



LAKE JAMES STATE PARK ASSISTS WILDFIRE EFFORT

All of the signs last fall suggested it would be an active fire season in western North Carolina. Extreme drought and low relative humidity, combined with ample fuels like fallen leaves, needles, branches and trees on the forest floor made many state parks in the West District a powder keg just waiting for a spark. Burn bans were put in place across the region, but the sparks came during the first weekend in November, when Chimney Rock (Nov. 5) and South Mountains (Nov. 6) state parks reported wildfire within their boundaries.

Within 24 hours, Lake James State Park rangers and maintenance mechanics, all with wildland firefighting certifications, sprang to the aid of their comrades who were already struggling to control the growing blazes. On Nov. 10, the unprecedented decision to close the park in its entirety was made to allow the staff to focus all of its efforts on the Chestnut Knob Fire in South



Mountains State Park, which was growing exponentially by the day in steep, rugged terrain, and no rain forecast for the foreseeable future.

"What amazed me was the reaction of the people who were in the park when we were ordered to clear it and close

the gates," said Park Ranger Jamie Cameron, who was on duty when the order came to shut the park down during a busy fall weekend. "Everyone I spoke to understood why we were doing what we were doing and offered their support and good wishes. Even the campers who had their weekend plans disrupted by something they couldn't see." Lake James State Park remained closed to visitors until Nov. 28. For the next month, the Lake James crew dedicated itself and its equipment to the massive, multiagency effort to bring the fire under control. Even seasonal workers and office assistant Lisa Crane were brought in to work at the command center to help offload and organize the massive amounts of donations from the affected communities

to support the firefighters. The work started at the 7:30 a.m. daily briefing and often lasted well beyond 6 p.m., when the night crews took over. At its height, nearly 400 firefighters (from as far away as Alaska and New Mexico), 35 engines and 10 bull

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If you would like to receive our monthly programs list, contact us at lake.james@ncparks.gov. In an effort to reduce idle waiting time before programs begin, please make an effort to arrive a few minutes early before the start times lists. Thank you.

FIRST DAY HIKE – SUNDAY, JAN. 1

Make sure you keep your New Year's Eve celebrations tame enough to be bright-eyed and bushy-tailed for what has become a cherished family holiday tradition at Lake James State Park – the First Day Hike. Park Ranger Jamie Cameron will shepherd this year's event and whether you're interested in starting a resolution of fitness, nature appreciation or learning about the environment, make a visit to Lake James State Park part of your holiday tradition. The hike will start at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway at 1 p.m.



WINTER BOAT TOUR – SATURDAY, JAN. 7

Lake James hosts many species of waterfowl during the winter months, as well as the critters that stay here year-round. As an added bonus, winter offers some of the most majestic views of the Linville Gorge and the Black Mountain Range of the year. Ranger Earl Weaver will be your captain and guide aboard the park patrol boat as we search for loons, otters, eagles and scenic vistas. The weather could be blustery, so be sure to dress warmly if you are one of the eight lucky participants. Registration is required and available on a first-come, first-served basis. Call the park office at 828-584-7728 to reserve your spot. Meet at the Paddy's Creek Area East Picnic Shelter at 12:45 p.m. for a briefing and prompt 1 p.m. departure.

WINTER BIRD HIKE – SATURDAY, JAN. 14

It may come as a surprise to some, but birdwatching during the winter can be excellent. With all of the winged visitors from the north, we might see as many as 30 different types of birds in little more than an hour. Join Ranger Jamie Cameron for a walk around the Holly Discovery Trail to see what kind of surprises we might turn up. Meet at the Holly Discovery Trail parking lot at 8:30 a.m.

MILL'S CREEK 100 MILE CHALLENGE HIKE – SATURDAY, JAN. 14

100 miles ... can you do it? Many North Carolina Park visitors are trying to do just that, hike 100 miles in 2017. Meet Ranger Kevin Bischof as he leads a hike in early Winter to discover the leaves after they have fallen for the year. The 4-mile moderate hike will trek around the Mill's Creek trail and return on the Paddy's Creek trail. Meet at 11 a.m. in the Paddy's Creek Area of the park near the East Picnic Shelter.

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OPEN WATER BIRDING EXPEDITION – SUNDAY, JAN. 15

The open water of Lake James can host some unique species of birds during winter. Different species of gulls, cormorants, loons, ducks and grebes can be found far from shore and the park patrol boat is an excellent platform to get out and see them up close. Ranger Jamie Cameron will be your captain and your guide on this special tour for serious birders. Weather conditions may be challenging and a close eye will have to be kept on the forecast. To be one of the 8 hardy souls on our voyage you must pre-register by calling the park office at 828-584-7728. We will meet at the East Picnic Shelter in the Paddy's Creek Area at 9:45 a.m. for a briefing and prompt 10 o'clock departure.

