



Friends of Oil Creek State Park~ Fall 2021

Park Manager's Report

Oil Creek has often been a great place for wildlife viewing but this year seemed to be one of my best. I'll start with bobcats. For me, bobcats were always one of those majestic sightings that only seemed to happen once in a blue moon. This spring and summer it was a weekly occurrence. Not only for myself but for many others that enjoy this park. Many of you know that I reside with my family in the Blood Farm-house located within the park boundaries. This year we were treated with about a month's worth of bobcat sightings right from the windows of the house. One particular cat was even fond of taking "catnaps" on our front porch. Why so many sightings?? Best guess is that we had a healthy rabbit population and he/she knew that. We even got to see it catch a few.



Bears have always been somewhat of a common sighting in the park, but sightings for them seemed to be up as well. Lots of people seeing sows with two, three and even four cubs. Plenty of boar sightings as well. And as always, they seemed to enjoy our dumpsters.



Other wildlife sightings that seemed higher than normal were owls. Anywhere I went in the park it felt like I was hearing owls. Mostly Barred, Screech and Great Horned. Many people don't know how easily owls can be called to within feet of you. After trick or treating this past Halloween my family and I heard two Great Horned owls calling to each other a short distance from our house. My daughter wanted to test out her skills and began calling back to them. As I grabbed our spotlight she continued to call and within minutes an owl landed in a tree about 40 feet from us. I have also had success using my phone to call them in when I'm hiking through the park. Keep that in mind next time you are out hiking the trails. Or you can sign up for one of our Owl Prowl programs that we host periodically throughout the summer.

I wish you all a happy and safe holiday season.

David Hallman

Photo— Tim Rudisille
Thankyou!

Environmental Education Specialist



Park programming has come to an end for the 2021 season, and while I'm always sad to leave, there is a lot of good to look back on and countless possibilities to look forward to. This past season started off with a few months of no programming due to COVID restrictions within DCNR, but that allowed time for me to attend several online conferences that I otherwise would not have had time to participate in, and time to write up some education grant proposals for new programming equipment.

Some of that equipment purchased will make it possible for us to offer quality programming next season including Birding for Beginners, Papermaking, Natural Dyes, gardening programming, living history programming, and an archaeology-themed day camp.

This was the first year I was able to host DiscoverE Day Camps for ages 4-5, 6-8, and 9-12. The camp themes this year were Discovering Senses, Ecosystem Safari, and Wilderness Survival, respectively. I had quite a bit of help from this season's intern, Casey Rust, who was an incredible asset to the park. Next season we plan to offer these camps again, and hopefully we'll see increased participation.

The park joined a climate and rural systems partnership with Shenango CREST this season, offering joint programming that focused on using gardening as a tool to slow the effects, mitigate outcomes, and adapt to climate change in a sustainable and manageable way. I was a guest speaker for some of the zoom programs offered through the group, and we had a program in-person at the park titled 'Gardening for Wildlife,' where we focused on supporting climate-stressed animals. This partnership will likely continue next season, and be strengthened by the greenhouse we will be building in spring with funding from the Environmental Education Fund through DCNR.





Other programs that were offered this year include Salamander Safaris, Crayfishin', Fly Fishing 101, a variety of historical-themed hikes, Natural Dyes, Wildflower Walks, Petroleum Centre Tours, International Women's Health and Fitness Day Hike, Fall Foliage Hikes, Wild Edibles and Medicines, PA Mammals, Vulture Awareness Day, Snakes of PA, Frogs and Toads of Venango County, and a few others.

The Trail Talk video series on the park's Facebook page has been received incredibly well by members of the surrounding communities. These videos are between 2 and 5 minutes in length and cover historical and natural topics that are park-specific. I plan on making more of these videos for next season to encourage visitorship and keep park patrons informed about park events and updates.

Another successful project at the park this season was the office garden makeover, which was featured in a previous newsletter. We had volunteers from the Venango County Master Gardeners and the Future Leaders and Entrepreneurs eXchange (FLEX) who helped us weed, prep the bed, and plant everything out. We've seen a wide variety of pollinators visiting the garden this year, including sphinx moths, bumblebees, honey bees, a variety of butterflies, and lots of hummingbirds! We are very much looking forward to seeing how the garden comes back next year, and we'd like to say thank you again for your support of this project. We couldn't have done it without you.

I am expecting to return to the park mid-February, with park programming starting back up shortly after that. I can't wait to see you all again!

