



# Oil Creek Summer 2025

Earlier this summer I was contacted by one of Pa Game Commissions biologists concerning a study that they are conducting regarding Pa black bears. They were looking to trap and radio collar sows as part of this study. One of the reasons for this study is to track sows and monitor when and where they choose to den. Occasionally they will get abandoned cubs for one reason or another. If they know where there is an active den they can “sneak” these cubs into the new den and often the sow will adopt them as their own.

We met in early July to select four bait locations throughout Oil Creek. Once we selected our locations the biologist and his team began to place bait out and monitored the sites with cell cameras or in person. After a week or so we started to get activity at a few of our sites. Once the sites were getting hit on a regular basis, they brought in live traps, and from there it was a waiting game.

It did not take long before we got our first bear and luckily it was a sow. Once the bear was sedated, they invited Oil Creek staff members to the location so we could be part of the process. We got to watch them pull a tooth for aging purposes, place ear tags in each ear, tattoo an ID number onto its gum, and attach the radio collar. We also got to take turns taking pictures with the bear. Once the information was gathered, the bear was given a shot that slowly brought the bear out of its slumber, and she eventually went on her way. A little groggy and confused but no worse for the wear.

All said and done they were able to collar three females in the park. The bears were not relocated and were released on site. This was a very interesting experience for me and the rest of our staff. Very thankful that the Game Commission included us and took the time to explain what they were doing as they were doing it.

Dave Hallman Park Manager



# ADA Projects

It is our goal to improve ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accessibility within the park. This is a cooperative effort among the Friends of Oil Creek State Park, DCNR, and our sponsors.

The rugged nature of Oil Creek State Park is both its amazing feature and its challenge when it comes to accessibility for the physically disabled. The park's scenic beauty, native plants and animals, and historic significance to the birth of the oil industry make it an outstanding place to visit. Yet, its rustic charm presents barriers to those with disabilities.

The ADA Project is an effort to remove some of those challenges. Through this project we hope to install handicapped parking pads, add handicapped accessible picnic areas with restrooms along the bike trail and some hiking trails, and add wildlife viewing areas along the bike trail.

We recognize the constraints of this project in terms of planning, funding, and coordination. We know it won't be easy and that it will take time, but The Friends believe that we are the group that should take on this project.

For instance, as the expanded new bike trail construction occurs and the existing bike trail is rejuvenated, we hope to add facilities that make the trails more exciting and usable by all.

Through fund raising opportunities such as community sponsorships, special grants and other public support, we hope to incrementally obtain the financial resources needed for our projects' goals.

We also know that we will need input and help in the following areas: priorities and ADA scope, design and engineering, fundraising and community leadership and participation.

## **Some of our goals include**

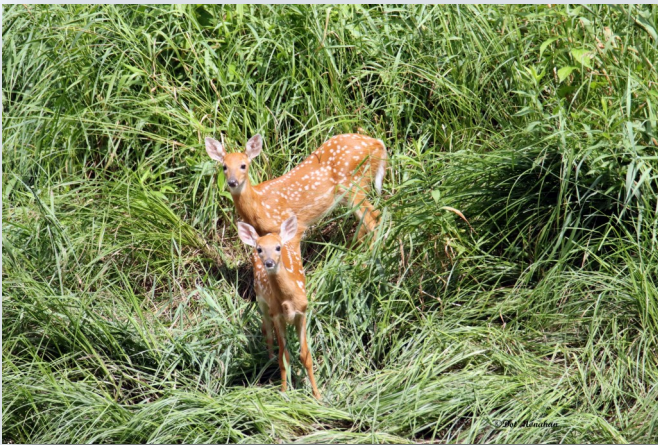
- Handicap Parking Pads at Egbert Farm Day Use Area; Handicapped picnic area at intersection of bike trail and Miller Farm Road; parking pad at intersection of bike trail and Russell Corners Road; parking pad and pathway to picnic shelter at Blood Farm and picnic area at intersection of bike trail and Pioneer Road; improve wheelchair access to Blood Farm Trail.
- Many additional proposals need consideration: Fishing, boating, kayaking access; Camping enhancements; Wildlife and wilderness viewing and / interpretation; Toilet access at various locations; Trail access/ wheeled, assisted walk devices/ ADA assisted ATV and Extensive Signage, Directional and Informational.

