



Spring 2015
Volume 15

Friends of Oil Creek State Park

Two Tramps in Mud

Roberts Frost

...The sun was warm but the wind was chill.

You know how it is with an April day
When the sun is out and the wind is still,

You're one month on in the middle of
May.

But if you so much as dare to speak,
A cloud comes over the sunlit arch,
A wind comes off a frozen peak,
And you're two months back in the
middle of March. ...



Oil Creek has become a panoply of daffodils signifying a past much different from today.

Park Manager's Report

Winter is over...I think anyway. It is at this time of year that we get to watch the environment come back to life. Flowers start to bloom, birds are preparing their nests, and fishermen are busy trying to land a lunker. Each season holds special meaning to me, and it also provides me with a different reason to get outside and explore the world around us. Usually this time of year I am busy scouting for turkey and preparing for the upcoming hunting season. However, recently I have discovered a new hobby that has begun to take up a good portion of my time. Mushroom hunting. Not the kind of mushroom that makes one see purple elephants, but rather the kind that chefs across the world pay big money for.

I have always enjoyed mushrooms but have never taken advantage of wild edibles until we had a mushroom club presentation at the park last summer. It opened my eyes to a new world, and I honestly feel silly that I haven't taken advantage of these delicious fungi earlier in my life. Mushrooms can be harvest from April through late fall, if you know what to look for. And that is the key. You must know what to look for and be absolutely sure that you are picking the correct kind. Any "professional" mushroom hunter will tell you to attend a program and go out with someone knowledgeable before you ever eat a wild mushroom. Let me stress this point again. NEVER eat a wild edible unless you are 100% sure.

Now, if I haven't scared you away, and you are still reading, I want you to know that there are many mushrooms that are good for beginners to pick. The reason they are good for beginners is because they are difficult to confuse with poisonous species. Last summer, after attending the presentation, I began with one such "beginner" mushroom called the Black Trumpet or Horn of Plenty. This not only is a great beginner mushroom, but it considered to be one of the tastiest and most sought after. They can be difficult to find but are well worth the effort especially if you have a nice thick steak to prepare them with.

I could sit here and talk about different kinds of mushrooms all day but I am not a professional, and you should not take my word for it. I merely hope to open your eyes to a new experience that you may not have considered before. If I have peaked any interest, I encourage you to seek out a local club and attend a meeting. The park hopes to have another presentation on mushrooms this summer. If interested you can call the park or look on our calendar of events located on the Oil Creek website.

Enjoy as always,

Dave Hallman





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 Friends of Oil Creek State Park are a chapter of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundation



This year’s race , the 7th one, will be held October 10th-2015. Registration began March 15th. The 50k and 100K have sold out. The 100 miler is over half full.

The trail runners of Oil Creek are getting geared up for another amazing trail running season. However, first we will all come together and do some much needed maintenance on the trail. A special team called “The Over-The-Hill-Gang” consisting mainly of retired men who pride themselves on working on and maintaining the Girard Hiking Trail of Oil Creek will be out every week fixing problem areas of the trail. Many of us join them and work hard to get the trail ready for the next season.



Early spring shot of the Benninghoff lookout taken by an OCI100 runner .

Drake Well Museum will be holding a 5 mile and 13 mile trail race on May 16th. This race will take place on the Girard Hiking Trail. So many local runners including myself will be out to clear those sections and make them as safe as possible for the race. If interested in the *MEET-U in 5 and 1/2 Trail Race* you can register at www.runrace.net. We all take great pride in our trails here in Oil Creek State Park. So if you are looking for a way to get out of the stress of everyday life and get reconnected with our natural surroundings, then I encourage you to spend some time on our trails. Happy Spring!! Adam Peterson

Dandelions are popping up everywhere...even through the gravel



chicks-in-the-Sticks

Chicks-in-the-Sticks 2015

The “Chicks-in-the-Sticks” event is going to be held on June 13th this year. For those of you who aren't familiar with this, it is a one day event for women only, ages 12 to 100+. It's held at Oil Creek State Park in the area of the office in Petroleum Centre. And it will be held, rain or shine so bring appropriate clothing with you.

As of this writing we are finalizing the classes and registration form. This year we will be making it possible to register online as well as pay for it online. However, registering and paying by regular mail will also be possible. We expect to have the registration forms ready sometime during the week of April 27th. To register or to get more information go to <http://friendsocsp.org/> and click on EVENTS, then Chicks-in-the-Sticks. Then click on whatever you'd like to look at.

