



CATAWBA RIVER ATTRACTIONS GET MAKEOVER

Since its establishment in 1987, Lake James State Park Catawba River Area has welcomed its share of visitors. Most folks started calling it the “Old Park,” once the Paddy’s Creek Area opened more than eight years ago. The CRA may be old, but it’s not forgotten. With 20 walk-in camp sites, a covered picnic shelter and picnic sites, two courtesy boat docks, a fishing pier, information and gift shop, public restrooms and 4-1/2 miles of hiking trails, there’s still plenty to see and do at the McDowell County side of the park.

In order to keep up with the times, the park’s maintenance staff took on the task of renovating and replacing some of the most-used infrastructure at the CRA. During the fall, the observation decks at both the Sandy Cliff and Lake Channel overlooks were rebuilt and relocated so that they may be enjoyed for another three decades. The handicapped-accessible fishing pier on



the Fox Den Loop trail also received a makeover.

The jobs were a perfect opportunity to enlist the help of the North Carolina Forest Service’s Young Offenders Forest Conservation Program. More commonly known as B.R.I.D.G.E. (Building, Rehabilitating, Instructing, Developing, Employing), the program has been in place since 1987 (the same year the park was established) to teach inmates convicted of non-serious crimes, between the ages of 18 and 25, skills in forest management, wildland firefighting, landscaping and a host of other experiences that can help in the job market. While the national rate of

young offenders returning to prison for crimes committed after their initial release is 35-percent, the N.C. Forest Service B.R.I.D.G.E. program graduates boast a return rate of just 12-percent.

B.R.I.D.G.E. crews based in Morganton assist state parks throughout the western region

throughout the year and Lake James typically has a crew for a week, 10 months out of the year. To complete the recent projects the park utilized the talents of program’s carpentry shop.

The CRA upgrades are just part of an ongoing process to keep facilities up to the task of withstanding the ever-growing annual visitation numbers. In 2016, the bathhouse at the walk-in campground was renovated. The park hopes to break ground on a new visitors’ center at the Paddy’s Creek Area in 2019.

FIRST DAY HIKE – TUESDAY, JAN. 1

There is no better way to start off a new year than with a hike at Lake James. Meet Park Ranger Jamie Cameron for what has become a cherished holiday tradition at Lake James State Park – the First Day Hike. 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 family's holiday tradition. The hike will start at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway at 10 a.m. Bring warm clothing and be prepared to walk two miles.

**FIRST BOAT TOUR OF THE NEW YEAR – SATURDAY, JAN. 5**

Be one of the first people to enjoy Lake James during 2019. 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 1:45 p.m. for a briefing and prompt 2 o'clock departure.

WINTER BIRD HIKE – SATURDAY, JAN. 19

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 Paddy's Creek Area to see what kind of surprises we might turn up. Meet at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway at 9 a.m.

WALKING THE WETLANDS – FRIDAY, JAN. 25

Park Ranger Clay Veasey will be meeting a group of adventurous hikers to the Old Catawba River to search for aquatic plants, animals, insects and birds. The wetland habitat in this area is rich in biodiversity and rarely visited by humans. Meet Ranger Veasey at the Canal Bridge Boat Access on NC 126 at 9:45 a.m. for a 10 a.m. carpool caravan to the site.

WALKING THE WETLANDS – SATURDAY, JAN. 26

If you couldn't make it yesterday, here's another opportunity to visit the "River Section" of Lake James State park. Park Ranger Earl Weaver will be meeting a group of adventurous hikers to the Old Catawba River to search for aquatic plants, animals, insects and birds. The wetland habitat in this area is rich in biodiversity and rarely visited by humans. Meet Ranger Weaver at the Canal Bridge Boat Access on NC 126 at 1:45 p.m. for a 2 p.m. carpool caravan to the site.

Continued Next Page

WINTER WATERFOWL BOAT TOUR – SATURDAY, JAN. 26

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 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 9:45 a.m. for a briefing prior to departure promptly at 10 o'clock.

FLIGHT OF THE TIMBERDOODLE – WEDNESDAY, JAN. 30

Some folks call it a bog sucker. Others refer to it as a timberdoodle. Birdwatchers know it as the American woodcock. It's a sandpiper that lives in the woods! These charismatic birds have one of the strangest courtships of any North American species and it's happening now ... at Lake James State Park! This evening, we'll try to hear and hopefully see the male woodcock conduct their display flights over the open woodlands of the Catawba River Area. It will likely be cold and it will definitely be dark, so dress accordingly. The group will meet Ranger Jamie Cameron at the Catawba River Area main gate at 5 p.m.