WALK LIKE A DUCK – FRIDAY, JAN. 20

Many species of waterfowl, including ducks, grebes, loons and cormorants spend the winter months on Lake James and now you have an opportunity to observe them in their element. Ranger Clay Veasey will be your guide as we hike the Paddy's Creek Trail in search of waterbirds. The weather could be blustery, so be sure to dress warmly if the forecast demands it. Meet at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway at 10 a.m.



WINTER WATERFOWL BOAT TOUR – SATURDAY, JAN. 21

Many species of waterfowl, including ducks, grebes, loons and cormorants spend the winter months on Lake James and now you have an opportunity to observe them in their element. Ranger Earl Weaver will be your captain and guide aboard the park patrol boat as we search for birds. The weather could be blustery, so be sure to dress warmly if you are one of the eight lucky participants. Registration is required and available on a first-come, first-served basis. Call the park office at 828-584-7728 to reserve your spot. Meet your captain at the Paddy's Creek Area, East Picnic Shelter at 12:45 p.m. for a briefing prior to departure promptly at 1 o'clock.

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WINTER PLANT HIKE – SUNDAY, JAN. 29

As the holidays fade away and the leaves have fallen off the trees many think there isn't a lot of green left to see as they hike. Join Park Ranger Kevin Bischof as he hikes along the Holly Discovery Trail in search of the plants that hold their green coloration even through the winter. The hike is approximately .75 miles in length. Please meet at the Holly Discovery Trailhead located in the Paddy's Creek Area at 1 p.m.



WINTER BOAT TOUR – SATURDAY, FEB. 4

Lake James hosts many species of waterfowl during the winter months, as well as the critters that stay here year-round. As an added bonus, winter offers some of the most majestic views of the Linville Gorge and the Black Mountain Range of the year. Ranger Earl Weaver will be your captain and guide aboard the park patrol boat as we search for loons, otters, eagles and scenic vistas. The weather could be blustery, so be sure to dress warmly if you are one of the eight lucky participants. Registration is required and available on a first-come, first-served basis. Call the park office at 828-584-7728 to reserve your spot. Meet at the Paddy's Creek Area East Picnic Shelter at 12:45 p.m. for a briefing and prompt 1 p.m. departure.

WALK LIKE A DUCK – FRIDAY, FEB. 10

Many species of waterfowl, including ducks, grebes, loons and cormorants spend the winter months on Lake James and now you have an opportunity to observe them in their element. Ranger Clay Veasey will be your guide as we hike the Paddy's Creek Trail in search of waterbirds. The weather could be blustery, so be sure to dress warmly if the forecast demands it. Meet at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway at 10 a.m.

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PREDATORS OF LAKE JAMES – SATURDAY, FEB. 11

Predators come in all shapes and sizes; those with feathers, those with scales and those with fur – each is unique in its own way. Meet Park Ranger Kevin Bischof to learn about some of the predators of Lake James and their adaptations that make them so effective in the hunt for prey. This will be an indoor program and includes a craft activity to design and create your very own predator. Bring your creativity and enthusiasm to the Catawba River Area basement classroom at 10 a.m.

ANIMALS IN WINTER – SATURDAY, FEB. 18

Bald eagles? Yes. Otters? Sure. Black bears? Yup. Bobcats? You betcha. Lake James and the land surrounding it are a paradise for wildlife. Winter is an excellent time to hit the woods and search for critters that can be easier to see now than any other season. Join Ranger Jamie Cameron for a hike on the Paddy's Creek Trail, with plenty of views of the lake and great habitat for birds and animals. Meet at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway at 10 a.m.

AMAZING EAGLES – SUNDAY, FEB. 19

Easily the nation's most iconic and easily identified birds (at least the adults), the bald eagle is the cherished symbol of our great country, but what do you know about its life cycle and habits? Lake James hosts a healthy population of eagles throughout the year – including a nest site that has been active for more than a decade. Join Ranger Jamie Cameron on a quest to spot one of these majestic birds



at one of several lookout points within Lake James State Park. Learn about the inspiring comeback of eagle populations, how to identify them and how they fit into the ecosystem. Bring binoculars if you have them and dress for the weather. Meet at the Catawba River Area office building at 1:30 p.m.

