



## YOUNG PARK VOLUNTEER RECEIVES NATIONAL HONOR

It's amazing how many faces you recognize when you visit a place often enough; even at a place that receives more than 500,000 visitors a year, like Lake James State Park. When you're a "regular" you get to know the other "regulars"- and so many of you reading this already recognize the face looking up from the page.

Since she was 5-years-old, Audrey Elliott has been a dedicated supporter of Lake James State Park. She earned her first Junior Ranger badge here and has gone on to collect 21 others at parks across the state and she's only a fourth grader! She also holds 21 junior ranger badges from national parks.

Recently, Audrey was introduced as the National Parks Trust's third Buddy Bison Student Ambassador in the National Parks Service Annual Report. With her two fellow ambassadors, Audrey is expected to continue her work in schools to encourage and inspire



Audrey Elliott

young people to take advantage of the National Parks System.

"My job is to get kids in parks and show them they can have fun and learn at the same time," she said.

Along with her parents, Melissa and Michael, Audrey is planning to meet with elected officials in McDowell County to campaign for an officially designated "Kids In Parks" day.

In spite of her national recognition, Audrey continues her volunteer efforts at her "hometown" park. She's currently working with Ranger Kevin Bischof to construct a bat box from materials funded by area businesses, which she lobbied. Audrey has also helped refurbish the interactive stations along the Holly Discovery Trail and she remains dedicated to keeping Lake James beautiful.

"I pick up trash every time I go out on a trail," she said proudly.

Now that you know the story behind this familiar face, be sure to give Audrey kudos the next time you see her working, learning and playing at Lake James State Park.

## **HIKE THE RIVER SECTION – FRIDAY, MAR. 9**

Park Ranger Clay Veasey will be meeting a group of adventurous hikers to explore the Old Catawba River to search for aquatic plants, animals, insects and birds. The wetland habitat in this off-the-beaten-path area is rich in biodiversity and rarely visited by humans. Meet Ranger Veasey at the Catawba River Area office a few minutes early to stage for a 1 p.m. carpool caravan to the site.



## **BOAT TOUR – FRIDAY, MAR. 16**

Lake James hosts many species of waterfowl during their return migration north, as well as the critters that stay here year-round. 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 departure at 1 p.m.

## **LAKE CLEAN-UP – SATURDAY, MAR. 17**

The weather is warming, the birds are singing and the trees are beginning to bud – it's time for a little spring cleaning at Lake James. Lake James Area Wildlife and Nature Society will partner with the state park once again for the annual shoreline clean-up. It will be all hands on deck to get the lake ready for the busy spring and summer season. With water levels low, now is the time to remove as much trash as possible from the exposed shoreline. Volunteers are needed, but volunteers with boats (pontoon boats especially) will be at a premium. Volunteers will meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Paddy's Creek Area law enforcement boat ramp for a briefing and departure. The teams will reconvene at the East Picnic Shelter at 2 p.m. for a picnic lunch. Students note: participants will receive a Letter of Community Service upon request. Anyone interested in lending a helping hand should check out the Lake James Area Wildlife and Nature Society on Facebook or call John Steine at 828-584-6948 or Howard Morgan at 828-584-0876.

## **MINNOWS, MAYFLIES AND MUD PUPPIES – SUNDAY, MAR. 18**

Spring is popping up everywhere and it's time to shake off that cabin fever with a Lake James State Park adventure. In celebration of the Year of the Fish theme at North Carolina State Parks, we'll be hiking down to Paddy's Creek to see what kind of finned friends we can find. Park Ranger Jamie Cameron will provide the buckets, nets and know-how as we explore the diversity of critters that call Paddy's Creek their home. Meet in the Holly Discovery Trail parking lot at 10 a.m. with clothes and footwear that can get wet.

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### **PADDY'S CREEK 100-MILE CHALLENGE HIKE – SUNDAY, MAR. 18**

100 miles - can you do it? Many North Carolina State Park visitors are trying to do just that; hike 100 miles during 2018. Meet Ranger Kevin Bischof as he leads a hike along the Paddy's Creek and Holly Discovery Trails, which will lead us along the banks of Lake James and Paddy's Creek. Along the way we will talk about the importance of water quality and look for the animals that call the shoreline and creek home. The hike will be a 2-mile, moderate trek so wear sturdy footwear and water and be prepared to walk for about two hours. Meet at 1 p.m. in the Paddy's Creek Area of the park at the bathhouse.

