



FRIENDS OF JOCASSEE

SPRING/SUMMER, 2016

# COMING IN SEPTEMBER: VIP DAY!

**VOLUNTEER, IMPROVE, AND PROTECT THIS BEAUTIFUL PARK! MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR VIP DAY!**

**SEPTEMBER 10, 2016**



The summer season is on at Lake Jocassee and Devils Fork State Park. Visitors are coming to camp, to swim, to boat, or to just spend a relaxing day soaking in some of America's most beautiful scenery.

According to park ranger Jacob Gantt, over the past five years Devils Fork State Park has hosted, on average, over 325,000 visitors per year. The heavy summertime use means the park can use a little

extra help when the season ends, and that is what VIP Day is all about.

Since 2011, volunteers have gathered on the second Saturday of September to tackle projects and clean up trash on and around Lake Jocassee. The event began as an all-out effort from the dive community to rid the lake bottom of accumulated trash, and a massive amount of debris was removed from the lake during the first couple of years. During those years the event was sponsored by Duke Energy. By the third year VIP Day was organized and sponsored by the newly formed nonprofit Friends of Jocassee.

Boaters and divers are still encouraged to volunteer for VIP Day, and now they are joined by the ever-growing Friends of Jocassee organization. Volunteers scour the park for leftover trash as well as doing trail work, landscaping, and working on erosion and storm water drainage projects.

All in all, VIP Day is about giving back to a place that gives so many of us a beautiful place to relax and play.

Come out on Saturday, September 10 and join Friends of Jocassee for a satisfying day of volunteer work.



Volunteers come in all sizes!

## COMING EVENTS

July 14: 10:00 AM: Devils Fork State Park, Summer Quarterly Talk

September 10: Devils Fork State Park VIP Day

September 12: 2:00 – 4:00 PM: Jocassee Lake Road, Adopt A Highway Cleanup

October 13: 10:00 – Fall Quarterly Talk

The photographer for the cover picture of this edition, taken from Jumping Off Rock, is unknown, but gratefully thanked. If this is YOUR photo, please, let us know!

## WATER 'N' WILDLIFE DAY

There is a lot of love for our local state parks. That was obvious on the last Saturday of April when approximately 45 people came out to volunteer for Water 'n' Wildlife Day at Keowee-Toxaway State Park. Park manager Kevin Blanton provided the 'wish list' of projects and volunteers spent the morning painting gates, weeding, planting, mulching, building trail steps, picking up trash within park boundaries along Hwy. 11, and reinforcing storm water catchment areas. Even the critters got some love with the addition of beautiful bird houses, toad houses, and 'critter ponds' made from clay plant saucers, all lovingly painted by young volunteers – including a local Cub Scout troop – and some talented supervisors. Following the morning's work Friends of Jocassee provided sub sandwiches and sides, and Friends of Lake Keowee Society (co-sponsors of the event) provided a couple of delicious cakes. Hungry volunteers were well provided for, and no one left hungry!

## BELLFEST ENTERTAINS A CROWD

If there's one thing that can be said about March weather, it's unpredictable. All week in advance of BellFest the prediction was for rain, and yet the day of BellFest was partly cloudy and beautiful, with no rain at all until the celebration of Oconee Bells was long over.

Despite the forecast, there was a great turnout of community. A crowd of people walked the Oconee Bell Trail to see the wildflower *Shortia galacifolia*, aka Oconee Bell, and learn about its interesting place in history, as related by a group of Master Naturalist volunteers stationed along the trail.

Back at the 'Big Tent' in the picnic/day use area of Devils Fork State Park, there was plenty of entertainment, plenty of good food, and plenty of interesting exhibits. Musical entertainment came from Three Creeks Over, a talented trio of local high school students who played foot-stompin' bluegrass music, and young folk singers Abbey Kyzer and Jake Holland.

The main attraction of the day was a soliloquy by the botanical explorer who discovered the Oconee Bell, Andre Michaux, as played by historian and reenactor Charlie Williams. The crowd sat and listened, spellbound, while 'Michaux' described his journey through the Jocassee Valley in June of 1787.



Also on hand enjoying the activities and talking to visitors was John Marsh, whose great, great grandfather, John Howard Redfield, played his own role in the Oconee Bell story.

Afterwards, Mr. Williams and Mr. and Mrs. Marsh accompanied new and renewing members of Friends of Jocassee on a pontoon tour into the native habitat of Oconee Bells, via Lake Jocassee, to view more populations of the wildflower in bloom.

# FRIENDS COME OUT FOR QUARTERLY TALKS!

Friends and visitors got a special treat when they arrived at Keowee-Toxaway State Park in April for the Spring Quarterly Talk, sponsored by Friends of Jocassee.

The talk itself was presented jointly by Kevin Blanton, manager of K-T State Park, and Kevin Evans, manager of Devils Fork State Park. Mr. Blanton gave an overview of the challenges faced by operating a popular camping park with limited staff. The 1000 acre park offers one cabin and 24 camp sites, most of which are filled every weekend throughout the warmer months of the year. A staff of 3 takes care of all park operations.

