



Friends of Oil Creek Early Spring Newsletter



Park Manager's Report

Thank You WCO Mark Kerr

I am taking a bit of a break from writing about park updates to thank Waterways Conservation Officer, Mark Kerr on his service to the Commonwealth and on his recent retirement. Mark has been protecting our waterways and fisheries for over 30 years.

I first met Mark in 2012 when I came to Oil Creek. I was quickly impressed by Marks professionalism and love for his job. Mark was always willing to help the park out whether he was directing trout stockings, or patrolling for fishing violations, illegal dumpsites and even hunting violations.

Throughout the years Mark knew that I was often without a Ranger and always offered his assistance, if and when I might need it. I took comfort knowing that he was just a call away from helping me with just about anything. To me, Mark is the definition of what a WCO should be. His professionalism is second to none. Thank you Mark for your service and enjoy what lies ahead. If you know Mark, please thank him on a career well done.

David Hallman



Thank you Dot Monahan
for this great picture

Ivy Kuberry Enviromental Specialist

Hello, all! I'm officially back in the park and excited for the 2024 season. This year kicked off with our small-scale maple sugaring operation and a few pop-up and scheduled programs. This is the first year we've used our new equipment for programming since last year we decided to take some time to practice. We tapped 17 Red Maples, collected around 52 gallons of sap, and finished off with almost a gallon of syrup. I'm planning to take some of the final product to our annual meeting to enter a maple syrup competition, so cross your fingers! Oil Creek maples make some sweet and smooth syrup. If you're interested in helping next year, please reach out. I'd like to eventually open these programs to school groups, but I'll need folks to help me tend the fire and make sure the sap doesn't boil too low.

We have a few other volunteer opportunities coming up as well, including a Pollinator Garden Clean Up day on April 20th. We'll be at the office from 10:00AM to 2:00PM, and folks are welcome to come and go as they need. Bring a lunch and something to drink if you plan to stay all day! We'll have the gloves and garden tools. After that we are planning to have one hour of garden weeding every-other Thursday at 2:00PM starting May 2, so if that's more your speed, I'd love to see you there!

Finally, we are starting to search for a volunteer who may be interested in taking over the care and data-collection of our Bluebird and Tree Swallow nest boxes. This entails assisting with box cleaning, a weekly visit to our nest boxes with provided data sheets, and reporting findings to me at the end of the year. There is a yearly conference for Cavity Nest Volunteers that you'll also be invited to, which is a great learning and networking opportunity!

Another project in the works is our Watershed Education Workshop on May 18th and 19th, which is a professional development opportunity for educators who work with 6-12 grade. We're holding the indoor portion of the workshop at Drake Well, and the outdoor portion in Oil Creek, and we'll be teaching educators how to measure stream health with biological, chemical, and physical data collection. If you are interested or if you know an educator who may want to get involved, feel free to reach out! We are offering 13.5 Act 48 hours for the event, and participants will get a copy of the Watershed Education Curriculum. The workshop costs \$25.

Oil Creek is going to be featured in the Commonwealth Library's Summer Literacy Road Trip for 2024. The program encourages families, educators, and education partners to discover Pennsylvania libraries and State Parks with fun activities and book recommendations. They also create a Travel Journal with resources and activities for each of the featured locations.

Finally, we have public programs scheduled out through the end of April so far, including World Water Day, a National Take a Walk in a Park Day Birding Program, Solar Eclipse Preparation programs, special-topic hikes, and a Fly Fishing 101 program. If you'd like more information on any of these or future programs, they will all be posted on our park Facebook page, the DCNR Calendar of Events website, and in our kiosks throughout the park. I've also got an email list where I send all upcoming program information out monthly. If you'd like to be added, please send me an email.

See you soon!
Ivy Kuberry
ikuberry@pa.gov

Venango Conservation
Project

*Ivy's schedule is on the
next page*



Ivy's March and April Schedule

MARCH

World Water Day

Friday, March 22

5:00PM-7:00PM

Park Office

Celebrate World Water Day at Oil Creek State Park. We'll learn about watersheds, macroinvertebrates, pollution, and more as we explore through hands-on activities. Space is limited. To register, email ikuberry@pa.gov.

National Take a Walk in a Park Day – Let's Go Birding

Saturday, March 30

10:00AM-12:00PM

Park Office

Meet the park educator for a walk along the paved bike trail as we learn about birds that call the park home. A limited number of binoculars are available through the park on a first-come basis. If you own your own binoculars, please bring them. Contact ikuberry@pa.gov with any questions.