### **ASTRONOMY FOR EVERYONE – FRIDAY, MAR. 23**

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. Sunset will be at 7:41 p.m. so we will meet in the upper parking lot of the Paddy's Creek Area at 7:30 p.m. to get oriented and cover some tips for the evening's events before it gets dark. Register by calling the park office at 828-584-7728.

### **SALAMANDER SOIREE – SATURDAY, MAR. 24**

The wonderful world of salamanders will be on display as Park Ranger Kevin Bischof leads a hike to different types of salamander habitat in search of these small, elusive amphibians. Meet at the Holly Discovery Trail parking area and come prepared to journey through woodlands, seeps, streams and pools. Bring appropriate footwear and keep in mind some of these areas may be a little muddy, so keep the new sneakers at home. The hike will begin promptly at 1 p.m.



### **HEADSTONES OF THE PAST – SATURDAY, MAR. 24**

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.

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## **NC SCIENCE FESTIVAL MINI-BLITZ – WEDNESDAY, APRIL 4**

Join us in celebrating the North Carolina Science Festival by joining a park ranger in a citizen-science project to identify, count and record as many species as we can find! All species of animals you can think of will be our focus. Park Ranger Kevin Bischof will lead us to discover how rangers inventory the species living inside their parks. This program will be for all ages, but will be specifically geared towards kids and ideal for homeschool groups. Meet the ranger at the Holly Discovery Trail parking lot in the Paddy's Creek Area of the park. The program starts at 1 p.m. so don't be late!



## **SPRING BIRD HIKE – SATURDAY, APRIL 7**

Warm southern winds are helping songbirds on their way to the nesting grounds and Lake James State Park is an important stopover for warblers, vireos, orioles, hummingbirds, swallows and a host of other birds. The Holly Discovery Trail is an excellent place to look for these tiny travelers, as well as the many species that reside year-round along the lakeshore. Ranger Jamie Cameron will have his trusty binoculars and field guide for this enjoyable 3/4-mile hike featuring one of the prettiest trails in the park. Plan to meet in the Holly Discovery Trail parking lot for a 9 a.m. departure. Watch the weather forecast and dress appropriately.

## **CANOE EXCURSION – SATURDAY, APRIL 14**

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. 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 10 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.

## **NC SCIENCE FESTIVAL REPTILE AND AMPHIBIAN BIOBLITZ – TUESDAY, APRIL 17**

Join us in celebrating the North Carolina Science Festival! You'll explore with a park ranger in a citizen-science project to find, count and record the reptile and amphibian species found along a dedicated section of the park used to study these animals. Park Ranger Kevin Bischof leads a group to discover what rangers do to inventory park species. This program will be for all ages but will be specifically geared towards kids and ideal for homeschool groups. Meet the ranger at the Holly Discovery Trail parking lot in the Paddy's Creek Area of the park. The program starts at 1 p.m. so don't be late!

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### **SUN, MOON AND STARS: STATEWIDE STAR PARTY– SATURDAY, APRIL 21**

Lake James State Park and the Catawba Valley Astronomy Club will be co-hosting the Annual Statewide Star Party. The fun will start out by exploring our closest star, the Sun, just before it sets. As the sun sets and the moon and stars brighten we'll turn our telescopes and binoculars on the night sky. Learn how to view the sun safely, 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 7 p.m. In the event of rain or clouds an "indoor" presentation will take place in the East Picnic Shelter.

### **BOAT TOUR – SUNDAY, APRIL 22**

Lake James hosts many species of waterfowl during their return migration north, as well as the critters that stay here year-round. 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 9:45 a.m. for a briefing and prompt departure at 10 a.m.

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**EARTH DAY - SALAMANDER SOIREE – SUNDAY, APRIL 22**

Earth Day! What better way to celebrate our wonderful planet than by searching for slimy amphibians? The wonderful world of salamanders will be on display as Park Ranger Kevin Bischof leads a hike into different types of salamander habitat in search of these small, elusive amphibians. Meet at the Holly Discovery Trail parking area and come prepared to journey through woodlands, seeps, streams and pools. Bring appropriate footwear and keep in mind some of these areas may be a little muddy, so leave the new sneakers at home. The hike will begin promptly at 1 p.m.