Photo Credit: Kevin Bischof

AMAZING EAGLES – SATURDAY, FEB. 2

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 10 a.m.

ASTRONOMY FOR EVERYONE – FRIDAY, FEB. 8

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 are also recommended. We will meet in the upper parking lot of the Paddy's Creek Area at 6 p.m. Register by calling the park office at 828-584-7728.

Continued Next Page

WINTER BOAT TOUR – SATURDAY, FEB. 9

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 1:45 p.m. for a briefing and prompt 2 o'clock departure.

WINTER BIRD HIKE – SATURDAY, FEB. 16

Looking for a unique way to spend quality time with your Valentine? Hermit thrushes, cedar waxwings, American goldfinches and brown creepers are among the many species of birds that spend the winter at Lake James. Ranger Jamie Cameron will be on hand to lead the hike, spot and identify birds along the way. The hike will take place on the 2.25-mile Fox Den Loop Trail. Dress appropriately for the weather and meet at the Catawba River Area breezeway at 9 a.m.

WINTER WATERFOWL BOAT TOUR – FRIDAY, FEB. 22

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 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 9:45 a.m. for a briefing prior to departure promptly at 10 o'clock.



Continued Next Page



WINTER BOAT TOUR – SATURDAY, FEB. 23

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 Clay Veasey 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 o'clock departure.

WALKING THE WETLANDS – SATURDAY, FEB. 23

Park Ranger Earl Weaver will be meeting a group of adventurous hikers to the Old Catawba River to search for aquatic plants, animals, insects and birds. The wetland habitat in this area is rich in biodiversity and rarely visited by humans. Meet Ranger Weaver at the Canal Bridge Boat Access on NC 126 at 1:45 p.m. for a 2 p.m. carpool caravan to the site.

FLIGHT OF THE TIMBERDOODLE – MONDAY, FEB. 25

Some folks call it a bog sucker. Others refer to it as a timberdoodle. Birdwatchers know it as the American woodcock. It's a sandpiper that lives in the woods! These charismatic birds have one of the strangest courtships of any North American species and it's happening now ... at Lake James State Park! This evening, we'll try to hear and hopefully see the male woodcock conduct their display flights over the open woodlands of the Catawba River Area. It will likely be cold and it will definitely be dark, so dress accordingly. The group will meet Ranger Jamie Cameron at the Catawba River Area main gate at 5 p.m.

NATURE NOTES

Like it or not, the middle of winter is upon us. So far the season has run the gamut; with a major snowstorm, heavy rains and temperatures from the 60s to the 20s.

Plants and animals in the park have responded in kind. Many organisms that would otherwise be dormant have been active during this latest temperate period. Spring peepers have been calling in the mornings and evenings. It's never too early for these tiny frogs to voice their breeding chorus when the conditions are suitable. In fact, spring peepers have

been heard at the park every month of the year.



Another surprising critter you might encounter during warm winter nights is the red bat. Red bats are migratory to the Southeast this time of year and start their nightly work shift earlier than most bat species. Sometimes they even fly during daylight hours and their reddish orange fur makes them a familiar species to most folks, whether they know it or not. Red bats are members of the “tree bats” – meaning they roost in dense foliage and under loose bark instead of caves, so they are not susceptible to the “White Nose” fungus that is decimating many other bat species across the eastern half of the country.

Our winter birds have moved in and made themselves comfortable for the season. Eastern bluebirds hang around field edges with mixed flocks of dark-eyed juncos, chipping sparrows and tufted titmice. The lake's nesting pair of bald eagles has already started the courtship process. A recent boat tour on the lake saw the male eagle chasing the female back in Mills Creek. It won't be long before the female lays her eggs and starts the breeding cycle anew.

There's still a lot of green in the woods. Everyone knows about pine trees and their allies keeping their color, but a hike along a trail at Lake James State Park reveals so much more. American holly, dog hobble, mistletoe and ferns and mosses all add a shock of green to the stark winter landscape.

