



## PARK RAISES PROFILE WITH ENDURO RACES

It's no secret western North Carolina is a hotbed of outdoor activities and sports. Folks have been flocking to the region for decades to experience the beautiful, yet challenging terrain that lends itself so well to adventure and competition.

In recent years, outdoor event coordinators have discovered Lake James and all it can offer to myriad athletic endeavors. As evidence of its growing popularity, the state park played host to three different endurance races during the month of April.

On separate weekends, athletes gathered at the Paddy's Creek Area for the inaugural SwimRun Lake James (April 7), the Fonta Flora Half Marathon and 50-kilometer ultra-marathon (April 14 and 15) and the annual Lake James International triathlon (April 28).



*Photo courtesy Tom Peterson; Lemonstripe*

With 13.5 miles of trail running and nearly 4 miles of swimming, the SwimRun Lake James epitomized the adventurous spirit of the athletes. SwimRun events have their origins in Scandinavia and require participants, in 2-person teams, to transition from running legs to swimming legs of varying distances. The Lake James race featured 26 swim-to-run transitions, the longest of which was a 7.7-mile run and a 1,600-yard swim. Add to that the challenges of wind and waves, off-trail hazards and air and water temps at 55-degrees

and you have the makings of an epic achievement for the teams that completed the course. Every athlete had to submit an application with proof of their recent experience in long-distance running and swimming competition. Teams also were required to outfit themselves with wetsuits, compression bandages and emergency whistles. Of the 50 teams that entered the race, 42 completed it. Team Orca, consisting of

Daniel Kimball, both from South Carolina, won the event.

Race co-director Kristen Jeno declared the SwimRun a "huge success" and plans are already in motion for next year.

"You have a hidden gem at Lake James and have done an incredible job with your facilities and staff," she said. "We are beyond excited about how everything went."

## **CANOE EXCURSION – SATURDAY, MAY 5**

The tranquility of paddling a canoe on a quiet morning is one of life's simple pleasures. Discover the beauty of Lake James State Park from the water with Park Ranger Kevin Bischof. Whether you're an expert paddler or you don't know the difference between starboard and port, we'll provide the equipment and instruction to make it a memorable morning. Six park canoes are set aside for this free program and each is capable of carrying two adults and one child. The program starts at 9 a.m. and meets at the Paddy's Creek swim beach. You must pre-register with a head-count of how many people will be in each boat (sorry, no singles). Please call 828-584-7728 and sign-up today.

## **SPRING BOAT TOUR – SUNDAY, MAY 6**

The waters and shoreline of Lake James is bursting with life and there's no better way to explore than by boat. Park Ranger Earl Weaver will be your captain and guide aboard the park patrol boat as we search for loons, ospreys, eagles and scenic vistas. The weather could be blustery or it could be sultry, so be sure to watch the forecast and dress appropriately for the day (remember it's always cooler out on the water) 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 9:45 a.m. for a briefing and prompt 10 a.m. departure.

## **GLOBE AT NIGHT ASTRONOMY PROGRAM – FRIDAY, MAY 11**

The Globe at Night program is an international citizen-science campaign to raise public awareness of the impact of light pollution by inviting citizen-scientists to measure and submit their night sky brightness observations. Join Park Superintendent Nora Coffey to learn about this program and how YOU can become a citizen scientist. After the Globe at Night presentation there will be telescopes and binoculars set up for viewing the night sky, but feel free to bring your own if you have them. Folding chairs and bug spray are also recommended. We will meet in the upper parking lot of the Paddy's Creek Area at 8 p.m. after parking near the East Shelter. In the event of rain or clouds an "indoor" presentation will take place in the East Picnic Shelter. Please register by calling the park office at (828) 584-7728.



## **LET'S GO BIRDWATCHING – FRIDAY, MAY 11**

Spring migrants are still trickling through the Piedmont while many nesters are already on territory. It's a great time to go birding at Lake James State Park. Park Ranger Jamie Cameron will start the hike around the Holly Discovery Trail at 8 a.m. to catch the morning chorus and see the greatest variety, including northern parulas, Louisiana waterthrushes, red-eyed vireos and scarlet tanagers. Bring binoculars and a field guide if you have them and be prepared to hike 1 mile over relatively easy terrain.

