



## A TALE OF TWO FESTIVALS



*Catawba Riverfest*

Summer may be over, but thousands of people are still enjoying the park this fall. On Sept. 21, Lake James hosted the 16th Annual Catawba Riverfest. The weather was perfect, the food was fantastic, and over 1,500 people visited educational booths and learned all about what makes the Catawba River, its reservoirs and communities so special. Highlights of the event included the traditional kayak raffle and the release of a rehabilitated red-tailed hawk back into the wild. The immature raptor, nursed back to health by the May Wildlife Rehabilitation Center at Lees-McRae College, made quite an

exit as it flew out of its travel carrier and over the crowd before resting in a nearby tree.

On Oct. 12, seventeen teams from the Carolinas competed in the 3rd annual Lake James Dragon Boat Festival. Started by Lake James' own Healing Dragons, the event is co-sponsored by Carolina Healthcare System Blue Ridge. This year's event drew a crowd of more than 2,500 race participants and fans. Teams came from as far away as Charleston, SC and included club teams, cancer survivor teams and community teams. The community

teams did quite well, with several of them placing higher than club teams. The Dragons of Motown, a local team out of Morganton, placed first in their division while The James Gang, a community team sponsored by the Friends of Lake James State Park group and comprised of park staff and friends group members, placed second in their own division. Stay tuned for next year's Save-the-Date because this is one event you won't want to miss.

*(To see photos of the Dragon Boat Festival, turn to pages 8-9.)*

**FALL FOLIAGE BOAT TOUR – FRIDAY, NOV. 1**

This might be your last chance to experience the fall foliage season before winter takes a firm grip and what better way to enjoy it than by boating around beautiful Lake James. Join Ranger Clay Veasey aboard the park patrol boat as we seek out the reds, golds, purples, and oranges of autumn. Only eight spaces are available and pre-registration is required. Call the park office at 828-584-7728 to save your spot. Meet at the East Picnic Shelter at 9:45 a.m. for a briefing and prompt 10 o'clock departure.

**FALL FOLIAGE BOAT TOUR – FRIDAY, NOV. 1**

Just in case you missed the first cruise of the day, here's another best chance to experience the fall foliage season before winter takes a firm grip and what better way to enjoy it than by boating around beautiful Lake James. Join Maintenance Mechanic Justin "Woody" Allen, famed bird-rescuer, aboard the park patrol boat as we seek out the reds, golds, purples, and oranges of autumn. Only eight spaces are available and pre-registration is required. Call the park office at 828-584-7728 to save your spot. Meet at the East Picnic Shelter at 11:45 a.m. for a briefing and prompt departure at 12:00.

**WALKING THE WETLANDS –  
SATURDAY, NOV. 2**

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 12:45 a.m. for a 1 o'clock carpool caravan to the site.



**ALL ABOUT OWLS – TUESDAY, NOV. 12**

Owls historically were a mysterious creature that was heard at night and rarely seen. Come unravel some of the mysteries of these birds of prey with Ranger Wade Engels as he leads a guided hike discussing the different species within North Carolina and their habitats. Afterwards the group will explore the owl's digestive tract through dissecting owl pellets. The hike will begin at the Catawba River Area picnic shelter at 9 a.m. Dissecting equipment and gloves will be provided for the owl pellets.

**WALKING THE WETLANDS – FRIDAY, NOV. 15**

Maintenance Mechanic Justin "Woody" Allen 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 Mechanic Allen at the Canal Bridge Boat Access on NC 126 at 9:45 a.m. for a 10 o'clock carpool caravan to the site.

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**ASTRONOMY FOR EVERYONE – SATURDAY, NOV. 16**

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 East Picnic Shelter at the Paddy's Creek Area at 5 p.m. to start things off before migrating to the upper parking lot. Register by calling the park office at 828-584-7728.

**AUTUMN HIKE – SATURDAY, NOV. 23**

The Fox Den Loop Trail offers just the right mix of open water, shoreline woods and fields to see plenty of plants and animal species in a morning. Join Ranger Jamie Cameron for a leisurely trek to start the day. We'll begin at 9 a.m. from the Catawba River Area picnic shelter. Bring binoculars if you have them and dress appropriately for the forecast. The hike will take approximately 90 minutes.

**PHOTO SAFARI – SUNDAY, NOV. 24**

Autumn colors might still be vibrant for this guided photography hike along the Paddy's Creek Trail. Shutterbugs of all skill levels are welcome to join Park Ranger Jamie Cameron, whose former career as a photojournalist and newspaper editor has equipped him with some helpful tips on composition – whether you shoot with a phone or a large format SLR. We'll meet at the bathhouse breezeway at the Paddy's Creek Area at 10 a.m.

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**HIKING THROUGH HISTORY – MONDAY, NOV. 25**

Follow in the footsteps of the Overmountain Men as they traveled from the frontier to the frontline of the Revolutionary War. The guided hike will follow a section of Lake James State Park's Overmountain Victory Trail as it shadows the original route that was used to ultimately reach the Battle of Kings Mountain. Join Ranger Wade Engels for a step back in time. The hike will begin at 9:30 a.m. from the Holly Discovery Trail parking lot.