APRIL

Exploring the Eclipse

Friday, April 5

3:30 PM-4:30PM

Oil City Library

Join the park naturalist to learn all about the upcoming solar eclipse. We'll learn how this incredible phenomenon happens and go over some safety tips before making our own pinhole viewers for the big day. The park also has viewing glasses to hand out at this event while supplies last. Register by emailing ikuberry@pa.gov.

Exploring the Eclipse

Saturday, April 6

5:30PM-6:30PM

Blood Farm Day Use Area

Join the Oil Creek State Park naturalist to learn all about the upcoming solar eclipse. We'll learn how this incredible phenomenon happens and go over some safety tips before making our own pinhole viewers for the big day. The park also has viewing glasses to hand out at this event while supplies last. Register by emailing ikuberry@pa.gov.

Geology Hike

Wednesday, April 10

1:00PM-3:00PM

Wildcat Hollow

Lace up your hiking boots and join the park naturalist on a hike through some of Oil Creek State Park's most interesting geologic features. We'll cover approximately 1 mile of very steep, rocky terrain as we learn about the formation and geologic history of the Oil Creek Valley. This trail is difficult and can be wet or slick in the spring. Please wear appropriate footwear and dress for the weather. You may want to bring hiking poles if you use them.

Woodcock Walk

Friday, April 12

7:00PM-8:30PM

Petroleum Centre Train Station

Take a walk with the park naturalist as we go out searching for the American Woodcock, also known as the Timberdoodle or Bogsucker. The male birds spend spring nights dancing high in the sky as they try their best to impress potential partners. Please dress for the weather and bring a flashlight. Register by emailing ikuberry@pa.gov.

Hemlock Hike

Wednesday, April 17

5:00PM-7:00PM

Egbert Farm Day Use Area

The Eastern Hemlock, Pennsylvania's state tree, has had an incredible history, inspiring works of Emily Dickinson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and more. Unfortunately, these striking giants may not be around forever. Join the park naturalist on a 3-mile hike out-and-back to a hemlock grove as we learn about this amazing tree and the issues they face today. This is a difficult hike with steep inclines. Dress for the weather and wear comfortable hiking shoes. Bring water.

Garden Clean-Up Volunteer Day

Saturday, April 20

10:00AM-2:00PM

Park Office

It's almost Earth Day! Join Park staff as we work on several projects to get the park looking its best for the busy season. We'll be cleaning up and mulching the native pollinator garden and preparing a community garden space. Come dressed for the weather and bring a sack lunch and something to drink. The park has all necessary equipment, including gloves, but if you have your own favorite pair, feel free to bring them! Let us know you are coming by emailing ikuberry@pa.gov.

Fly Fishing 101

Saturday, April 27

9:00AM-12:00PM

Park Office

Join the park naturalist and representatives from Fly Fishers International to learn the basics of fly fishing at Oil Creek State Park. We will cover casting technique, equipment, knot tying and more to give you a solid foundation. This program is free, and all necessary equipment is provided. Ages 16 and up. Registration is required. To register, email ikuberry@pa.gov

Ivy Kuberry | Environmental Education Specialist
Oil Creek State Park |Bureau of State Parks

Photography Award

Dot Monahan is an avid Oil Creek photographer. She shares her wonderful pictures for our newsletter whenever asked.

Below is an amazing picture of a bobcat. Dot won the *2023 Parks and Forest Foundation People's Choice Runner -Up* award for the category – “What Parks/ Forest Mean to Me “





Here it is March already – I like these kind of winters. With winter being over comes the announcement of the OC100 race date. This year’s race will be 10/12/24. Every year I am trying to tweak the race a little bit to make it bigger and better. Last year’s change was adding the 25k. This year’s biggest change is changing the registration platform. I am still in the development stages on this but hoping to get past winners registered early. (Previous winners have free registration for life!) Registration for ALL races will open up 4/6/24 at 6am. Enjoy the spring weather and get out and enjoy the trails!



Heather Nelson
OC100 Race Director

A runner on a cool March day training for the OC100.



©Dot Monahan

Dot Monahan's

Beautiful
Photography



©Dot Monahan

Over-The-Hill Gang

The Over the Hill Gang has been out on the trails every Wednesday this winter, weather permitting. They have covered their sections 1-14 and will have the entire park covered in a few months. The Gang has been removing down trees on the Gerard and the ski trails. They also have been cutting wood for the Adirondack shelters

Denny Pattison is stepping down as the Gang's leader. Howard Wursbacher will be assuming his position. Denny and Howard will be working closely together in order to ensure a smooth transition.

