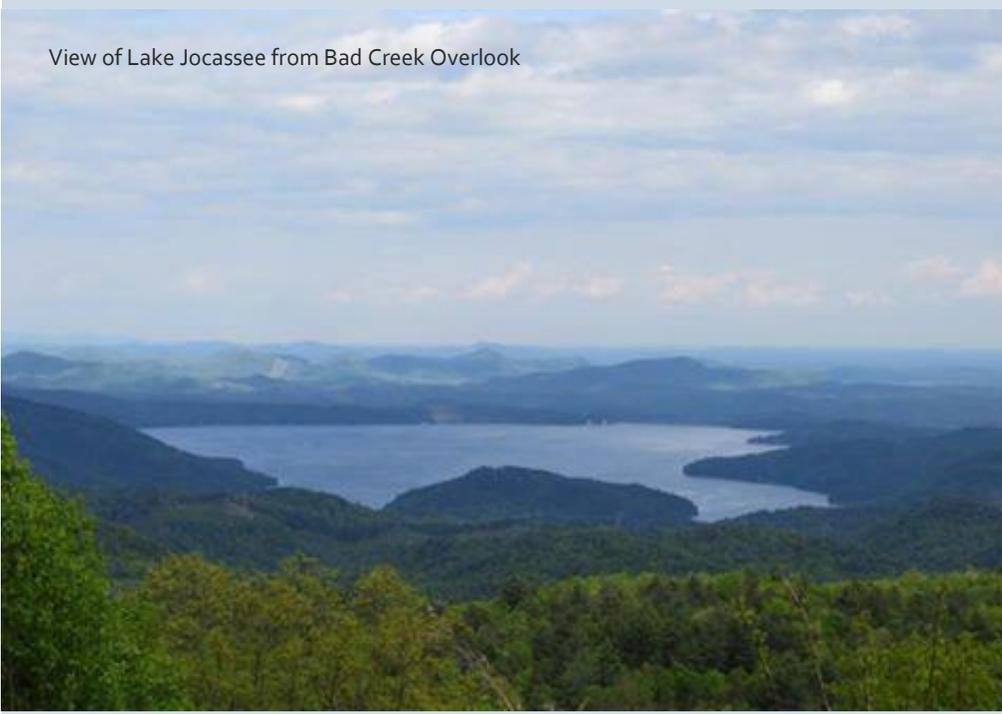


View of Lake Jocassee from Bad Creek Overlook



FRIENDS OF JOCASSEE

SPRING, SUMMER 2017

## OCONEE BELLS CELEBRATED AT BELLFEST

The Bells were blooming for the 5<sup>th</sup> annual BellFest celebration! An unusually warm winter led to some very early flowers, but the diminutive plants were in full bloom on a cloudy Saturday when scores of visitors arrived in Devils Fork State Park to witness the event. Volunteers from the Upstate Master Naturalist Association and the Upstate SC Native Plant Society were stationed along the Oconee Bell Trail to tell visitors the story of Andre Michaux's discovery, and Asa Gray's decades-long search for the elusive species.

At the 'Big Tent' in front of Lake Jocassee, visitors perused unique and interesting items on the Silent Auction table, took advantage of the many educational exhibits, and enjoyed lunch at Eclectic Sun. There was a popular kid's table offering face-painting and treasure

hunts, so quite a few 'tattooed' children brightened the day.

Entertainment was provided by Conservation Theory, a local Appalachian Americana folk band which continues to grow in popularity throughout the region. Preceding the band, the crowd was charmed by the singing duo of Marlee Daniel and Campbell Davenport. These two young people have a bright future ahead!

The keynote speaker for the day was SC-ETV star of 'Expeditions with Patrick McMillan', who also happens to be Executive Director for the South Carolina Botanical Gardens in Clemson. When Patrick spoke, almost everyone sat quietly and listened to what he had to say. His presence helped make BellFest 2017 even more of a success!



## COMING EVENTS

July 20: 10 am: Lake Jocassee, Underwater! w/ Mike Atkins, Picnic Pavilion, DFSP

September 9: 9 am: VIP Day (Volunteer, Improve, Preserve) DFSP

January 1, 2018: First Day 5K and Loon Lunge, DFSP

### BELLFEST SPEAKER PATRICK MCMILLAN INSPIRES WITH PASSIONATE CONSERVATION MESSAGE

"THIS PLACE (the Jocassee Gorges) is probably more important to supporting life in the eastern North American deciduous forest than any other single place, and we need to value that, we need to connect that and cherish that."