We are very excited and committed to introduce this critical Theme and Objective to the Friends of Oil Creek Mission and look forward to expanding the Park's success as a valued Historic Region destination and community asset.



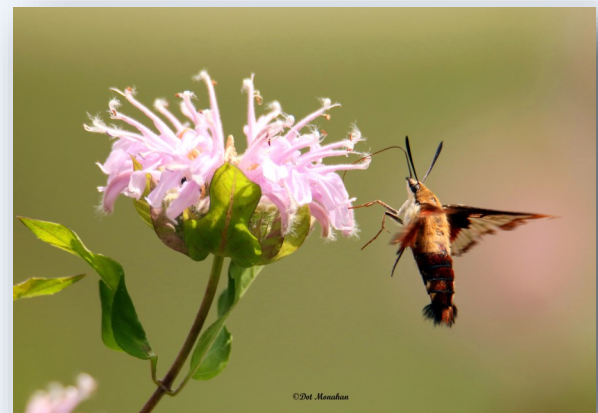
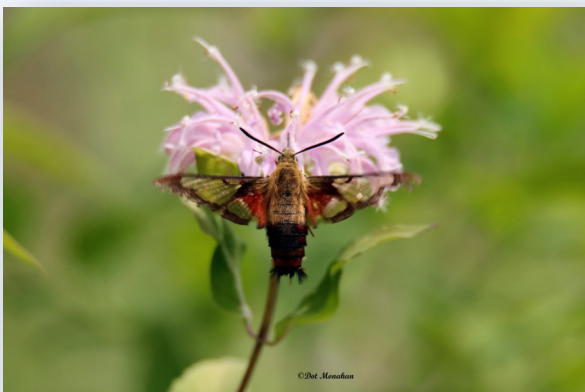


# Oil Creek Photos Through Dot Monahan's Lens





# More from Dot's Lens





## A Summer of Fun at the Park

The waning of summer brings both reflection of those long hot days and the anticipation of cool cozy times ahead. The Oil Creek State Park education team kicked off the 'dogdays of summer' with Fourth of July weekend programming. An informal Trail Side Nature Talk met bikers and walkers along the bike trail with a table-top of information about owls. This type of educational experience, known as an impromptu program, is a great way to interact with park visitors outside the more formally scheduled events. The surprise and excitement of visitors in stumbling upon a fun, quick, and informative opportunity makes impromptu a great tool to have in one's naturalist back pocket. The following day, a big crowd turned out to stomp around the creek in search of water critters during the Creek Discovery program. Record breaking high temperatures and humidity were reasons enough to spend a few hours splashing in the cool(ish) waters looking for crayfish, whirligig beetles and the ever-amazing tiny stick-home architects known as caddisfly larvae!

The creepy-crawly took center stage during the July DiscoverE program. Kids ages 6-9 and their accompanying adults discovered all things bugs at this three-day camp-style program. Grasshoppers, butterflies, lightening bugs – and a surprised water snake – were among the highlights as campers explored fields, forest and the creek. Hummingbird moths, fascinating insects that resemble hummingbirds in appearance and behavior, were the favorite with the adults. Look for them feeding on nectar of native flowers around the park in summertime!

The month of August was a showcase in guest speakers and partnering organizations. Seneca Rocks Audubon Society joined us around an evening campfire to talk owls. Member Mal Hays highlighted the society's Northern Saw-whet Owl Next Box Project. In October 2023, twelve boxes were installed at Oil Creek State Park in the hopes of attracting these tiny, but mighty feathered friends. The society has received national attention for this project, and although park success has not included nesting activity, it does include non-nesting saw-whet owl sightings – and a few surprise discoveries such as an opossum utilizing a box as a cozy winter den site. The Northern Saw-whet Owl weighs in at only 2 to 5 ounces and is named for its call that sounds like a saw being sharpened on a whetting stone. Listen for them year-round but particularly in the upcoming cooler season.