It's beautiful and quiet at the park in winter, so bundle up and do yourself a favor. 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

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

ANNUAL MONARCH TAGGING

It's been a few years since Ranger Jamie Cameron has participated in the annual monarch butterfly tagging program, but predictions of an increased fall migration of these iconic insects in 2018 had him put in for a tagging kit in the hope of contributing to the ongoing effort to understand their populations and movements.

For the last few years the park has partnered with Monarch Watch and the North Carolina Wildlife Federation to improve habitat for migrating monarchs. Pollinator gardens filled with native flowers and beds of common and swamp milkweed have been planted at locations throughout the park to attract and aid monarchs through their unique life-cycle.



The predictions came true and the rangers at Lake James tagged 16 monarchs during the months of September, October and November as they winged their way to their overwintering range in northern Mexico. Perhaps during the winter researchers will find one of the butterflies tagged at Lake James and another piece of the monarch mystery will fall into place.

For more information about monarchs, monarch tagging and conservation visit www.monarchwatch.org.

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 Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.).



2019: YEAR OF THE SNAKE

It's the announcement you've all been waiting for; what will the North Carolina State Parks system be dedicating its 2019 educational efforts to? You might have gasped in fright or oohed in admiration as you turned to this page, so you already know - it's the Year of the Snake!

For the next 12 months we will be learning about these most-divisive of creatures. Love em or hate em, snakes are an integral part of the ecosystem. Depending on the species, snakes prey upon a wide range of critters, all the way from crickets and slugs, to rabbits and birds. Some snakes just grab and swallow their victims, others wrap and squeeze. A few venomous types inject venom through hollow fangs into their prey and then wait for the toxins to take effect.

Here in North Carolina there are a whopping 37 different species of snakes. Of these, there are six that are venomous and therefore potentially



Mole Kingsnake

dangerous to humans. In Burke and McDowell counties, that number is further reduced to just two species; the copperhead and the timber rattlesnake. All other venomous snakes do not occur this far west.

This time of year, snakes are out of sight and out of mind as they hibernate through the winter, at least here in the western part of North Carolina.

It is always possible, however, to come across a snake or two during prolonged periods of above average temperatures, especially when it's sunny.

As reptiles, snakes are cold-blooded, meaning they cannot self-regulate their body temperature. They rely on their environment to keep them warm enough to stay active and go about their lives. At Lake James State Park, the most frequently encountered serpent is the black rat snake (*Elaphe obsoleta*), although, in reality, 16 different species have been recorded here.