**ALL ABOUT OWLS – FRIDAY, DEC. 6**

Owls historically were a mysterious creature that was heard at night and rarely seen. Come unravel some of the mysteries of these birds of prey with Ranger Wade Engels as he leads a guided hike discussing the different species within North Carolina and their habitats. Afterwards the group will explore the owl's digestive tract through dissecting owl pellets. The hike will begin at the Catawba River Area picnic shelter at 9 a.m. Dissecting equipment and gloves will be provided for the owl pellets.



**LONG ARM CEMETERY TOUR – THURSDAY, DEC. 12**

It's a rare opportunity for members of the public to have the chance to visit the historic cemetery on Long Arm Peninsula. Before the area became part of Lake James State Park in 2005 it was long held in private ownership. As new park facilities are developed to access and enjoy this beautiful area, the park staff is excited to provide this experience to walk among the tombstones. Meet Ranger Clay Veasey at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway at 10 a.m. and we'll caravan to the cemetery from there.

**WINTER BOAT TOUR – FRIDAY, DEC. 13**

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 9:45 a.m. for a briefing and prompt 10 a.m. departure.

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**COFFEE WITH SUPERINTENDENT COFFEY – SATURDAY, DEC. 14**

Join Park Supt. Nora Coffey for coffee, doughnuts and a sneak preview of the Visitor Center plans and renderings. Be one of the first people to see the exciting plans for the Visitor Center Exhibit Hall and the Cove Bridge that will connect the Long Arm and Paddy’s Creek Peninsulas. Meet at the Catawba River Area office at 9 a.m. Register by calling the park office at 828-584-7728.

**ANIMAL TRACK ORNAMENTS AND HIKE – SUNDAY, DEC. 15**

Join Park Superintendent Nora Coffey to learn about different animal tracks and other signs that can be found around Lake James and make your own animal track ornaments to take home. Come prepared for both indoor and outdoor activities. Meet at the Catawba River Area office at 1 p.m. Please call the park office at (828) 584-7728 for program registration

**HOLLY DISCOVERY HIKE – MONDAY, DEC. 16**

December is also a great time to walk through Lake James State Park in search of the park’s furry and feathered residents. The leaves have mostly fallen, but their aroma still hangs in the air as many of park’s animals are easily seen throughout the day. Meet Maintenance Mechanic Justin “Woody” Allen as he leads a hike along the Holly Discovery Trail to see what animals can be found during Winter. The hike starts from the Holly Discovery Trailhead parking lot in the Paddy’s Creek Area at 10 a.m.

**HIKING THROUGH HISTORY – FRIDAY, DEC. 18**

Follow in the footsteps of the Overmountain Men as they traveled from the frontier to the frontline of the Revolutionary War. The guided hike will follow a section of Lake James State Park’s Overmountain Victory Trail as it shadows the original route that was used to ultimately reach the Battle of Kings Mountain. Join Ranger Wade Engels for a step back in time. The hike will begin at 9:30 a.m. from the Holly Discovery Trail parking lot.

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**PRE-CHRISTMAS FOX DEN LOOP HIKE – TUESDAY, DEC. 24**

Before we belly-up to the Christmas feast, let's get some exercise under our belts. December is a great month to walk through Lake James State Park in search of the park's furry and feathered residents. The leaves have mostly fallen, but their aroma still hangs in the air as many of park's animals are easily seen throughout the day. Meet Ranger Jamie Cameron as he leads a hike around the Mills Creek Loop to see what animals can be found during Fall. The hike starts from the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway at 10 a.m. The hike is 3.6 miles long, so bring water and snacks and dress appropriately for the forecast.

**POST-CHRISTMAS HOLLY DISCOVERY HIKE – THURSDAY, DEC. 26**

Let's work off that second slice of pecan pie. December is a great time to walk through Lake James State Park in search of the park's furry and feathered residents. The leaves have mostly fallen, but their aroma still hangs in the air as many of park's animals are easily seen throughout the day. Meet Ranger Jamie Cameron as he leads a hike along the Holly Discovery Trail to see what animals can be found during Winter. The hike starts from the Holly Discovery Trailhead parking lot in the Paddy's Creek Area at 10 a.m.

**FIRST DAY HIKE – WEDNESDAY, JAN. 1**

There is no better way to start off a new year than with a hike at Lake James. Meet Park Ranger Wade Engels 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.



## LJSP STAFFING NEWS

It's safe to describe Lake James State Park is a highly desirable landing spot for rangers and maintenance staff across the 41 parks and recreation areas in North Carolina. The proof is in the low employee turnover here: When you get to Lake James you stay at Lake James.

It is therefore rare and exciting to welcome a new member to the ranger ranks at the park. Wade Engels arrived for his first day on duty near the end of September and has quickly established himself as the park's lead interpretation and education ranger, as well as volunteer coordinator.