**NC SCIENCE FESTIVAL - MACRO-INVERTEBRATE STUDY – TUESDAY, APRIL 24**

Aquatic life in our creeks and rivers goes far beyond the fish and crawdads you see with a casual glance. The ecosystem of moving water can be incredibly diverse, depending on water quality and other factors. At Lake James State Park, we are lucky to have a waterway of fantastic biological diversity and this program will show participants many of the hidden animals that call Paddy's Creek home. Armed with nets, seines and buckets, participants will collect aquatic insects, crustaceans, fish, amphibians and more with Park Ranger Kevin Bischof.

This program is suitable for all ages, especially those who are willing to get wet and have a great time. We will meet in the parking lot for the Holly Discovery Trail at the Paddy's Creek Area at 1 p.m. Wear clothes you don't mind getting wet and water shoes or waders if you have them.

**BOAT TOUR – FRIDAY, APRIL 27**

Lake James hosts many species of waterfowl during their return migration north, as well as the critters that stay here year-round. 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 9:45 a.m. for a briefing and prompt departure at 10 a.m.

**BOAT TOUR – SATURDAY, APRIL 28**

Lake James hosts many species of waterfowl during their return migration north, as well as the critters that stay here year-round. 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 9:45 a.m. for a briefing and prompt departure at 10 a.m.

## NATURE NOTE

After a winter of extremes, it's reassuring to see the return of spring as it takes hold across the land.

The sights and sounds of the season are evident as you as you walk out the front door. Resident birds have started singing their territorial songs in preparation of the nesting season that's about to begin. Northern cardinals, song sparrows, pine warblers and American robins are commonly heard across a variety of habitats. Red-winged blackbirds, purple martins, northern parulas and broad-winged hawks are among the vanguard of early migrants to make their return.



As spring progresses, they will be joined by later arrivals from the neotropics. Birdwatchers will be searching for feathered jewels like black-throated-green warblers, scarlet tanagers, indigo buntings and the first ruby-throated hummingbirds of the year. At the same time, wintering species will be leaving the Carolinas for their own breeding territories to the north. These are the final days to see common loons, yellow-bellied sapsuckers, dark-eyed juncos and ring-billed gulls.

The increase in daylight means the water temperature of Lake James is rising. Each type of fish has its own threshold that must be met to trigger the spawning cycle. Among the first to lay their eggs are walleye (see related story). They will be followed by bluegill, largemouth and smallmouth bass, catfish and carp.

The trees and plants are responding to the changing season as well. Vascular plants are poking up through the layer of duff on the forest floor and deciduous trees are sprouting new leaves that seem to expand by the day. Green briars, wild grapes and poison ivy vines are sending out new growth as they climb across the ground and into the trees.

Mammals are also on the move. Black bears have emerged from their winter dens and the females have their recently-born cubs in tow. As they seek to replenish themselves after their long winter's nap, bears will take advantage of all food sources, including human trash. It's the time of year to remind ourselves to keep trash cans secured and feed pets indoors.

It only gets better from here folks. Enjoy the spring and hope to 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

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

## YEAR OF THE FISH: WALLEYE

If you've ever seen a walleye, the first things you will notice are its long, torpedo-shaped body and its teeth. The walleye is a fast, agile predator, making it one of the most sought-after fish in Lake James. The walleye is considered a gamefish, targeted by anglers across the country. Naturally occurring in northern parts of the country and Canada, walleye are thought to have had historic population ranges into the western extremes of North Carolina, but not Lake James. So how and why did they get here? Like many of the lakes across the country, Lake James' walleye were stocked to supplement sport-fishing opportunities.

While anglers can be seen "lipping" or holding trophy bass by their lower lips, you won't see walleye anglers doing the same. Walleye are toothy critters, using their teeth to secure prey items such as fish. Walleye have long bodies that are built to move quickly through the water in pursuit of prey. They range in color from a light, golden/tan color to a drab, olive green/brown. They often have 5 – 12 dark saddles, similar to dark tiger stripes. Since walleye are in the perch family, they are similar to the yellow perch of the lake. They differ from perch by having a large white spot on the base



Walleye

of their tail. Walleye average between 14 and 18 inches and typically weigh between .75 to 1.5 lbs. The state record was caught in Shooting Creek near Lake Chatuge and weighed 13 lbs., 8 oz. The world record was caught in Tennessee, weighing a massive 25 lbs.