This year's classes include: Nature printing, Basic First Aid, Aquatic Insects, Dutch Oven Cooking, Basic Kayaking, Overnight Survival, Outdoor Photography, Fly Casting, Basic Bicycle Maintenance, Yoga, Archery, Basics of Birding, Tree Identification, Geocaching, Intro to Backpacking,

Build Your Own Micro Alcohol Stove, Fly Tying, .22 Caliber Rifle Shooting, and possibly two or three more. Each activity is scheduled for one hour and fifteen minutes. All materials and equipment will be provided.

Each participant can choose up to four different activities. Scheduling is done on a first come-first served basis. A catered lunch will be provided. A Chinese auction will be held and some small items will be for sale so bring some extra cash with you.

If you have any questions contact Kirby Neubert at kirby@northcountrycreations.com, or at (814) 677-4633, or the park office at (814) 676-5915.

Last year was our inaugural event and 79 ladies had a wonderful time. We hope to see those ladies again this year along with a lot of new faces!

Kirby Neubert

Event Chairman

Spring at the Miller
Farm Overlook...



Biathlon 2015

10th Year

The Friends of Oil Creek Summer Biathlon has been a special event that many people enjoy. We are anticipating that the 10th Anniversary will be the biggest and the best biathlon yet. The 10th Annual Biathlon will be held Saturday, August 8, 2015. For the 10th anniversary we are planning a special micro fiber race shirt and we will be acknowledging those who have participated all ten years. Registration is limited and already filling up fast so go to our website to download a race application and get it in the mail. We are also looking for volunteers such as range officials, clip loaders, hit/miss recorders, and several other important jobs. Email us at oilcreekfriends@gmail.com or call race director, John Sims, at 814-354-2802 if you would be willing to volunteer or would like to be a sponsor. Sponsors of \$100 or more will be printed on our race shirt and listed on our website. The Biathlon is one of the biggest fund raisers for the Friends group and all proceeds come directly back into the park to support our many projects. Please help us make this the best biathlon yet by participating, volunteering, or with a sponsorship. Run fast, shoot straight!



Oil Creek State Park's Upcoming Events

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Chicks-in-the-Sticks....June 13th

Biathlon... August 8th

OC 100...October 10th & 11th

As summer progresses, more events will be added. Continue to check our website for more information.

www.friendsocsp.org



Spring along the bike trail .

Orphan Wells in the Park

John Kolopchick

The Orphan Wells Project involves a group of volunteers who look for abandoned oil and gas wells on public lands, including Oil Creek State Park, in Venango County. The group of volunteers, members of the Venango Pa Senior Environmental Corps (VPaSEC), started looking for wells in 2003, after other groups had also searched for and found numerous abandoned wells in the park. The purpose of the project is to get the wells properly plugged.

The story of oil and gas wells in the Park began in 1859 when Col. Edwin Drake drilled the first commercial oil well and started the oil boom of the 1860s. Since then the Park's land has seen a series of drilling operations. The state did not require the registration of all oil and gas wells prior to 1984 and since most of the Park's wells were drilled before that date, they were not registered and no maps or other records give their specific location. Over the years, most of those wells have been abandoned.

Such orphan wells are the source of many environmental problems. The well bore acts as a conduit which allows materials from normally separate layers to mix together. Gas and oil come to the surface. Gas and oil mix into the water table and contaminate springs, streams and water wells. Oil that reaches the surface pollutes streams. Wells also collapse and are hazards to hunters and hikers in the Park.

Since the VPaSEC project began volunteers have located over 860 wells in the Park. The well hunters work in groups of three to nine. The only way to find a well is to actually walk the wooded hillsides and look

for the telltale signs of an abandoned well. Some still have a pumping jack but most are just pipe casings or open holes in the ground. When a well is found, the group photographs, marks and tags the site and records specific details about the well including its GPS location. This information is then turned over to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and DEP then examines the site and adds it to the well plugging list.

Between 1997 and 2010, eleven plugging contracts worth 2.2 million dollars have plugged 528

wells in the Park. More than 700 additional wells are on the list and need to be plugged. Each year additional wells are plugged and more are added to the list.

Well hunters are always amazed at how many abandoned wells they find. They estimate that they have covered about 50 percent of the Park. The well hunters describe their work as a treasure hunt in the Park. They never know what they will find. Some days it's abandoned wells, others it's oil field artifacts, and others it's an opportunity to enjoy the wildflowers, fungi and animals of the Park.