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WINTER WATERFOWL BOAT TOUR – SATURDAY, FEB. 25

Many species of waterfowl, including ducks, grebes, loons and cormorants spend the winter months on Lake James and now you have an opportunity to observe them in their element. Ranger Earl Weaver will be your captain and guide aboard the park patrol boat as we search for birds. The weather could be blustery, so be sure to dress warmly if you are one of the eight lucky participants. Registration is required and available on a first-come, first-served basis. Call the park office at 828-584-7728 to reserve your spot. Meet your captain at the Paddy's Creek Area, East Picnic Shelter at 12:45 p.m. for a briefing prior to departure promptly at 1 o'clock.

FOX DEN LOOP 100 MILE CHALLENGE HIKE – SUNDAY, FEB. 26

100 miles ... can you do it? Many North Carolina Park visitors are trying to do just that, hike 100 miles in 2017. Meet Ranger Kevin Bischof as he leads a hike in early Winter to discover the what winter residents are in the park. The 2-1/4-mile, moderate hike will trek around the Fox Den Loop trail. Meet at 11 a.m. in the Catawba River Area of the park near the picnic shelter.



NATURE NOTES

Not many folks think the dead of winter can be productive for nature watching, but when you're at a lake in western North Carolina it can be one of the very best seasons, especially if you happen to be a birdwatcher.

Species of birds that are attracted to Lake James in winter are often here in great abundance. Different types of gulls rove around the lake in large flocks searching for small fish swimming near the surface. Most of them are ring-billed and Bonaparte's gulls, but there are a small number of herring gulls that also find their way here.

Double-crested cormorants are another common waterbird in winter. These are often mistaken for geese, but are different in both plumage and behavior. Cormorants are darker than the geese and ducks and loons they resemble. Young birds have pale-colored bellies, but the hooked tip of the bill is distinctive. When feeding, cormorants swim at the surface with their heads underwater as they search for fish. Once prey has been spotted, they dive below and chase down their meal, propelling themselves with powerful webbed feet.



Common loons are also spending the winter on the lake and diving for fish in much the same way, but they are larger than cormorants and have broad, straight bills and white throats and flanks as they sit on the water. On foggy, windless mornings it's not uncommon to hear the loons uttering their mournful, wailing calls that echo across the lake.

Of course the lake also hosts a variety of ducks during the season, but their abundance depends largely on the weather conditions to the north. As winter strengthens its icy grip across the Great Lake and New England, waterfowl are forced to head south in search of open water. Lake James acts as a stopover for many species, including buffleheads, mallards, ring-necked ducks, gadwalls, redheads and wigeon.

If the winter doldrums have gotten you down, think about lacing up your warm boots, throwing on an extra sweater and coming to the park to enjoy the quiet beauty and variety of waterbirds that don't mind sharing it.

See you out 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

Paul Braun - Member at Large

Annette Bryant - Membership Coordinator

Randall Conley - Member at Large

George Milner - Member at Large

Greg Norell - Member at Large

Molly Sandfoss - Member at Large

Alan Scholl - Member at Large

Jeff Stark - Member at Large

Jim Williams - Member at Large

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

LAKE JAMES STATE PARK ASSISTS WILDFIRE EFFORT

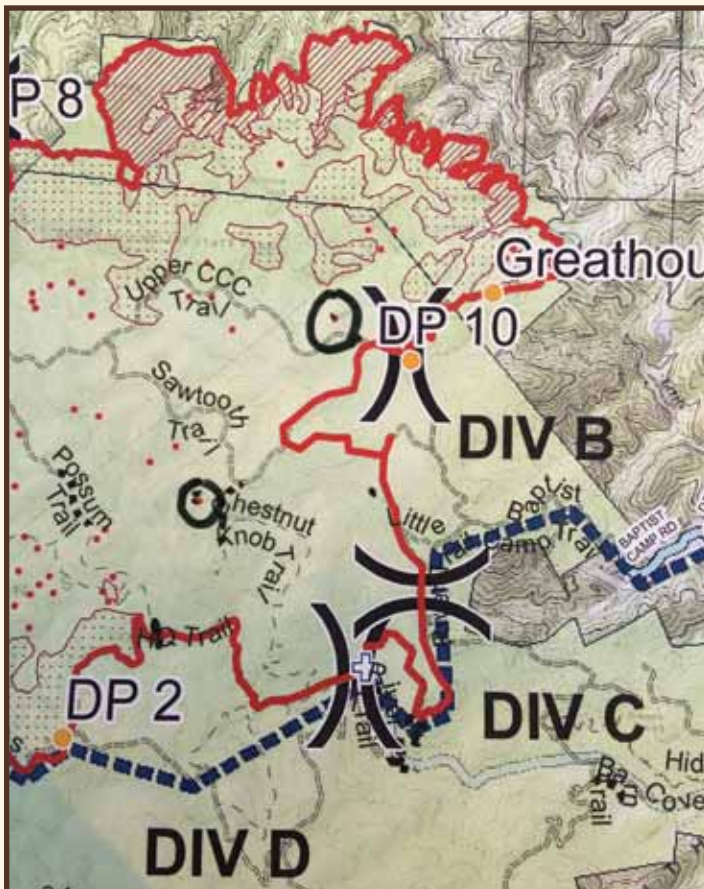
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dozers were assigned to the incident. Included among these, N.C. Forest Service B.R.I.D.G.E. crews provided critical manpower and experience on the fire lines.

