

View of Lake Jocassee from Jumping-Off Rock



Photo by Brenda Wiley



FRIENDS OF JOCASSEE

WINTER, 2017

NEXT UP: BELLFEST 2017!



BellFest, the celebration of upstate SC's favorite native wildflower, is the first outdoor Spring Festival of the year in the Upstate, and this will be year #5 for what is becoming well known as a nature lover's outing.

The festival is held at Devils Fork State Park on Saturday, March 18, from 10:00am till 2:00pm. Devils Fork SP boasts a large population of *Shortia galacifolia* – aka Oconee Bells -- along the Oconee Bell Trail, and a smaller population along the Bear Cove Trail. Upstate Master Naturalists will once again be

stationed along the Oconee Bell Trail to share the Oconee Bell history with visitors, and to point out other interesting plants along the way.

Guest speaker is Patrick McMillan, Director of the SC Botanical Gardens in Clemson and star of SC-ETV's "Expeditions with Patrick McMillan". Patrick is a passionate speaker who has a long relationship with Oconee Bells and their fascinating story.

Visitors to BellFest will also be treated to some great music by local favorite Conservation Theory, an Appalachian Americana folk band. The members of Conservation Theory write songs which speak of the mountains, rivers, heartache and downhome love and life of their southern Blue Ridge mountain home.

Hot lunch will be available at DFSP's on-site vendor, Eclectic Sun, as well as hot beverages and snacks.

New and renewing FOJ members are welcome to join us for a free 2 hour tour of Lake Jocassee, into the heart of the Oconee Bell's native habitat. We'll see you there!



At BellFest 2016, Charlie Williams entertained the crowd as 18th century botanist Andre Michaux.

COMING EVENTS

February 7: 2 pm: Firewise,
Holcombe Rm., DFSP

March 4: 10 am: Loon Research on
Lake Jocassee, Holcombe Rm,
DFSP

March 13: 12 pm: Adopt A Highway
cleanup, Jocassee Lake Rd.

March 18: 10 am – 2 pm: BellFest,
DFSP

April 29: 9:00 am – 1 pm: Water 'n
Wildlife Day, Keowee-Toxaway SP

May 5: 10 am: FOJ Spring Quarterly
Talk: Tim Lee, Songbird Migration
in the Jocassee Gorges, Holcombe
Rm, DFSP

WATER 'N WILDLIFE DAY: APRIL 29

Join FOJ and friends (Native Plant Society, Upstate Master Naturalists, Friends of Lake Keowee Society) to help with conservation projects at Keowee-Toxaway State Park, home to the Jocassee Gorges Visitor Center. These projects prevent erosion and pollution, and provide for wildlife! Plant Native Plant Gardens: Pollinator Garden, Rain Garden, Fern Garden, Remove Invasive Plants, Maintain Trails, Pick-up Litter, and Build Habitat Boxes.

Following the morning's work FOJ and FOLKS will provide a nutritious, delicious lunch for all the volunteers. Last year around 45 people came out to lend a hand... let's keep up the good work this year with even more volunteers! See you there! Water, Wildlife, and Wildflower Day!!!

Runners Warm Up With 1st Day 5K, Cool Off With Loon Lunge

Despite a gray and chilly day, 56 runners turned out to compete in the challenging race through Devils Fork State Park for the 2017 First Day 5K. After the 5K, nearly half of those runners ran right into the water of Lake Jocassee for the Loon Lunge, despite air temperature that struggled to make it into the 50's! Top runners received complimentary FOJ drink glasses, and the Loon Lungers all received a complimentary towel. Smiling faces were everywhere. If you missed the First Day 5K this year, there's another one coming up on the first day of 2018. Don't miss it... and watch for more Come Out & Play 5K Series races at local state parks this year! Below are the top 10 winners:

Place	Bib #	Name	Finish	Age	Gender
1	144	Chris Hopkins	22:41	28	M
2	137	Dale Looper	23:16	50	M
3	154	Michael Summers	25:26	20	M
4	112	Steven Heller	29:13	52	M
5	108	Michelle Rice	30:02	42	F
6	109	Jody Wilbanks	30:02	47	M
7	156	Steven Ludwig	30:49	34	M
8	160	Katie Bailey	31:17	27	F
9	118	Patrick Krohn	31:25	50	M
10	130	Joseph Henderson	31:30	11	M