*Continued Next Page*

## **SPRING BOAT TOUR – FRIDAY, MAY 11**

The waters and shoreline of Lake James is bursting with life and there's no better way to explore than by boat. Park Ranger Clay Veasey will be your captain and guide aboard the park patrol boat as we search for loons, ospreys, eagles and scenic vistas. The weather could be blustery or it could be sultry, so be sure to watch the forecast and dress appropriately for the day (remember it's always cooler out on the water) 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 1:45 p.m. for a briefing and prompt 2 p.m. departure.

## **HEADSTONES OF THE PAST – SATURDAY, MAY 12**

Want to know more about the Catawba River Valley and the people who settled here? One of the best ways to do it is to visit the area's old cemeteries and pick up important information inscribed on the tombstones. Lake James State Park has three known cemeteries within its borders and each of them holds the key to understanding the early settlers who lived here as far back as the 18th century. Historian RoAnne Bishop, of the McDowell Gateway Museum in Old Fort will be our special guest for this fascinating foray into the past. We'll meet at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway at 2 p.m. You must pre-register for this program by calling the park office at 828-584-7728.



## **FLY TYING AND FLY CASTING – SATURDAY, MAY 19**

There is something rhythmic about the cast of someone fly fishing. Gently gliding their carefully crafted lure to land so delicately on top of the water, in search of the next bite. But how do they do it? And how do they make them? Come to Lake James State Park and find out from one of the local experts. Paul Schell, owner of The Rod and Fly will be leading a beginner level program to show you just how to make the flies used for fly fishing, and how to cast them. Supplies will be provided but please call the park office to sign up for the program. Meet Paul at the West picnic shelter at 9:00 am and be prepared to celebrate the year of the fish by learning how to fly fish.

## **CANOE EXCURSION – SATURDAY, MAY 19**

The tranquility of paddling a canoe on a quiet morning is one of life's simple pleasures. Discover the beauty of Lake James State Park from the water with Park Ranger Jamie Cameron. Whether you're an expert paddler or you don't know the difference between starboard and port, we'll provide the equipment and instruction to make it a memorable morning. Four park canoes are set aside for this free program and each is capable of carrying two adults and one child. The program starts at 9 a.m. and meets at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway. You must pre-register and be prepared to share your journey with a new friend if you are a single and space dictates. Call 828-584-7728 and sign-up today.

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### **SANDY CLIFF OVERLOOK HIKE – SUNDAY, MAY 20**

Check out one of the best views on the lake with Park Ranger Jamie Cameron. The Sandy Cliff Overlook Trail is an easy, 1/2-mile route through a section of the Catawba River Area that received a restorative prescribed fire in late 2014 and again in early 2018. Come see for yourself the amazing habitat improvement that can be achieved through a thoughtful prescribed burning program and bring your camera to record the awesome overlook view of Lake James. Meet at the Catawba River Area parking lot at 10 a.m.

### **APRIL SHOWERS BRING MAY FLOWERS – SUNDAY, MAY 20**

Come experience nature in a new way, a magnified way! Undoubtedly, you've strolled along the park trails and experienced the beauty Lake James has to offer, but have you ever seen the natural world magnified? Come join Ranger Kevin Bischof as he leads a group along the trails of Lake James to explore the wildflower species of the forest at a different level. The park will supply the magnifying loupes, all you have to do is bring the kids and a sense of exploration. Magnification will turn your walk in the woods into a whole new experience. Because we have a limited number of magnifying loupes, please call ahead of time to reserve your spot. Reservations can be made by calling the park office at 828-584-7728. This program can be used for the Junior Ranger program credit and will meet at 1 p.m. at the park office parking lot in the Catawba River Area.



### **WHAT'S IN THE NIGHT SKY? – SATURDAY, JUNE 2**

Lake James State Park Superintendent Nora Coffey will be co-hosting with the Catawba Valley Astronomy Club for a night of star gazing. Learn some basic star-gazing tips and take home your own star chart. There will be telescopes and binoculars set up for viewing the night sky, but feel free to bring your own if you have them. Folding chairs and bug spray are also recommended. Meet in the upper parking lot of the Paddy's Creek Area at 8 p.m. after parking near the East Shelter. In the event of rain or clouds an "indoor" presentation will take place in the East Picnic Shelter. Please register by calling the park office at (828) 584-7728.

### **SPRING BOAT TOUR – SUNDAY, JUNE 3**

The waters and shoreline of Lake James is bursting with life and there's no better way to explore than by boat. Park Ranger Earl Weaver will be your captain and guide aboard the park patrol boat as we search for loons, ospreys, eagles and scenic vistas. The weather could be blustery or it could be sultry, so be sure to watch the forecast and dress appropriately for the day (remember it's always cooler out on the water) 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 9:45 a.m. for a briefing and prompt 10 a.m. departure.