Seeing as it's the dead of winter and the snakes are all tucked away in

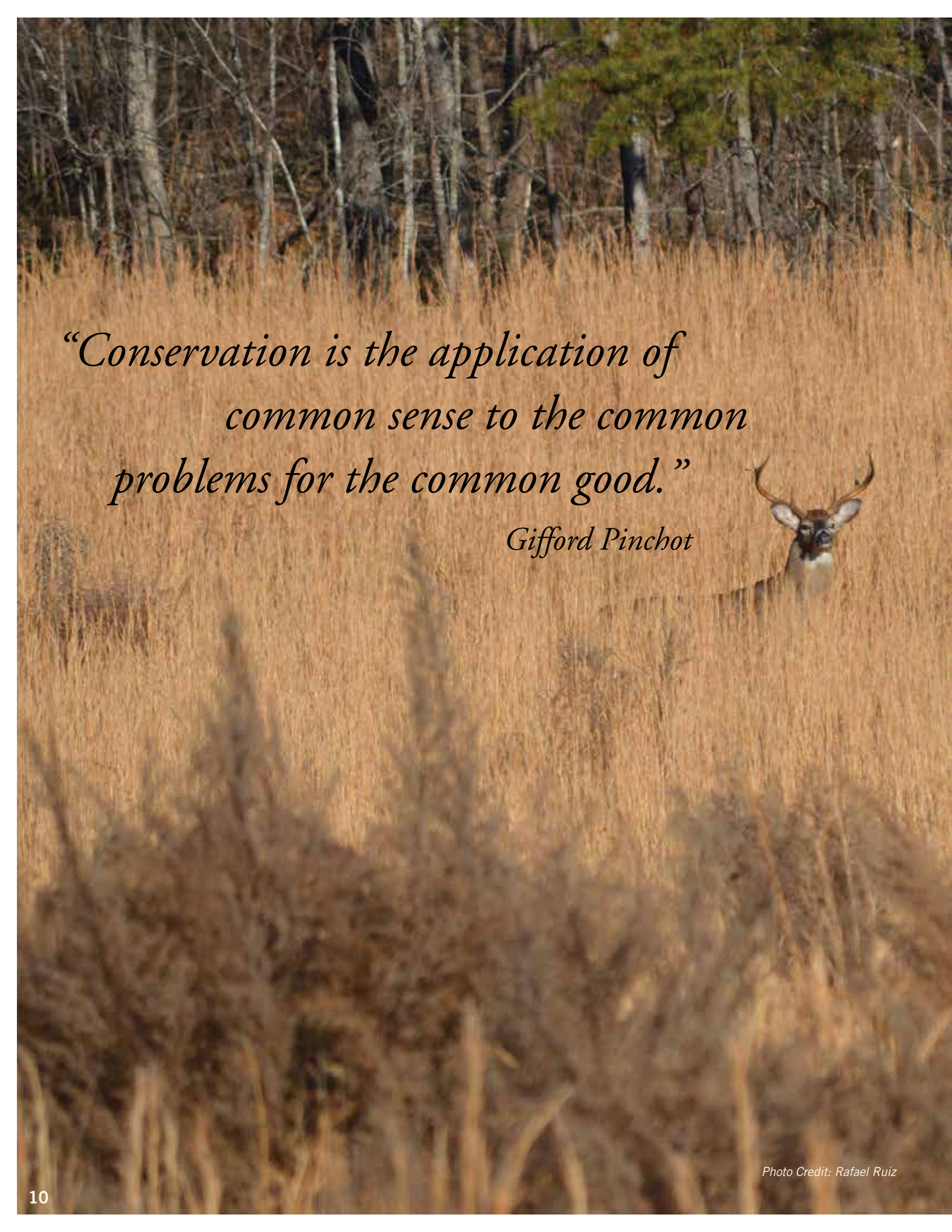
their beds until spring, we've got plenty of time to get our minds and our hearts right about the Year of the Snake.

Hopefully, once it's all said and done, you'll have found a new appreciation for these fascinating creatures that make our environment so much more interesting.

WINTER STORM DIEGO

The snow started falling late in the day on Saturday, Dec. 8, 2018 and it didn't stop until the wee hours of the morning on Monday. When it was all said and done, Winter Storm Diego dropped approximately 12 inches of heavy, wet snow on Lake James State Park and brought down dozens of trees across park roads and trails. Although the storm forced the park to close to visitors for a couple of days, park staff never stopped plowing the roads and parking areas, shoveling sidewalks and breezeways and cutting fallen trees out of the roadways so that the gates could swing open as soon as it was safe to do so. They even plowed and cleared trees from Hwy 126, between the park entrances, and sections of Benfield Landing Rd.





*“Conservation is the application of
common sense to the common
problems for the common good.”*

Gifford Pinchot

FRIENDS OF LAKE JAMES STATE PARK

SAVE THE DATE

- The annual Lake James Clean Up is scheduled for March 23. Volunteers are needed to help with this massive effort to remove trash from the Burke County shoreline of the lake and areas within the state park. Information will soon be available at the Community of Lake James Facebook page, or you can call Howard Morgan at 828-438-7003 to talk about volunteering.
- It may seem crazy to start planning so far in advance, but no crazier than actually participating in the 2nd annual SwimRun Lake James on April 20. This endurance race pits teams of two against the rest of the field and, more importantly, whatever weather is on tap for race day. Racers will navigate 2-3 miles of open water swimming and 13-14 miles of trail running (depending on the final course layout). Athletes will be vetted for experience in endurance events and registrations must be received by April 1. For more information, go to <https://runsignup.com/Race/NC/Nebo/SwimRunNCLakeJames>
- The 17th annual Catawba RiverFest will be held Sept. 21. There will be something for everyone at the Paddy's Creek Area, with dozens of interactive and information booths representing area conservation, outdoor recreation and historic organizations. Admission to RiverFest is free. For more information, check out the Friends of Lake James State Park page on Facebook, or call the park at 828-584-7728.



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.
- The Hidden Cove Boat Access will be closed through Feb. 28.
- The swim beach and concessions stand remain closed for the season. Canoe and kayak rentals are unavailable at this time.

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.