We moved from tiny owls to big mammals with Heather Flick of the PA Game Commission who spoke to a crowd of beary-friendly park visitors. Donning bear faced headbands, kids measured up in comparison to the size of a black bear, felt bear fur and learned that day-old donuts is the food of choice when trapping local black bear for research or re-homing!

For the fungi lovers, a Mushroom Hike lead by Western Pennsylvania Mushroom Club offered expert identification of local wild mushrooms. A crowd of 53 people searched Wildcat Hollow learning mushroom skills, safety, and hunting techniques. We found mushrooms that were edible – some that were not - mushrooms that glowed, and ones known as parasitic mushrooms that invade and feed on other living organisms! Who knew fungi could be so fun! Thank you to Friends of Oil Creek State Park for clearing hiking trails along Wildcat Hollow in advance of this program – the area looked great!

Moving into fall, programs shift to a school audience focus. We are hosting a number of students here at the park for field trips, as well as traveling to schools bringing nature education and park history into local classrooms. Public programs include autumn hikes, a fly-fishing instruction class, and a volunteer garden clean-up. For more information visit the online DCNR Calendar of Events at <http://events.dcnr.pa.gov>.

See you at the park!

Emily Pritchard

Environmental Education Specialist





## WILDCAT HOLLOW



A good and productive (at least mostly!) time was had by all eight folks taking part in the recent trail-work on a beautiful morning at Wildcat Hollow. Weed-whacking, scraping growth off wooden walkways, and routine trail clearing were the order of the day. Some walkways were completely obscured by turf which had grown over them. The four trails are short – totaling a little less than three miles – but I beg to differ with the park map/brochure (at least the 2017 version I’m looking at right now), which labels them all “easy.” The Geology Trail has some pretty steep ups and downs with tricky footing (especially while being dragged by a large, exuberant dog!), but it rewards with interesting paths around some huge boulders which invite climbing by kids. The Wetlands and Oil History Trails are certainly flat and easy, and I’ve yet to give the Forestry Trail a try.

We heard about the dance hall that was located higher up the hollow. On a subsequent outing (with dog and grandkids), the nice lady volunteering at the Petroleum Center train station explained that it was in operation until the 1950s. She thought maybe there were still foundation stones at the sight. Anybody know where? The diorama and other items at the station are always interesting.

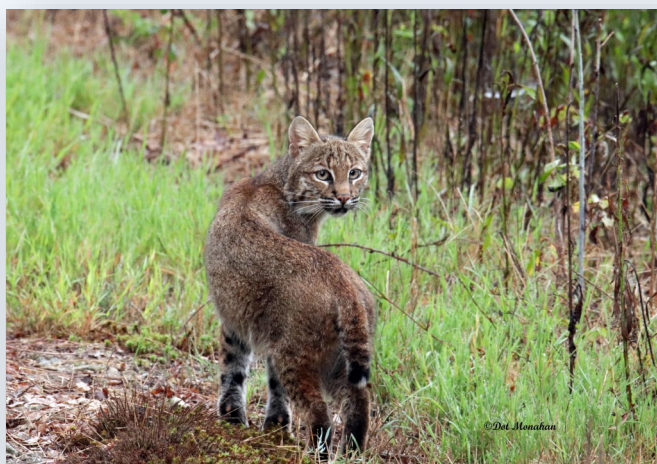
Wildcat Hollow gets a nod in Wikipedia (including that it’s now located in OCSP) for its role in the derivation of the term by referencing the familiar story that, after drilling a successful well in the “holler,” an area away from and more difficult to access than the successful wells on the “flats” by Oil Creek and thus predicted to be less productive, the driller shot and stuffed a “wildcat” (I suppose what we would call a bobcat) and put it on his top of his derrick. This gave the hollow its name and gave rise to the term “wildcatter” referring to a person drilling for oil in any unproven area. Or did it – Wiki goes on to point out that, by 1838 – long before the birth of the petroleum industry, the term “wildcat” was slang for any risky business venture. But what do they know?! Our story’s better and we’re sticking to it.