This was the ultimate message of a passionate talk by Patrick McMillan, director of the SC Botanical Gardens and keynote speaker for BellFest 2017.

Patrick explained why coves and gorges of the southern Blue Ridge Escarpment ecoregion provide areas where species can survive outside their more typical environments, thus enabling tropical ferns to exist under striped maples from Canada. Moderating temperatures and a considerable change of elevation within just a few short miles will help species cope with changing climate. This is extremely important for species like salamanders, who move only a few feet within a lifetime, and trillium, which depend on ants to disperse their seeds. "This little chunk of mountains," as Patrick call it, becomes even more important to survival of species considering that it contains more species of trillium, wild ginger, and salamanders per square inch than anywhere else in the world.

The story of the Oconee Bell (*Shortia galacifolia*) wove through Patrick's talk, from its original discovery near present-day Devils Fork State Park to the importance of protecting its existing native habitat in the Jocassee Gorges. His words uplifted an appreciative audience, and Friends of Jocassee is grateful to Patrick for his contribution to BellFest!



**BellFest visitors of all ages love the wildlife exhibit sponsored by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. For some visitors, this is their first chance to hold a docile reptile!**

**FOJ sincerely thanks all vendors who helped make this event a success. Volunteers donated their time to help educate us and we appreciate that! Look for even more vendors and their unique offerings in 2018!**

**Born in the mountains of South Carolina and bolstered by the vocal traditions and storytelling of their homeland, the songs of Conservation Theory tell the tales of experience and imagination, and tales of woe, happiness, spirit, human frailty, Earth, and nature.**

## QUARTERLY TALK - FIREWISE

The intermix of urban development in wildland settings has presented a challenge for agencies trying to manage fire in South Carolina. Proactive communities can be FIREWISE by adopting Community Wildfire Protection Plans, and educating residents on steps to take to reduce the risk of fire damage to their homes, should a wildfire ever develop nearby.

Bill Wiley, Upstate FIREWISE Field Coordinator for the South Carolina Forestry Commission, presented a program on 'Living with Wildfire in South Carolina' for Devils Fork State Park and Friends of Jocassee at a 'bonus' Winter Quarterly Talk.

Mr. Wiley talked about the history of fire, natural and otherwise, and about how the expanding population has led to suppression of fire. That suppression can ultimately lead to more devastating circumstances when fire threatens.

The South Carolina Forestry Commission was heavily involved in fighting the Pinnacle Mtn. fire in November of last year. That fire burned fourteen thousand acres through the Jocassee Gorges, some of the most rugged land in the southeast. No homes were burned in the November wildfire, but the recent tragedy when fire swept out of the Smoky Mountains and across Gatlinburg reminds us of how easily that could happen.

FIREWISE offers common sense guidelines to protect property, from property maintenance to landscape plants to building materials. Learn more at [FIREWISE.org](https://www.firewise.org).

## QUARTERLY TALKS – JOCASSEE LOONS & SPRING SONGBIRD MIGRATION IN THE JOCASSEE GORGES

Jocassee Gorges and Lake Jocassee hosts a wide variety of birds, some of which live here, some of which spend the winter (or summer), and some of which migrate through the area a couple of times a year. Friends of Jocassee were treated to a couple of excellent Quarterly Talks by experts in the field of ornithology.

First up was a Winter Talk by Dr. Jim Paruk, who spent several weeks at Lake Jocassee doing field research with the [Earthwatch Institute](https://www.earthwatch.org) studying the winter behavior of the common loon. Earthwatch has committed to a three year research project at Lake Jocassee which will continue through 2019. A stable population of around 150 'Jocassee loons' return to this lake each winter, and the relatively small size of Lake Jocassee makes it the perfect laboratory for observing these fascinating birds. Abundant food and a low-stress environment means the 'Jocassee loons' are healthy birds, though their presence on a freshwater reservoir in the winter represents a shift in behavior. Traditionally, loons winter on salt water, either along the Atlantic coast or in the Gulf of Mexico.

The Spring Talk was given by Tim Lee, park naturalist for the Mountain Bridges Wilderness Area. Tim's talk focused on Spring Songbird Migration in the Jocassee Gorges. A power outage at Devils Fork State Park on the day of that talk meant that Tim could not present his excellent slide show but he didn't skip a beat, entertaining the group of Friends of Jocassee with stories laced with facts about migrating songbirds and their interesting habits.