Ivy

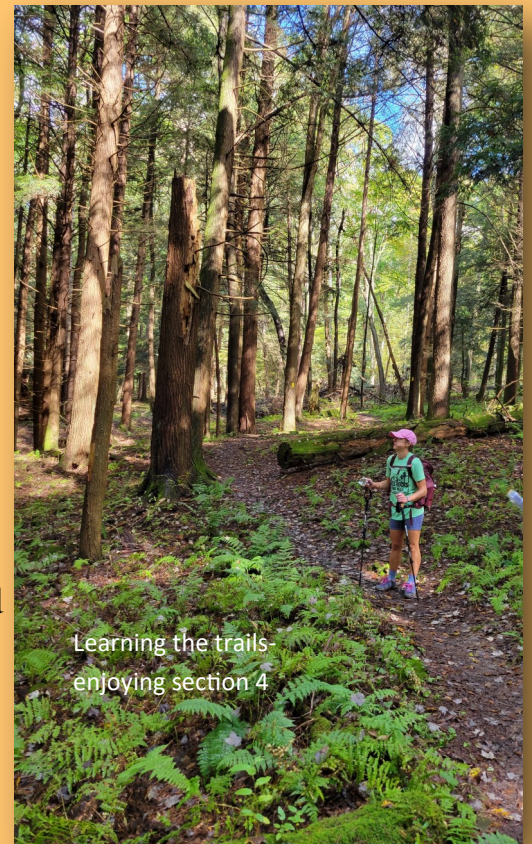




First 50k

Walking and hiking have always been a passion of mine. Throw Oil Creek into the mix and I have my paradise. Oil Creek is a part of me—since pre-school age, when I participated in the Junior Naturalist program held every summer, to picnics and family get-togethers through adulthood when I joined the Friends of Oil Creek Board of Directors.

When the COVID-19 Pandemic hit in March 2020, to help curb cabin fever and the negative effects of not being able to be out as much, I began hiking even more. I did it mainly to get out of the house, to clear my mind to help process what was happening across the world, but also to help stay fit and active. 4 mile hikes turned into 7 miles, then 12 miles, my longest was 22 miles. With all the walking and hiking I was doing, I thought why not try and sign-up for the Oil Creek 100 race? I am by no means a runner, I jog for ½ mile and I can feel my lungs gasping for air. Walking, even at a quick pace, is something I have always had the stamina for. In March 2021, with my hopes set high, I logged on to see if I could reserve a spot doing the 50k. All spaces were already filled as those who had originally signed up for the 2020 race were anxious to race this coming year. To my dismay, I reserved a spot on the waitlist with low expectations that I would make it into the race in 2021. In the back of my mind I was thinking there was no way I could stay in shape and be ready for something like this in October 2022. In the interim, I continued working out, walking and hiking to stay in shape with the slim glimmer of hope there would be a spot for me. In the middle of July, an email was received from the race director, Tom Jennings, that limited 50k spots were opened. I jumped at the chance and registered immediately. I increased my distances in excitement and anticipation of race day. My friend Libby, (who volunteered at Aid Station #4 on race day for a number of years and fellow Friends Board Member) was even so kind to help re-acquaint me with the Gerard Trail where the race is held, as it had been a number of years since I had been able to hike at the Park. We completed all 4 sections of the trail together. We did each section on separate days as it was my intention to familiarize myself vs. timing with what to expect come October 16th.



Learning the trails-
enjoying section 4

As the day approached, so many thoughts came to mind—would I get lost? Would I get hurt? Was I even in shape? The last thing I was worried about was the weather. Turns out, that should have been my biggest worry. I woke up early the morning of to make the somewhat short drive from my house to Titusville to arrive with ample time before the race started. By the time I arrived and parked, it was a monsoon. I believe the weather forecast had predicted up to 2 inches of rain for the day. I threw my drop bag down, which had a change of clothes, extra snacks and shoes to be picked up at AS #2. When the 50k runners were released at 7AM, the wind was fierce and the rain was still coming down hard. I had no clue what to expect on the trail, as I had primarily hiked it under somewhat sunny & fairly dry days. Despite the mud, perpetual ‘river’ running through a big part of the Gerard Trail, a few slips, I was able to finish; thankfully not injured, but caked in mud. What an experience!

I have to say the highlight of the race was when I was coming into AS#2, I noticed my friends, Libby, Stacey and Becky waiting for me holding signs, cheering me on.



Finished!

The kindness and warmth from them to stand out in the cold rain to support me, and on a Saturday to boot is something to be admired. After changing my socks & shoes and eating some food as well as warming up at Egbert Pavilion, I headed out for Section 3 with a more positive spirit knowing I had friends that care about me. This really helped me push through to the finish line where my fiancé, Stacey, and her husband were there to see me complete the course.

I would like to give a big thank you to Race Director, Tom Jennings, all of the volunteers who spent countless hours in the cold, wet weather to man the aid stations, check points, register/check-in people, place trail markers, clean-up and just being there. Everyone did such a wonderful job to make my first 50k experience wonderful despite the weather.