*Continued Next Page*

### **CREEK SEINING – FRIDAY, JUNE 8**

Creek seining program: What type of fish are in Paddy's Creek? We plan to find out. Using a seine net and some volunteers who are willing to get their shoes wet, we will sample Paddy's Creek to see what kinds of fish swim in the park's creeks. The program will be in and around the creek and footwear is required (no flip flops), so bring some shoes you are willing to get wet and join Ranger Kevin Bischof as he leads a group on an aquatic exploration. The program will occur in the Paddy's Creek Area of the park and start at the Holly Discovery trailhead. The program will take place on Friday, June 8th at 1:00 p.m.



### **SPRING BOAT TOUR – TUESDAY, JUNE 12**

The waters and shoreline of Lake James is bursting with life and there's no better way to explore than by boat. Park Ranger Clay Veasey will be your captain and guide aboard the park patrol boat as we search for loons, ospreys, eagles and scenic vistas. The weather could be blustery or it could be sultry, so be sure to watch the forecast and dress appropriately for the day (remember it's always cooler out on the water) 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 9:45 p.m. for a briefing and prompt 10 a.m. departure.

### **JUNIOR RANGER BOOT CAMP – SUNDAY, JUNE 17**

Do you think you have what it takes to join the prestigious ranks of the North Carolina State Park Junior Rangers? If you do, the rangers at Lake James State Park want you! The Junior Ranger program is for kids ages 6-12 who have an interest in nature and stewardship. Join Park Ranger Jamie Cameron to receive your Junior Ranger workbook and participate in several activities that will put you well on your way towards earning your Junior Ranger certificate and patch. We'll meet at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway at 3 p.m. You must pre-register for this program by calling the park office at 828-584-7728.

### **CANOE EXCURSION – TUESDAY, JUNE 19**

The tranquility of paddling a canoe on a quiet morning is one of life's simple pleasures. Discover the beauty of Lake James State Park from the water with Park Ranger Kevin Bischof. Whether you're an expert paddler or you don't know the difference between starboard and port, we'll provide the equipment and instruction to make it a memorable morning. Six park canoes are set aside for this free program and each is capable of carrying two adults and one child. The program starts at 9 a.m. and meets at the Paddy's Creek swim beach. You must pre-register with a head-count of how many people will be in each boat (sorry, no singles). Please call 828-584-7728 and sign-up today.

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## **SPRING BOAT TOUR – SATURDAY, JUNE 23**

The waters and shoreline of Lake James is bursting with life and there's no better way to explore than by boat. Park Ranger Earl Weaver will be your captain and guide aboard the park patrol boat as we search for loons, ospreys, eagles and scenic vistas. The weather could be blustery or it could be sultry, so be sure to watch the forecast and dress appropriately for the day (remember it's always cooler out on the water) 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 9:45 a.m. for a briefing and prompt 10 a.m. departure.

## **RETURN TO THE BURN– THURSDAY, JUNE 28**

It's been several months since Lake James State Park conducted prescribed burns at the Catawba River Area, four years after the first prescribed fire in the park's 30-year history took place in February, 2014. Following decades of well-intentioned but ill-advised fire suppression, it's a great time to revisit the site to weigh the consequences, both good and bad. Park Ranger Jamie Cameron will lead the way on this moderate, 2.25-mile hike in search of plants and animals that were affected by the fire. Meet at the Catawba River Area breezeway at 10 a.m.





## NATURE NOTES

With the threat of frost now long past, it's time for the growing season to kick into high gear. Trees have leafed out for the most part; just in time to provide shade during the heat of summer.

The month of May is a great time to hike the trails at Lake James State Park and enjoy the wildflower show. Some of the best wildflower habitat exists where recent prescribed burns have cleared the forest floor of dead leaves and pine needles and seed to soil contact allows for better germination. With two prescribed burns over the past four years, the trail system at the Catawba River Area is an excellent choice for those who want to test their plant identification skills. Among the many specimens you'll find along the Fox Den Loop are Daisy Fleabane, Windflower, Foamflower, Solomon's Seal and Lady's Slipper. Understory trees and shrubs have also blossomed and though it may be getting late in the season



you may find Pinkster Azalea, Mountain Laurel, Sweet Betsy and Catawba Rhododendron still in flower if you get out during the first part of May.