See you on the trails!



Pilings for the dance hall.

In its day, the dance hall was a very popular venue. Bill Huber, who was a local guitar savant, played there regularly during the 1950’s. The remains of the dance hall can be found on top of the hill overlooking the camping area at Wildcat hollow.



Ironically, Dot Monahan took this bobcat picture by Wildcat Hollow



# Over-The-Hill Gang

A memorial bench was placed for Denny Pattison at one of his favorite places along the Gerard Trail. Denny was a long time member of the Gang as well as their leader for many years. He was truly an amazing person, and he was loved by everyone who knew him.

During the storms in early summer, Alfred's Bent Nail Bench (across Wolfkeil Run ) was destroyed by flood waters. The Gang has been working on plans for the replacement of the bridge. The gang also has continued to maintain the trails as needed.

OTHG has welcome Chuck Carlin to their group. Roger Loker has retired after many years of participation. His long history with the Gang is much appreciated



Alfred's Bent Nail Bridge totally pushed off the its foundation from flood waters and landing off to the left (in this picture).

The Gang on the trails...







OC100 plans are well underway for this year's race on October 4th. Registrations are arriving daily— all races are open. Training sessions have been going on for some time with the last one this past Labor Day weekend.

Most of the registration and before race events remain that same - such as packet pickup at The Iron Works and the spaghetti dinner.

Volunteers are still needed so if interested, email at [oc100.volunteer@gmail.com](mailto:oc100.volunteer@gmail.com).

Many thanks to the Park and the Over the Hill Gang for getting the trails in order, and for their efforts in getting the Bent Nail Bridge in crossing order before the race.

Alfred's Bent Nail bridge off its foundation. The stones across the creek ( to the right) is where the bridge was.



OC100 runners on the Bent Nail Bridge during last year's race.



# President's Report

The park's skunk, Flower, had the opportunity to attend a couple functions this summer. The first, in August, was the Children's Fair during Oil Heritage Week. He greeted children and adults that visited the Friends of OCSP table. Emily Pritchard, the park educator, prepared wonderful crayon rubbing art projects for children to design. Flower helped them choose the subject and colors for their creations!

The second event was the Rouseville National Night Out celebration. In addition to greeting visitors to the Friends of OCSP table and, again, helping children with their crayon rubbings, Flower checked out the Sheriff's vehicle and the Cherry Tree Fire truck. He also had the opportunity to pose for a photograph with Smokey the Bear!

As our weather changes from summer to fall, the days grow shorter and cooler. Summer birds are migrating south replaced by the friendly Chickadee and the noisy Blue Jay.

Deer change their light tan coats to that black/brown overcoat. They eat more acorns and farmers' corn. The black bears, too, eat more food as they are getting ready for winter hibernation. The squirrels and chipmunks are running around with their mouths stuffed hiding nuts for winter feasts.

While Flower will not need to prepare for winter, skunks that live in the forest will need to prepare. It's time to forage food to prepare for the low-resource time of year and extended cold winter "naps" (skunks are not true hibernators, but will enter torpor). For many young adult skunks, this is also the time when they may be on the prowl for their own first dens, though some females will stay with their mothers for their first winter. So, you may see some of Flower's relatives getting ready for winter, along with the other animals in the park, when you are enjoying your autumn hike.

Speaking of hikes, many thanks to the diligence and expertise of the OTHG for the repairs to the trails and bridges after the multiple heavy rains in storm. The Gerard Trail had significant damage, including the destruction of the Bent Nail Bridge. Thank you!

Jen McAlevy- President





# Membership

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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](http://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](mailto:oilcreekfriends@gmail.com)
- Website– [www.friendsocsp.org](http://www.friendsocsp.org)
- Call Park Office—814 676-5915
- Please Note: All checks should be made out to Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundation (PPFF) with Friends of Oil Creek State Park listed in the memo section.



## 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