It's easy to put him in these important positions given Wade's already impressive experience as a North Carolina state ranger. In 2011 Engels started his career as a ranger at Haw River State Park. He then served at Crowder's Mountain State Park from 2014 to 2017. After returning to his native northern New Jersey in the interim, the team at Lake James happily welcomed Wade back to the state park family this year as its newest member.

"Wade Engels comes to us with so much park experience and accolades from former co-workers that it feels like winning the park ranger lottery," said Park Superintendent Nora Coffey. "He brings a wide range of skills and expertise that will have immediate



*Ranger Wade Engels*

value in terms of park operations and visitor experience."

"My family and I are very happy to be here," Engels said. "Lake James is located in such perfect geography for access to outdoor activities on the water and in the mountains."

In terms of how he views his duties and responsibilities Engels remarked, "The position of lead I&E ranger is especially worthwhile

because it focuses on the importance of giving young people a positive mindset towards the outdoors. As volunteer coordinator, my goal will be to put people on tasks and assignments that give them the most satisfaction, while maximizing their skills to help the park be the best it can be."

The park staff has also seen some recent in-house reshuffling as Jamie Cameron has been promoted into a Ranger II position that brings new responsibilities and challenges to his job. Ranger Cameron has worked at Lake James for more than eight years and is well-deserving of this move up the ranks according to Coffey. "Since he was hired here back in 2011, Ranger Cameron has shown his dedication and put in hard work that make him an excellent Ranger II candidate. I expect he will prove himself quite capable in this new capacity."



*Ranger Jamie Cameron*

# THERE BE DRAGONS HERE!



**FRIENDS OF LAKE JAMES STATE PARK**

# **3RD ANNUAL LAKE JAMES DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL**



## NATURE NOTES



While the calendar might suggest the year is coming to an end, the plants and animals we share Lake James and the surrounding landscape with have no concept of such things. The arrival of winter is neither a beginning or an end; it's just another season with different challenges for survival.

While winter marks a dramatic decrease in the number of human visitors at the park, birds and animals are increasingly easy to spot and observe. Much of that is due to the lack of

foliage. The winter gallery of bare trunks and branches are a stark contrast to the calliope of motion and colors during spring, summer and fall. Without leaves to hide behind, wildlife is seemingly more abundant to the human eye.

During this period of feast or famine, songbirds of many species will flock together into roving groups that can be as large as several dozen individuals. These birds might not be of a feather, but they benefit from the partnership by helping each other find food and avoid predators. Birdwatchers can take advantage of the behavior during their hikes by locating the flocks and patiently scanning through them for hidden gems. The most abundant and visible members of these feeding groups are tufted titmice and Carolina chickadees, but there are often golden-crowned and ruby-crowned kinglets, pine warblers, Eastern towhees, Northern cardinals and hermit thrushes in tow. If you're really lucky, you'll spot some of the rare winter birds as well; brown creepers, red-breasted nuthatches, fox sparrows and winter wrens to name a few.

It's also a prime season to watch for mammals of all shapes and sizes. Sure there are deer feeding in the open, but there is also the increased possibility of seeing bobcats, foxes, otters and opossums during daylight hours.

It might seem counterintuitive, but sometimes the coldest days are some of the best days to get outside and do some nature watching, if you can pull yourself away from the fireplace.

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

**Chuck Abernathy** - Member at Large

**Randall Conley** - Member at Large

**Mickey Lewis** - Member at Large

**George Milner** - Member at Large

**Greg Norell** - Member at Large

**Shane Prisby** - 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)

## YEAR OF THE SNAKE: THE FINALE

And so we come to the final installment of North Carolina State Parks' Year of the Snake.

Over the course of the past 10 months, we've learned a lot about these interesting and often misunderstood members of the environment we live in.

Snakes are found in just about every habitat there is in the state of North Carolina, from the darkest forests to the busiest cities. There are types of snakes adapted to aquatic environments and types that require rocky outcrops in which to hibernate during winter.

Some species of snake prey on insects and other small invertebrates while others eat mammals as large as cottontail rabbits.



*Timber Rattlesnake*

Most snakes in the American Southeast are non-venomous and rather rely on constriction to subdue prey. The few venomous species inject a toxic cocktail into their victims and then hang back until incapacitation or death has occurred.

Snakes in North Carolina run the gamut – from the tiny, 6-inch worm snake to the common black rat snake that can reach 6 feet in length.

Most importantly, we have come to understand snakes are a vital thread in the fabric of our natural world. They help maintain rodent populations at healthy levels and even serve as an important food source themselves for birds of prey and mammalian carnivores.

Last but not least, snakes are just plain cool to look at. We hope you've enjoyed the Year of the Snake. Stay tuned to find out what 2020's focus will be.

## 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 November are 7 a.m. until 8 p.m. Starting Dec. 1 the gate hours change to 7 a.m. until 7 p.m.
- The Paddy's Creek Area swim beach is closed for the season
- The Paddy's Creek Area concessions stand and canoe and kayak rentals are closed for the season.
- Lake James State Park is OPEN Thanksgiving Day. The park is CLOSED Christmas Day.
- Hidden Cove Boat Access will be closed Dec., Jan. & Feb.

# 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.*