



FRIENDS OF JOCASSEE

WINTER, 2016

# BELLFEST 2016!

BellFest is the first Spring Festival of the year in the Upstate, and well worth a drive to Devils Fork State Park, where Friends of Jocassee host the event on Saturday, March 19th, from 10:00am til 2:00pm.



Everyone will want to take the Oconee Bell Trail walk to see the Oconee Bells (*Shortia galacifolia*) in bloom. Once again Master Naturalist volunteers will be stationed along the trail to interpret the Oconee Bell story and point out other interesting sights along the way. Back at the main event, stay for lunch and there'll be some good, toe-tapping music to set the mood, and high-kicking cloggers to entertain you. (You might want to bring a folding chair!)

Visit live critters at the DNR exhibit or hang out with local writers holding forth about local history. Vendors with ties to local history are invited to BellFest this year, so there will be crafts, books, and DVDs for sale that represent life in Jocassee Valley prior to the 1960s.

Special guests at BellFest this year will include Charlie Williams, dressed in period clothing from the mid-1700s. Charlie's impersonation of the man (Andre Michaux) who discovered the Oconee Bell is priceless, and he will tell us, in Michaux's own words, about the discovery of the Oconee Bell right where Lake Jocassee is today.

Friends of Jocassee will once again offer complimentary pontoon tours for new and renewing 2016 members. The first tour leaves the dock at 10:30, the second leaves at 12:30. The tour will go by one of Lake Jocassee's many beautiful waterfalls and deep into Oconee Bell territory. Along the way you may see ducks, bald eagles, or loons! You never know!

A silent auction will raise funds that Friends of Jocassee uses to help its mission of protecting, preserving, and promoting Lake Jocassee and the Jocassee Gorges. If you have an item to donate, please send an email to [info@friendsofjocassee.org](mailto:info@friendsofjocassee.org) and let us know! You never know what fun things we'll have to offer!

Will Oconee Bells be blooming for BellFest? Local native plant experts predict the Bells might very well be in full bloom for the event! What a treat that would be!



Oconee Bells

## COMING EVENTS

March 14 – 2:00 – 4:00 PM: Jocassee Lake Road, Adopt A Highway Cleanup

March 19 – 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM: Devils Fork State Park, BellFest

April 14 – 10:00 AM: Keowee-Toxaway State Park, Spring Quarterly Talk

April 30: Keowee-Toxaway State Park – Water n Wildlife Day



# FIRST DAY 5K DRAWS A CROWD

Top overall winner and 1<sup>st</sup> Place, Men's Division – Chris Harmor

1<sup>st</sup> Place, Women's Division – Charlene William

1<sup>st</sup> Place, 45+ Women's Division – Cathy Reas-Foster

1<sup>st</sup> Place, 45 + Men's Division – Randy Bassett

2<sup>nd</sup> Place, 45+ Women's Division – Octavia Childress

2<sup>nd</sup> Place, 45+ Men's Division – Mark Fifer

1<sup>st</sup> Place, 17 – 44 Women's Division – Katie Felton

1<sup>st</sup> Place, 17 – 44 Men's Division – Sam Slagle

2<sup>nd</sup> Place, 17 – 44 Women's Division -- Debbie Gillespie

2<sup>nd</sup> Place, 17 – 44 Men's Division – Robert Hartner

1<sup>st</sup> Place, 1 -- 16 Girl's Division – Patty Harmor

1<sup>st</sup> Place, 1 – 16 Boy's Division – Brackett Hardy

2<sup>nd</sup> Place, 1 – 16 Girl's Division - Caroline Lucas

2<sup>nd</sup> Place, 1 – 16 Boy's Division – Trey Best

Who wanted to get out of bed on New Year's Day and run a 5K? Lots of people! There was a great turnout this year for the First Day 5K, an annual event sponsored by Devils Fork State Park and Friends of Jocassee. The mild, mid-50's temperature was family-friendly, and families turned out to race, hike, and challenge each other with a jump into chilly Lake Jocassee water in the Loon Lunge. Around 15 people took the plunge, and 54 people raced over mountainous terrain from the picnic/day use area to the day use boat ramp and back. A special effort was put in by a group of [Ainsley's Angels](#), whose members pushed specially loved children along the route in their race mobiles. Another 24 or so hiked over to the Oconee Bell Trail. Smiling faces were everywhere. If you missed the First Day 5K this year, there's another one coming up on the first day of 2017. Don't miss it... Come Out and Play at Devils Fork State Park!



Over 2375 people participating in SC Park's First Day events, running and hiking an estimated total of 3500 miles!

Explore South Carolina's beautiful state parks and get active at the

COME OUT & PLAY 5K SERIES	
COUPLE RUN	FEB 13 11 A.M. AT Paris Mountain State Park
5K	MAR 19 11 A.M. AT Oconee State Park
SPRING SPRINT	APR 16 10 A.M. AT Table Rock State Park
MOUNTAIN LAUREL RUN	MAY 14 10 A.M. AT Keowee-Toxaway State Park
THE GRENADE DASH	JUN 11 9 A.M. AT Croft State Park

Need to know more? Call 800-335-7669 or visit [www.Go-ComeOutandPlay.com](http://www.Go-ComeOutandPlay.com) today!

