



Friends of Oil Creek ¹

June 2024

Newsletter

Dot Monahan's pictures
on an eagle eating "lunch" by the dam



Park Manager's Report

Park Update

The park staff have been busy with various projects throughout the park. They have been doing a tremendous job keeping this park looking beautiful while tackling our backlog of projects. We are lucky that we have all our maintenance positions filled this year. We are still in the process of filling our Ranger and Educator positions. Interviews have concluded, and we hope to have them here and working by the end of July.

Petroleum Center bridge is still slated to be rehabbed sometime in 2026. So, no new changes there. The construction of our new bike trail extension is now slated for late winter/early spring of 2025. If construction plans stay on track for 2025, it will result in the closure of Egbert picnic area.

A few other projects in the works for this year are the re-blazing of the ski trails and hopefully Wildcat Hollow, roof replacement on several shelters, invasive removal and treatment, timber stand improvements for 160-acre tract of land across the road from the ski hut... and of course, wood splitting.

It's shaping up to be a terrific summer! Come out and enjoy what Mother Nature has to offer.

Stay Safe,
David Hallman



Happy summer everyone. Just giving you a little update on this year's race ... We have finally hit 300 registered runners, although none of the races are sold out. Race entry prices increase as the race date approaches. The first price increase is July 1.

The trails look great thanks to the Over the Hill Gang. They do an amazing job keeping the trails in great shape all year, and especially before the race.

The next training run is tentatively scheduled for July 6th (please check our Facebook group out for updates).

If you would like to sign up the link is [runsignup.com](https://www.runsignup.com), Facebook group [Oil Creek 100 Trail Runs](#), and the website is [OC100trailruns.org](https://www.OC100trailruns.org)

Stacked Races

The 3rd Annual Oil Creek 5 & 13 Stacked Trail Races were held on Saturday, May 18, 2024, at Drake Well Museum and Park in Titusville, PA.

The race began at the historic Drake Well Museum and Park on Saturday morning. The 5-mile race started early at the Jersey Bridge, just outside of Drake Well Museum. Racers made their way up the steep path to the Gerard Hiking Trail. The 13-mile race began later, allowing the more adventurous racers to stack both for an impressive 18 miles.

The great thing about this race is runners at different levels get a chance to enjoy the beautiful Oil Creek State Park while tackling a pretty steep elevation gain! One of the many reasons we love OCSP! There's a little something for everyone!



Very happy stacked race runners!

Over-The-Hill Gang

The Over The Hill Gang has been very busy this spring weed whacking along the trails. They have also helped the Friends in clearing many trees from the ski trail.

The Gang recently removed a large fallen tree along the “Wildcat Loop” about a mile in from the Rouseville train station trailhead. The way the tree had fallen across the path made rerouting for hikers a bit of a challenge.



Wildcat Loop trail– Before and after



Dot's turtles on a log



In 1959, a local Titusville attorney by the name of Charles B. Stegner was asked to share his childhood memories. He did so in a small, public domain booklet called "Trolley Car Days - The Recollections of a Small-Town Boyhood in That Golden Era."

Chapter 55 of the booklet was called "Chestnutting" - and chestnut trees were highly-valued for their beautiful decay-resistant timber in trees that would grow upwards of 100-feet tall and 10-feet in diameter; the trees were also esteemed for their delicious chestnuts. The chestnuts were a very important food source that was rich in protein for wild animals as well as also in high-demand by the early natives and settlers. Sadly, however, these magnificent trees, once abundant throughout Oil Creek State Park, were almost wiped out by the 1940s due to a chestnut blight. As a young girl, I recall my grandfather doing his best to replant and nurture young chestnut trees on his farm on the edges of the Park in the hopes of restoring these valuable trees.

