steps:

- Grow native plants that occur naturally in our area, including trees, shrubs and other plants that offer food such as pollen, nectar, nuts, cones, berries and other seeds.
- Provide water for wildlife with a shallow pond, birdbath or dish. Enhance your water feature with a pump or drip system to create flow that attracts wildlife and discourages mosquitoes.
- Create an area of natural cover for wildlife by replacing your lawn with native grasses, dense shrubs and/or evergreens.
- Build birdhouses to replace natural cavities that are lost when dead trees are cut down in your neighborhood. Many types of birds, along with flying squirrels and bats require these habitat features to roost or nest.





# 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.



## PARK GENERAL INFO

- February gate hours are 8 a.m. until 6 p.m.
- The campground is closed for season
- The swimming area is closed for season
- The concession stand is closed for season
- Hidden Cove Boat Access Area is closed for season

## 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            \$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.*