As young fish, walleye feed on plankton and eventually graduate to feed on crayfish, mollusks, worms and other invertebrates. As adults, they use their large eyes to actively hunt fish such as shad, bass, perch, sunfish and trout if available. When walleye reach maturity, they will return to spawn at the mouth of a creek or river where they were born. This takes place around late February as the water temperature reaches 42 degrees. Fortunately for anglers, Lake

James' walleye have become self-sustaining and haven't required additional hatchery releases. After spawning, the walleye eggs hatch between 7 to 26 days depending on the water temperatures.

Walleye can be a tough fish to catch in Lake James, but knowing where they can be found can help anglers be more successful. Walleye like cool water, so unlike largemouth bass, they prefer water below 77 degrees. Lake James' largemouth and smallmouth bass

cohabitate with walleye, but they rarely share the same water. Walleye move around in the lake depending on the temperature of the water. They can be found near the surface in the cooler months of the year, but move to deeper water in the summer to find the cooler water. The general rule with fishing for walleye is the same as many other fish species; find their desired food and water temperature, and you will find the fish. It may be February and the lake may be cool, but the walleye can be caught this time of year. So, if you're up for the walleye challenge, grab your fishing gear and hit the lake. One of the country's most sought after game fish is waiting to see if you're up to the challenge.



## NEW FACES AT LJSP

As the park team prepares for the busy summer season, help has arrived in the form of two new permanent employees who have brought the maintenance crew back up to full staff. One of them is a familiar face many regular park visitors will recognize; the other has been coming to Lake James State Park nearly his entire life.

In late January, Justin Allen turned in the “seasonal” title beside his name and exchanged it for a “permanent, full-time” designation as a Maintenance Mechanic I. Justin was born and raised in McDowell County and is an alumni of McDowell High School. He has worked hard during the last five years as a seasonal General Utility Worker to achieve his goal of becoming a maintenance mechanic.

“I’m glad it finally happened,” he said. “I feel like this is ‘my’ park and that’s the attitude everyone has who works here.

When something needs to be done, we treat it like it’s our own and we get it done. It’s never seemed like work to me. I like being here and I like completing projects that make the park better for everyone.”

A month later, the maintenance staff grew again with the addition of Keith Harris. Keith is also a McDowell County native and has previously worked for the City of Marion in both the construction and maintenance department and the water department.

“I’m looking forward to the opportunities I’ll have to grow here,” he said of Lake James State Park. “It’s going to be a different environment than I’m used to; getting outside and interacting with the public. I can see it’s a team effort here and I look forward to being a part of it.”



*Justin Allen(l) and Keith Harris (r)*

## THE EAGLES OF LAKE JAMES

The eagles of Lake James have been frequenting the Paddy's Creek Area during the past month and many park visitors have been telling us about up-close encounters with these magnificent birds of prey. Back in February, Rafael Ruiz, of Marion, took this fantastic photograph of an adult bald eagle as it left its perch near the Paddy's Creek Area fishing pier. Early morning seems to be the best time to see these birds as they venture from the nest in search of fish.



# FRIENDS OF LAKE JAMES STATE PARK

## SAVE THE DATE

- The annual Lake James Clean Up is scheduled for March 17. Volunteers are needed to help with this comprehensive effort to remove trash for the Burke County shoreline of Lake James and areas within the state park. (See I&E schedule on page 2)
- The inaugural SwimRun Lake James endurance race will be April 7. Two-person teams traverse 3.5 miles of swimming and 13 miles of running, with 26 land-to-water transition points along the way. Find out more at [www.runsignup.com/Race/NC/Nebo/SwimRunNCLakeJames](http://www.runsignup.com/Race/NC/Nebo/SwimRunNCLakeJames).
- Distance runners should check out the Fonta Flora Half-marathon and 50K races, April 14 and 15. Learn more at [www.ultrasignup.com](http://www.ultrasignup.com).
- The Lake James International is part of the NC Triathlon Series and will take place at the Paddy's Creek area on April 28. This race will consist of a 1500 meter swim, a 40K bike race and a 10K run. For more information visit [www.setupevents.com](http://www.setupevents.com).



## 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 March and April are 7 a.m. until 9 p.m.
- The Paddy's Creek Area swim beach remains closed.
- The Paddy's Creek Area concessions stand and canoe and kayak rentals are closed through March. Call the park office during April to get an up-to-date schedule of availability.
- Park offices and gift shops are operating on limited hours during March and April so please call ahead, (828) 584-7728.



# 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
- Funded "high volume" concession stand employee for select weekends and holidays

## 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.*