By Nov. 18th, the 24-7 effort to build fire containment lines, remove snags that could fall and allow the fire to escape and find and extinguish hot spots halted its growth at 6,435 acres. Remarkably, not a single serious injury was reported and not a single home or structure was lost.

"The response to this emergency from parks across the state was nothing short of remarkable," said Lake James State Park Superintendent Nora Coffey, who spent more than 10 days on the Chestnut Knob Fire herself. "Our staff put in long hours for days on end and worked extremely hard in the face of this challenge. We are proud of the work we did and proud to know that if the situation were reversed we can count on our fellow rangers and maintenance mechanics to come to our aid."

The work at South Mountains State Park did not end when the fire was officially declared 100-percent contained on Dec. 3. Affected trails and roads will need to be rehabilitated and new hazard trees will need to come down before the park can fully reopen. The work will likely take months and the staff at Lake James State Park will likely be called to help – it's what they do best.



FRIENDS OF LAKE JAMES STATE PARK



2016 STATE OF THE PARK

Another year has passed and I would like to thank everyone who visited Lake James State Park in 2016. Our centennial year was a huge success, thanks in large part to the hikers, mountain bikers, swimmers and fishermen that love the park and take advantage of the many outdoor recreational opportunities it provides. Without you folks there wouldn't be any incentive to protect and preserve the great outdoors in our little corner of McDowell and Burke counties. Your attendance and participation, day-in and day-out, proves how important Lake James State Park is to the fabric of this community. The staff here takes great pride in that relationship and looks forward to forging even stronger bonds with our neighbors, one-time users and park "regulars" in the year to come.

A large part of our success in 2016 was due to the many special events we hosted. People from near and far have discovered, and rediscovered, how wonderful Lake James State Park truly is. From returning events like the Lake James Clean-up held each spring, to new events like the Dragon Boat Festival, Lake James continues to prove its up-and-coming status as



a major attraction. These events drew in more than 3,500 visitors last year and we already have several new events booked for 2017.

I would be remiss to neglect the wonderful seasonal staff we've been so fortunate to hire in recent years. From general utilities workers, to concessions stand cashiers, to lifeguards to naturalists; these are the folks who keep this park operating at a high level during the heavy visitation months of summer. Without them, the park would be overwhelmed on weekends, holidays, and when hosting large events.

Looking forward, 2017 will be a year of planning and maintenance. We now have more facilities to maintain, with a total of 83 campsites, and we have a laundry list of major maintenance improvements throughout the park, to include a new entrance sign at the Catawba River Area and new decking on our overlooks and fishing pier, just to name a few. We will spend much of the year planning the design of our new Visitor Center and we will finish up the design of a 238-foot bridge that will connect the Paddy's Creek and Long Arm peninsulas. We spent the last year celebrating the North Carolina State Parks Centennial, and this year the celebration will continue with the 30th Birthday of Lake James State Park.

With your continuing support and involvement and the help of citizens' groups like the Friends of Lake James State Park, the future is bright. I look forward to seeing you and your families enjoying the great outdoors.

Nora Coffey
Park Superintendent
Lake James State Park

SEASONAL JOBS

It's not too early to consider a summer seasonal position at Lake James State Park. Applications are being accepted to lifeguards, general utility workers and concessions stand attendants. Download a State Government Application for Employment (PD-107) by going online to www.ncparks.gov and clicking on the "Get Involved" banner near the top of the page. Follow the prompts to "Seasonal Employment." Once you've printed out an application and filled it out, mail it to Lake James State Park, P.O. Box 340, Nebo, NC 28761 or hand-deliver it to the Catawba River Area office (open Mon-Fri from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m.).



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 during January and February are 7 a.m. until 7 p.m.
- Paddy's Creek Area swim beach is closed for the season
- The concessions stand and boat rentals are closed for the season

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.