Resident and migratory birds are nesting now. Full leaf-out of the trees makes tracking them difficult, but the need to find food for fledglings keeps them active throughout the day. Some of the birds known to nest within the park include red-shouldered and broad-winged hawks, Louisiana waterthrush, summer tanager, Eastern bluebird and brown-headed nuthatch to name a few.

Unfortunately, it's also tick and chigger season, so hikers and mountain bikers should take precautions against these nasty parasites. Wear light-colored clothing to make dark-colored ticks stand out during mandatory post-activity inspection. Consider using a repellent on your clothes, focusing especially around sock lines, waistlines and necklines to discourage chiggers from embedding. Avoid hiking through areas of tall grass and other vegetation that brushes against your legs. Learn how to remove embedded ticks properly, without squeezing or pulling away mouth parts that can become infected or transmit disease. Make it a habit to bath or shower quickly after completing your foray in the woods. A thorough body inspection and good scrubbing with soap and a hand towel will help you avoid days of itching and the possibility of chronic, tick-borne diseases.

On that note, don't let fear of biting insects, snakes, bears or any other critters keep you from enjoying the great outdoors. Simple precautions, common sense and respect for wildlife will keep you safe and sound. 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

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







*Photo courtesy Tom Peterson; Lemonstripe*

## YEAR OF THE FISH: SMALLMOUTH BASS

If one could name a fish that swims in Lake James and is more beloved than the walleye, it would be the smallmouth bass. Revered across the country for their legendary aggression and fighting abilities, the smallmouth bass is not native to North Carolina, but Tarheel anglers are passionate in their pursuit of the mighty “bronzeback.”

Smallmouth bass belong in the same family as largemouth and white bass – known collectively as the “black bass.” Here in Lake James, all three species co-exist and all three can be caught on any given fishing trip, but for many veteran Lake James fishermen, smallmouths are special.

Because they are native to inland areas across New England and west of the Appalachians, smallmouth bass are only able to exist in coolwater rivers and reservoirs here in North Carolina. Lake James boasts a healthy and thriving population that started out as a North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission introduction. Once they're in the boat, identifying smallmouth bass from their close cousins is relatively easy. The fish have a dominant bronzy to brownish-green color with dark vertical bars running down the length of



*Smallmouth Bass*

the body. Individual fish can be darker or lighter in tone, but the barring is always present. Smallmouths are so named for their relatively short upper jaw compared to other bass. Reddish eyes also are a distinguishing feature for separating smallies from largemouth and white bass.

Smallmouth bass spawn in the shallows during the month of April. As juveniles, the young bass feed on tiny aquatic insects and graduate to larger prey as

they grow. Lake fish feed primarily on shad and other small fish, as well as crayfish and the occasional frog or salamander. Researchers with NCWRC studying growth rates of river-dwelling smallmouths found some populations took five years to attain a length of 10 inches, while others in waterways with warmer temperatures and higher nutrients only required two years to achieve that size.

Folks trying to catch smallmouths are well off mimicking the techniques they use on largemouths, with perhaps a stronger focus on fishing around exposed points sticking out into the lake, especially those with rocky bottoms or fallen trees. The state record smallmouth was landed at

Hiwassee Reservoir back in 1951. The fish weighed 10 pounds, 2 ounces. Fish in Lake James are typically in the 1- to 2-pound range, but specimens weighing up to six and seven pounds are occasionally caught.

If you're looking for a hard-fighting, clear-water-loving, handsome sportfish that lives in one of the most scenic reservoirs in the state, you've come to the right place. Happy angling!



# FRIENDS OF LAKE JAMES STATE PARK

## LAKE CLEAN UP SUCCESS

The annual Lake James Clean Up took place March 17 and was a rousing success. This year more than 100 volunteers turned out to pick up trash around the Burke County side of the lake and within the state park. Many thanks to all the volunteers and the great members of the Lake James Area Wildlife and Nature Society.



## 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 May and June are 7 a.m. until 10 p.m.
- The Paddy's Creek Area swim beach opens May 1. Beach hours are 10 a.m. until 6 p.m., seven days a week. Daily fees are \$5 for adults, \$4 for children ages 3-12 when life guards are on duty. Life guards are scheduled to be on duty daily starting May 26.
- The Paddy's Creek Area concessions stand and canoe and kayak rentals open for the season starting May 6 and will operate weekends only until June 9. Starting June 9 the concessions stand will be open daily. Hours of operation will be from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. Call the park office at 828-584-7728 for the latest information.
- The Catawba River area office and gift shop is open Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. the Paddy's Creek area office is open Friday-Monday from 9:00 a.m. until 6:00 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.*