Thank you to The Over Hill Gang for all of their hard work to maintain the trails & the Friends Group for your dedication to help keeping the park beautiful and accessible to all.

Rebecca Beach





Ski and Hiking Trail Culverts



The Friends trail group has been fortunate to have Boy Scouts, when working on their Eagle Scout Awards, choose Oil Creek for their projects. With that in mind Amy Douthett, a Friend board member, contacted Boy Scout troop 11 in Oil City for help with much needed culverts along the ski/hiking trail. These spots were very wet and needed much attention. This project interested scout Cameron Weller, and he committed to the task. He contacted Oakland Township, and they collaborated with the installation of the culverts which were bought by the Friends. The Oakland township maintenance staff taught Cameron how to operate the equipment and to prepare and place the culverts. His fellow scouts, friends, and family helped with this endeavor. Cameron did an excellent job. We are all pleased that he received his Eagle Scout award! Thank you so much, Cameron



Over-The-Hill Gang



Rebuilding trail that a large, old oak took with it as it fell

The OTHG kept all trails open through late summer and Fall despite periods of inclement weather. In addition to removing downed trees, we were able to improve some trail sections by replacing old, worn bumpers and digging ditches to re-route water runoff, in chronically wet areas. In some situations, short bypasses were constructed in order to avoid the worst of the wet sections.

We have found that many old metal drainpipes are easily clogged by debris and rust out causing water to overflow during heavy rains. Recently, on one especially troublesome section we removed the old pipe, deepened the drainage ditch and built a bridge over the ditch. This section was checked after a heavy rain and we noted that the overflow had been eliminated. We will continue to address similar situations throughout the trail system, although we will attempt to utilize larger drainpipes whenever possible rather than build bridges.

Exceptionally severe weather occurred during the weekend of the OC100, resulting in damage to trails in some areas but the OTHG has addressed these

areas and overall condition of the trail is back to pre-race

Brain trusts finalizing plans for the "Big Dig"

conditions. We recognize that the OC 100 is a highly valuable asset for our area and we are pleased to help make this event a continued success.

The OTHG is very appreciative of compliments and expressions of gratitude that we frequently receive from runners and hikers. We feel fortunate to be able to do what we do while providing service to others.



Enjoy the trails and the special beauty of our Park.

Denny Pattison
For the Over the Hill Gang.



Removing huge tree from the trail



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President's Report

It's that time of year again when we begin our Membership Drive for 2022. Please consider renewing or joining. If you sent in a membership this fall after September or you received your membership through the OC 100 Trail Runs, your membership is good until December 2022. The membership year runs from January to December. Memberships are \$10 for an Individual, \$25 for a family, or \$100 for a corporate membership. By joining the Friends of Oil Creek, you will be giving back to Oil Creek State Park for all the fun and adventures you may experience within the park. With your help, the Friends support the efforts of the Over the Hill Gang and the Hiking and Ski Trail Group. This year we supported a huge garden project at the park office, a Boy Scout Eagle Project, and were able to hold the Biathlon again. This is just a few of the ways the Friends support the park through your membership donation which is tax deductible through the Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundation. You can join online on our website or by mail. Consider a membership as a Christmas gift to yourself or someone who loves the park. It's the gift that keeps on giving

Peg Sims

Chair Friends of Oil Creek State Park

Along the Oil Creek bike trail is this memorial bench in honor of Lee Ann Reiners. Lee Ann passed away a few years ago. We have all missed her. She was a true friend to all things Oil Creek. When passing this memorial, pause and look at the beautiful view which was chosen by the Allegheny Canoe Club to memorialize Lee Ann



Membership

9

The Friends of Oil Creek would like to thank all the members who renewed their membership and to thank the many new members.

Your membership helps maintain existing projects in Oil Creek State Park. Your contributions also help maintain new initiatives in the Park. Your membership also helps to maintain the Gerard hiking trail, the bike trail, and the ski trails. In addition, these resources fund the “Over the Hill Gang”.

If you haven't renewed your membership or would like to become a member, follow the link to become a friend of Oil Creek State Park: www.friendsocsp.org. The membership prices: single \$10, family \$25, and corporate/business/group \$100. You can also become a Friends member or renew your membership by contacting the FOCSP in one of the ways listed below:

- Write the Friends of Oil Creek
PO Box# 1273 Oil City, Pa 16301
- E-Mail– oilcreekfriends@gmail.com
- Website– www.friendsocsp.org
- Call Park Office—814 676-5915



Thank you Tim Rudisille for this beautiful photo of a black-eyed junco



The Friends of Oil Creek State Park is a Chapter of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundation



Friends of Oil Creek Mission Statement

The Friends of Oil Creek State Park support the Park's mission to preserve, protect, and interpret our natural environment while providing recreational and educational opportunities for residents and visitors to the region.