WHAT A GREAT CROSS COUNTRY SKIING SEASON

Here's to a fantastic winter of cross country skiing at OCSP! Thanks to what may have been the best winter weather ever (non-winter enthusiasts might dispute the use of the term "best"!), and the tireless efforts of John and Peg Sims and Sun Valley Nordic, we had nearly three solid months of the best local skiing in memory. The long stretches of very cold weather kept the snow from melting, which resulted in a long-lasting, packed base. The drainage improvements accomplished during the volunteer work days over the preceding summer and fall made for almost no wet areas, and John's expert grooming and tracking kept the trails ski-able deep into the spring. John and Peg worked with the gas well tenders and others to minimize damage to the set tracks. The efforts to improve the trails and keep them, as much as possible, as dedicated classical cross country ski trails, coupled with the very modest trail fee, has paid off, with people coming from all over the area (Pittsburgh, Cleveland, etc.) and turning the facility into a regional draw. It is especially exciting to see a number of children and young adults (including Jeff Smith's Slippery Rock students) give the sport a try and discover the best (and most fun) of all full-body aerobic activities. Of course, the intensity level can vary from heart-pounding to, ah, stopped and shooting the breeze!

Winterfest, with Tambra Sabatini as chief instructor, was a huge success, with many participants. Many folks who tried skiing for the first time at the event have already become regulars on the trails. The night skis were a big success, and one was timed perfectly with a nearly full moon and clear skies.

Temperatures from -12 F to 50 F made for a variety skiing conditions. We got to use our extreme cold weather gear and then be reminded how few layers are needed once we're warmed up. The quiet solitude and beauty mix with the camaraderie among fellow skiers to make winter a season to look forward to. Please join us next winter!

Bruce Getsinger



This little fellow appeared mid-season and stayed for the duration...

**Keep up to date
with Oil Creek activities
by visiting our new website at:**

www.friendsocsp.org

President's Report

President's Report

Oil Creek State Park attracts a wide variety of visitors and park users throughout the four seasons. One way to be a good "Friend" to the park is to respect the park and fellow users. With over 7,000 acres, 52 miles of trails, and 9.7 miles of bike trail, there is plenty of room for all to enjoy our beautiful park. Having a "code of honor" or "trail etiquette" is one way to show respect.

I have thought a lot about trail etiquette and what follows is some of my ideas of what it means. First, the old adage "LEAVE NO TRACE" is a good place to start. LNT can mean staying on the designated trails when applicable as to not disturb the flora and fauna. Leave plants and flowers in the park for all to enjoy. Take photos instead. Stay far away from wildlife, especially things like eagles nests and bears! Keep dogs on leash and on the trail for their own safety and the safety and consideration of others. Pick up from the trail any dog waste. No one wants dog poop on their running or hiking shoes and feces can spread disease. LNT means you should pack out anything you bring in and to be a good steward and pick up any litter you find. Another good motto is to "leave your campsite better than you found it".

When using the hiking, ski trails, or paved bike trail, be considerate and stay to the right when passing someone head on. Trail users, especially skiers, coming downhill have the right of way. If you are catching up to a slower trail user, let them know well in advance that you are behind them and want to pass. Say something like "excuse me, I'm right behind you" or "passing on your left". Slower trail users should step a side or move over. Be friendly! Wearing a bear bell can be good for warning both bears and humans.

When paddling on Oil Creek, or walking along the shore, give plenty of leeway to fishermen and pass by quietly. Hunting is popular in Oil Creek with 6,250 acres open for hunting. Trail runners, hikers and skiers should be alert and wear bright clothing during hunting season. Hunters might consider avoiding peak times or trails popular with runners, hikers, and skiers for everyone's safety and positive experience..

During the short winter ski season, runners, hikers, dog walkers, snowshoers, and hunters should avoid the designated ski trails that are professionally groomed for skiers who are paying for this service. Please consider using the many other miles of trails/acres in the park during ski season. If you do come across a groomed ski trail, please stay well to the side of the tracks. It takes much time and expense to prepare the trails for skiers enjoyment and safety.

With some thoughtfulness and consideration everyone can happily share Oil Creek State Park and experience the wide variety of outdoor adventures to discover there. Be a "Friend" and respect the park and fellow users.

Happy Trails,

Peg Sims, President

Membership

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

Your membership helps maintain existing projects in the Park. Your contributions also support new initiatives throughout the Park. Your dues contribute to the trail maintenance of the Gerard trail, the bike trail, and the ski trails. In addition, these resources help fund the “Over-The-Hill Gang’s” efforts to keep the trails clear and to erect and maintain the many bridges and benches along the Gerard trail.

If you haven’t renewed your membership or would like to join the Friends of Oil Creek, follow the link on our web page ... www.friendsocsp.org . The membership prices are : single \$10, family \$25, and corporate/business/group \$100.

You can become a member or renew your membership by contacting the FOCSP in one of the ways listed below. Our web site has a direct link.

- Oil Creek Office
305 State Park Road
Oil City, PA 16301
Park Office Phone: 814-676-5915
- E-Mail: oilcreekfriends@gmail.com
- Website: www.friendsocsp.org



Bridges throughout the park are done through combined efforts of the Park Staff, The Friends Group, and The Over-The-Hill