Mr. Evans discussed the challenges of maintaining the integrity of a small park whose visitor numbers have increased substantially over the years, and how his staff works hard to keep those who love Lake Jocassee and Devils Fork SP from "loving it to death." In recent years the park has averaged more than 325,000 visitors per year!

Following the presentation, attendees had the option of walking the Natural Bridge Trail with Tim Lee, SCPRT Naturalist for Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area parks. Many native spring ephemeral wildflowers were in bloom that day, and Tim emphasized the importance of enjoying the flowers in bloom without destroying other plants in the process. Numerous foot trails lead away from the main path, evidence that people are eager to explore other areas. Going off trail endangers delicate plants along the way which may not yet be in bloom, so trail walkers are strongly encouraged to stay on the trail, and watch where they step.

The upcoming Quarterly Talk will feature Dr. John Hains, a Professor in the Biological Sciences Department at Clemson University. Dr. Hains is an expert in Limnology and Fresh Water Ecology, and he will offer some interesting insights on Lake Jocassee, Lake Keowee, and the Upper Savannah River drainage. This upcoming Talk is scheduled for Thursday, July 24th, from 10:00 – 11:30 in the Holcombe Room at Devils Fork State Park. A short field trip will follow the presentation. All are welcome!

## FOJ, SCNPS TEAM UP FOR NEW POLLINATOR GARDENS AT DFSP

New pollinator gardens are being planned for Devils Fork State Park. Designated sites for the gardens will be along the entrance to the park's villas, just past the main boat ramp, and along the entrance to Holcombe Circle, across from the park's office. Native plants purchased by Friends of Jocassee will be maintained by the Upstate chapter of the SC Native Plant Society. In addition to beautifying the grounds at Devils Fork State Park, the gardens will promote wildlife-friendly plant species and will attract native bees, butterflies, and beetles, all of which play an important role in maintaining the diversity of our native plant species.

## LOON RESEARCHERS VISIT JOCASSEE

Delayed flights, roads glazed with black ice, and missing baggage made for an interesting beginning to a week at Lake Jocassee, but skies cleared, the temperature warmed, and, eventually, the visiting loon research team accomplished its mission: laying the groundwork for a three year study of the Common loon by EarthWatch, an international citizen science institute.

Dr. Jim Paruk, Senior Scientist for the Center for Loon Conservation at the Biodiversity Research Institute in Portland, Maine, led the team. He was joined by Nina Schoch, D.V.M., coordinator for the Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation, and EarthWatch coordinator Kyle Hutton. The team spent every day of their visit on the lake observing loons, along with Friends of Jocassee members Brooks and Kay Wade.

Thanks to clear night skies and a bright, nearly full moon, no loons were tagged during the visit, but the team anticipates much success in loon tagging next winter.

Next time Dr. Paruk visits he will be leading teams of EarthWatch volunteers. They will observe the Lake Jocassee loons, record behaviors, and participate in nighttime tagging adventures. The volunteers will be staying on site at Devils Fork State Park from mid-January through the first of March, 2017, 2018, and 2019.

[Interested in joining the EarthWatch volunteers?](#)

# Adopt-A- Highway Update

Between the 14<sup>th</sup> of December, 2015, and the 14<sup>th</sup> of March, 2016, 38 bags of litter had accumulated along Jocassee Lake Road and Boone Creek Road. At this rate it looks like we will exceed the 2015 total of 113 bags. This excessive amount is coming during the quarter of the year when Lake Jocassee sees the least amount of visitors.

Apparently people aren't getting the memo that roadside litter has potential effects beyond just making a neighborhood look bad. It washes into ditches, blocking culverts and creating road flooding problems. It degrades the quality of water running through the ditches, water which flows directly into creeks and rivers and into our beautiful lakes. (How many empty, uncapped containers of motor oil have we picked up?) Roadside trash can also be deadly to wildlife, as small critters sometimes take refuge inside bottles and cans and are unable to get out.

Friends of Jocassee will continue to clean up the trash, but we sure wish that we didn't have to do this. If you have an idea for a short, highly effective slogan – something easily read by passing traffic – we will have signs made to put up during roadside cleanups. A little education goes a long way!

The next scheduled cleanup is September 12. All volunteers are welcome! Cleanup begins at 2:30 and lasts until approximately 4:00. FOJ provides 'picker-uppers', Adopt A Highway trash bags, orange vests, and disposable gloves. Join us, please!

**FOJ will provide  
trash bags,  
orange vests,  
gloves, and  
picker-uppers!**

## ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY CLEANUP

**Monday, September 12: 2:30 – 4:00 PM**

**Jocassee Lake Road**

**Boone Creek Road**

## *BECOME A MEMBER OF FRIENDS OF JOCASSEE*

Please consider a recurring membership when you sign up online at [www.friendsofjocassee.org](http://www.friendsofjocassee.org)

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 \_\_\_\_\_

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- 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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