SouthCarolinaParks.com

**AND THAT'S NOT ALL!**

SCPRT is hosting **5 more 5K races in state parks** around the Upstate between now and mid-June. Come run, and help us spread the word!

# EARTHWATCH TO VISIT LAKE JOCASSEE

For more than 40 years, the [EarthWatch Institute](#) has connected everyday people with some of the world's top scientists to help conduct vital research for a sustainable planet. In the winters of 2017, 2018, and 2019, EarthWatch volunteers will come to Lake Jocassee to document how the health and behavior of loons wintering in a pristine, uncontaminated winter environment compares to loons wintering in the Gulf of Mexico, a region impacted by the largest offshore oil spill in North American history.

In April 2010, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill dumped hundreds of millions of gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico, impacting many species of wildlife in the region, including the common loon (*Gavia immer*). For four years, Earthwatch teams collected data on the health and behavior of loons along the coast of Louisiana, an estuary near the mouth of the Mississippi River. They found that high internal concentrations of oil residues in loon blood affected their body mass and red blood cell volume.

Now, to better understand loon health and behavior, scientists are studying wintering loons in Lake Jocassee, South Carolina – a clear, freshwater ecosystem. EarthWatch volunteers will join researchers in this pristine environment, which National Geographic listed as one of the world's last great wild places, to listen to the haunting, low-pitched call of loons as you capture and tag them at night to assess their health and condition.

These citizen scientists will measure differences in the foraging behavior of loons in a coastal versus freshwater ecosystem, which will enable researchers to better predict and understand what factors might influence their winter survival. Interested in joining the effort? [Sign up here!](#)

Dr. Jim Paruk (L) and Brooks Wade (R), tag and measure a Jocassee loon, February 2015.



## Friends Come Out for Quarterly Talks!

More than 40 people came out on a chilly day in mid-January for the second of a series of Quarterly Talks sponsored by Friends of Jocassee.

Brooks and Kay Wade, both members of the FOJ Board of Directors, gave a slideshow presentation on 'Loons of Lake Jocassee'. Brooks is a long-time loon-lover who has brought attention to the phenomenon of the large population of Common Loons which spend their winters on Lake Jocassee. The couple talked about the history, life cycle, and social behavior of loons on Jocassee. Members of the audience included local residents who have lived near the Common Loon's summer breeding lakes, as well as visitors from the SC coast who are familiar with the birds in that marine environment.

Following the presentation, attendees had the option of taking a pontoon ride out on Lake Jocassee to see the birds 'up close and personal' and observe their interesting feeding and preening behavior.

The upcoming Quarterly Talk will feature Keowee-Toxaway State Park Manager Kevin Blanton and Devils Fork State Park manager Kevin Evans at K-TSP, discussing what's going with the state park service. A wildflower walk with FOJ board member Dan Whitten will follow the Talk. Don't miss it!

## LOON STUDY TO BEGIN THIS WINTER

In preparation for the coming EarthWatch Expedition to Lake Jocassee, leading loon field researcher Dr. Jim Paruk will spend time at the lake this winter from February 15-19. Dr. Paruk is a Senior Scientist for the Center for Loon Conservation at the [Biodiversity Research Institute](#).

For more than 20 years he has been devoted to studying the social and breeding behaviors of the Common Loon, *Gavia immer*.

Prior to joining BRI, Dr. Paruk was a tenured, full-time college professor for 13 years at two academic institutions (Feather River College and Northland College) teaching courses in ornithology, zoology, ecology, and animal behavior. He is now an adjunct professor of biology at the University of Southern Maine, where he currently supervises two graduate students, each doing loon research.

Dr. Paruk will be accompanied by EarthWatch coordinator Kyle Hutton and wildlife veterinarian Nina Schoch, and assisted by FOJ board member Brooks Wade. The team plans to capture and tag loons on Lake Jocassee during the cold night hours.

Friends of Jocassee made a generous donation to help Dr. Paruk make the trip this year, along with donations by the Upstate Master Naturalist Association and the Carolina Bird Club. Please stay tuned for more information on this important work!

# Adopt-A-Highway Update

Friends of Jocassee met before the board meeting on December 14<sup>th</sup> to show the community a little love. Members picked up trash – a LOT of trash – and when they were finished, Jocassee Lake Road and Boone Creek Road were litter-free. Roadside trash makes its way into ditches, clogs culverts and create road flooding problems. Worse, it degrades the quality of water running through those ditches, water which flows directly into creeks and rivers and into our beautiful lakes. Roadside trash can also be deadly to wildlife. Friends of Jocassee picked up more than 50 bags of trash that day. In 2015, FOJ picked up a total of 113 bags of trash, with a whopping estimated weight of 1695 pounds! That’s a lot of litter!

An interesting side note: in 1967, nearly 50 years ago, the Seneca Journal was full of newspaper articles and letters to the editor discussing the problem of trash on Oconee County roads. Some folks...

The next scheduled cleanup will be March 14, just prior to BellFest. 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, March 14: 2:00 – 4:00 PM**

**Jocassee Lake 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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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