We learn a lot at these Quarterly Talks! Next up we'll experience 'Lake Jocassee, Underwater!' w/ Mike Atkins, on July 20, 10am, at the picnic pavilion at Devils Fork State Park. Join us!

## FOJ PLANTS WILDLIFE GARDENS WITH HEP GRANT FROM DUKE ENERGY FOUNDATION

The non-profit Friends of Jocassee has been awarded a Habitat Enhancement Project grant in the amount of \$5140 by the Duke Energy Foundation. The Keowee-Toxaway Habitat Enhancement Program (KTHEP) funds projects that create, enhance and protect fish and wildlife habitats along the shores of Lake Keowee and Lake Jocassee, as well as in their watersheds. The funds will help rebuild a kiosk at the Oconee Bell Trail, and have added pollinator gardens to the areas entering the park office/store and on the roadside entering the DFSP villas area. The planting was assisted by local Boy Scouts. Thanks, guys!

The program is funded annually from a fee charged to individuals and developers seeking lake use permits for projects on the Keowee-Toxaway lakes, as well as by contributions from Duke Energy. The Foothills Community Foundation administers the funds.



## **KEOWEE-TOXAWAY STATE PARK BENEFITS FROM HARD WORK OF WATER, WILDLIFE, AND WILDFLOWERS VOLUNTEERS!**



Thanks to all volunteers for a successful Water, Wildlife, and Wildflower day at Keowee-Toxaway State Park and Jocassee Gorges Visitor Center! We got a lot done to protect water quality and wildlife habitat of the Lake Keowee watershed with teamwork: organization and grant writing (Friends of Jocassee), project leadership (SC State Parks), park benches (Boy Scout troop 134, from Six Mile), native plants (SC Native Plant Society Upstate Chapter), trail maintenance (Foothills Trail Conference), people power (Upstate Master Naturalists), cake /litter pick up (Friends of Lake Keowee Society), and very special thanks to Duke Energy for funding and support. And, thanks to SC State Parks and SC Dept. of Natural Resources for making this park a spotlight of history, ecology, and preservation of natural resources!



## **ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY UPDATE**

During the summer months there are no scheduled Adopt-a-Highway cleanups. Members are encouraged to monitor the sections of roadway they have adopted, and clean up as necessary.

FOJ's next Adopt-a-Highway cleanup will be on September 11 following VIP Day at Devils Fork State Park. Join us... please!

### **ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY CLEANUP**

**Monday, September 11: 12:00 – 1:30 PM**

Jocassee Lake Road

Boone Creek Road

## **UPCOMING FOJ QUARTERLY TALK:**

**LAKE JOCASSEE,  
UNDERWATER! W/ MIKE  
ATKINS**

**THURSDAY, JULY 20**

**10:00 AM**

## **PICNIC PAVILION IN DAY-USE AREA OF DEVILS FORK SP**

Dive Master Mike Atkins will be talking about Jocassee as most people have never seen it... underwater. See the history of diving here and what happens as you slip beneath the surface. Mike Atkins has been diving Lake Jocassee for over 37 years. He is the owner of The Scuba Shop in Spartanburg SC. and has Jocassee Adventures at the lake also. Mike has taught and chartered thousands of divers on Jocassee for 32 years. He will be showing us a video of some of the underwater sites found on the lake and take everyone on a 30 min dive with shots of classes, wrecks, wall dives and events held underwater. Also see some of the great places divers travel to because of training on Jocassee. This is a great opportunity to sit back and relax as you splash in the world under Jocassee.

## ***BECOME A MEMBER OF FRIENDS OF JOCASSEE***

Please consider a recurring membership when you sign up  
Or, send a completed membership form and donation to join or renew membership to:

Friends of Jocassee, PO Box 621, Salem, SC 29676

Name/s\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

City\_\_\_\_\_

State/Zip\_\_\_\_\_

Phone\_\_\_\_\_

Email\_\_\_\_\_

- Individual = \$20
- Family = \$30 (# in Family\_\_\_\_\_)

### **Annual Donor Level**

- Eastatoee = \$100
- Toxaway = \$250
- Horsepasture = \$500
- Thompson = \$1000
- Whitewater = \$2000

Please tell us if you have a special volunteer interest:\_\_\_\_\_

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