But, let's get back to several excerpts from Mr. Stegner's story that will give us a wonderful insight into the era near the end of the oil boom in the Park. He provides an amazing look into the natural cycle of wild edibles in the Park that still exists even today. As he shares, "In the early 1900s, most of us kids were always "going after" something. Most of us felt a tacit obligation to bring something home.

In March we went after pussywillows. In April we went after sassafras, watercress and trailing arbutus. In May we went after violets, May apples, honeysuckles and adder's tongues. In June we went after wild roses, wintergreen berries (we call them teaberries), and wild strawberries. In July we went after red and black raspberries, huckleberries, and gooseberries. In August we went after blackberries, elderberries and wild plums. In September we went after hazelnuts, hickory nuts, butternuts, and black walnuts. The most fun of all, however, was going after chestnuts.

Chestnuts were usually ripe when the woods were aflame with color, and the sunny but cool October days made going after them a real pleasure. A whole bunch of us would go on these nutting expeditions.

In the early 1900s, thousands of chestnut trees grew and flourished in the nearby woods and along the fence rows of farms. The chestnut tree was a beautiful tree. It was tall and stately, had a beautiful leaf and unusual blossoms, which somewhat resemble long, thin caterpillars. Each of these blossoms would produce a chestnut bur. These burs were about two inches in diameter, very prickly, and you had to be very careful in picking one up. During September and until the frost came, these burs were sealed tight, but impatient as we always were to get at the nuts inside the bur we would either climb the tree or club the branches to get the unopened burs and then hit the burs with a stone to get at the nuts.

Sometimes, after a heavy frost the ground would be literally covered with chestnuts, and you could scoop them up with your hands. Quite frequently you would be able, the following spring, to scrape away the leaves and recover a good supply of chestnuts, if the squirrels hadn't beat you to it. We usually got chestnuts in quite a good quantity. The smallest receptacle we ever took was a five-pound salt bag, but most of us usually took an old pillow case which we frequently filled. The chestnut meat was delicious, eaten raw, boiled or roasted.

The chestnut tree still persists, and occasionally someone from the country will bring in a twig with several chestnut burs on it. Who knows, but nature might eventually enable it to overcome the blight which practically extinguished it not so many years ago."

Tambra Sabatini



American Chestnut
Flower



Ruffed grouse in the rain



Baby Woodcock



Osprey in a Dead Tree

Wilson's Warbler passing through the part



Pileated Woodpecker in the rain

Dot
Monahan's
Pictures
Of
Common
Mergansers



President's Report

Come out to walk, hike, fish or sit by the Creek to enjoy the sounds of nature. Some research shows that just 5 minutes outside can combat stress.

There is a wide variety of flora and fauna to see ~ everything is fresh and new. Oil Creek is well stocked with fish and the water level may be high enough for some kayaking or canoeing. The streams and water falls are flowing. The birds are singing and eagles soaring!

“There are many studies that demonstrate how spending time in nature can improve mood, lower anxiety, and improve cognition and memory,” says Mayo Clinic nurse practitioner Jodie M. Smith, APRN., C.N.P., D.N.P., M.S.N. “Making time for nature is important in order for us to maintain resiliency and promote self-care in a world that demands a lot from us.”¹

One can not predict the Pennsylvania weather, but regardless of the conditions, it is almost always perfect for hiking or doing trail maintenance. There are always tons of photo opportunities. It can be a great time for families to picnic and hang out at the playground.

On a sad note, we are sorry that Ivy Kuberry, Environmental Education Specialist, decided to pursue other opportunities. Ivy provided a terrific variety of opportunities for folks of all ages. Having attended some of her classes, I can attest they were both fun and educational.

We wish Ivy all the best as she moves on and look forward to supporting the new Environmental Education Specialist.

See you on the trails!



Jennifer McAlevy, Chairman, Friends of Oil Creek State Park

¹ <https://mcpres.mayoclinic.org/mental-health/the-mental-health-benefits-of-nature-spending-time-outdoors-to-refresh-your-mind/>



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



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