Below, the gang is reconstructing a particularly nasty section of the Gerard where an uprooted tree took out the trail.



Before-A tree had been uprooted which destroyed the trail on a hillside.



The Gang finishing an awesome job of engineering the repair.

Cross Country Skiing?

It was a great winter for those who like warm. Not so much for those of us who like snow, although I suppose all of us like paying less to stay warm and not scraping ice off the windshield on a Monday morning. In any event, it seems to be over now, and we only had three, maybe four cross-country skiable days, all in a row over and around the weekend of January 20-21. We didn't get a ton of snow, but it was just enough, thanks to the ground getting a chance to get good and frozen before it fell and the temperature staying cold, apparently thanks to a "polar vortex." In any event, the skiing was pretty good, apparently on all the trails at OCSP. Saturday was bitter cold starting out, and didn't warm up much from there, so it was time to keep moving to warm up the fingers.

I skied with an old friend who is a life-long resident of the Northside of Pittsburgh. Not to be confused with the North Hills or any other suburb, Northsiders consider themselves the only true "yinzers" (they like to say there's only two sides to Pittsburgh – the Northside and the outside). So the irony is this city boy introduced me to the sport in the mid-seventies, despite the fact that I'm from northern New York on the Canadian border. Nordic skiing didn't become popular there until after I left. But I digress.

So, after having skied a decent amount of time on that cold January Saturday, my friend broke an old 3-pin ski boot a few miles from the car, but he managed to tie his laces around the sole and it worked pretty well. The downside was his improperly laced boot left him with a blister on his heel. So between that and my slightly twinged knee, we headed to Casey's Tavern and didn't go out Sunday as planned (not because we went to Casey's!). A fun day despite the setbacks, but a disappointing "season" for the second year in a row - there were only a handful of suitable days last "winter." Oh well, I guess we'll be hiking (or biking or ...) more!

Winter Hiking

Although it wasn't a great skiing winter, it certainly was a great hiking winter with days full of apricity (*definition: Apricity-noun- warmth of the sun in the winter*). Many hikers and trail runners took advantage of the beautiful days. There really is nothing quite like a cool winter's day in the woods where one can see forever through the trees.



A beautiful winter hike.



Taking in the view from Gregg/Pioneer falls.

President's Report

Hello Friends of Oil Creek State Park. After many years of love, hard work and time, Peg Sims stepped away from chairmanship of the Friends of Oil Creek State Park Board. She is still on the board, helping me to learn my new position, and most importantly, support the park.

I was born and raised in Oil City. After living in the Philadelphia area for 30 years, my husband and I were very glad to move back to this area. Growing up, I spent summers hiking and exploring the forest around Rockmere, a small river community north of Oil City. Since it is along the Allegheny River, my family also spent hours waterskiing, swimming, and eventually kayaking.

After years of biking and cross-country skiing in Oil Creek State Park, I'm looking forward to learning more about the forest, hiking trails, birds and animals that are in the park.

The popular Chicks-in-the-Sticks event will not be held in 2024. The park is going to have upgrades to the bike trail, so that area will be filled with road building equipment.

The final Oil Creek Summer Biathlon was held August 12, 2023. The biathlon began back in 2006 with 45 entries and it grew each year ending with 113 entries in 2023. We thank Peg and John Sims along with the many volunteers who made this event possible through the years.

We thank Heather Nelson for her wonderful job running the OC100 last year and look forward to her leadership for the 2024 event!

The Over The Hill Gang continues to support the park with their expertise in fixing various areas of the trails. These folks keep the trails up to snuff so the rest of us can safely use them to explore the park!

The Friends of Oil Creek State Park Board is hard at work planning events for 2024. We look forward to supporting Ivy Kuberry (Environmental Education Specialist) with her classes as well as holding separate events.

Volunteering at the park is a great opportunity to give back and to be a good steward of our beautiful park. If you think you might be interested in volunteering, please contact us by emailing oilcreekfriends@gmail.com or calling one of the board members or park office.

See you on the trails!

Jennifer McAlevy, Chairman, Friends of Oil Creek State Park



The Benninghoff Daffodils are early this year!



Membership

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



Thanks Dot Monahan for another great picture.

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.

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