FOJ Hosts 'Freezing With Friends' Bass Tournament

FOJ sponsored the first ever Freezing With Friends Bass Tournament on December 3rd, with 5 boats and 6 participants. The \$40 registration fee was paid out to the winners, and each participant received a registration packet with a FOJ trash bag, FOJ flyer, Fishing Leave No Trace Card, floating keychain, trail utensil set, and two packs of lead free weights. FOJ mugs were given out to the top three teams. Everyone caught fish, and Charles Murphee brought in the biggest bass at 5.60 lbs. After the event FOJ members took fish with expanded swim bladders out to deeper water and recompressed them, so no fish died because of this tournament. FOJ will sponsor a venting clinic to teach the venting procedure, an alternative way of recompressing fish which have been caught in deep water. Thanks to Devils Fork State Park assistant manager and FOJ Board Member Ray Felton for organizing this event. Ray is considering more fishing events in the future, including a kayak fishing tournament this coming fall.

FRIENDS COME OUT FOR FALL QUARTERLY TALK AND TOUR OF BAD CREEK PROJECT

It all began with 81,000 acres, and a tractor.

That's the beginning of the story about the Keowee-Toxaway Project, Duke Power (now Duke Energy) President Bill Lee's 1960 era vision for a cooperative energy assembly which would eventually include the Bad Creek Hydroelectric Project, the Jocassee Pumped Storage Facility, the Keowee Hydroelectric Project, and the Oconee Nuclear Station.

FOJ members were treated to a tour of the Bad Creek Project as part of the Fall Quarterly Talk on a sunny day in mid-October. FOJ President Allan Boggs drove a full bus of attendees up and onto the dam of the Bad Creek Reservoir, where they had a spectacular view of Oconee and Pickens Counties, and told the story of the Bad Creek Project. The dam is Allan's responsibility, and he knows every foot of its 2800' length and its 2000' breadth. He's alerted if the ground shakes and he's alerted if heavy rain is forecast. Electronic monitors take readings on the dam every 15 seconds, and any abnormal reading prompts a call straight to Allan's phone. Every day he takes a manual reading of instruments spaced along the length of the dam, and every day he visually inspects it. It's a big responsibility, and his pride in his job and his company is understandable.

Allan explained the coming expansion of the Bad Creek Project as a way to use solar energy being generated across the southeast. Generation of solar power is time and weather dependent; hydro power is immediate and steady. Using extra electricity generated by solar cells on sunny day to refill the reservoir more quickly will allow Bad Creek to generate more power – 200 megawatts per hour per turbine more – than the present capacity of 1200 megawatts per hour per turbine.

Allan began work with Bad Creek Project when the tunnel was 200' deep (it's now 1200') and there were still trees on the reservoir site. As the FOJ group left the dam and headed down to the power plant, located deep inside the granite mountain, Allan spied off facts about the pressure of water seeping through the walls inside the tunnels, the weight of the turbine's component parts, how the 4 energy producing turbines are also used as a pump to refill Bad Creek Reservoir from Lake Jocassee, and how a 'bypass tunnel' kept 2000 workers a day moving inside during construction. The group hiked around the bypass tunnel, deep under 1300' of rock, and took a collective deep breath when the bus finally backed out of the tunnel into sunlight. Ultimately it would take 31 filing cabinets to contain all the engineering blueprints for the Bad Creek Project, which is known worldwide as an engineering masterpiece.

Following the Bad Creek tour, FOJ members enjoyed a delicious lunch at the Bad Creek Outdoor Classroom as part of the 2016 Annual Friends of Jocassee Meeting.

FOJ RECEIVES 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 KTHEP was formed as a result of the Keowee-Toxaway Relicensing Agreement Duke Energy entered into with 16 other stakeholder organizations during the Keowee-Toxaway Hydroelectric Project Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing process.

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.



FRIENDS COME OUT FOR WINTER QUARTERLY TALK AND TOUR OF WALHALLA FISH HATCHERY

For now, the glory days are over.

That was the message from DNR Fisheries expert Dan Rankin, talking about the 'glory days' of fishing Lake Jocassee in the 1970's, when the lake was still new and raw and trophy trout were regularly caught from its waters. That doesn't mean fishing isn't still good – no one would sniff at 5 and 6 lb. trout, and the occasional 8+ lb. brown trout makes a fine dinner – but the number of fish caught isn't what it used to be ten years ago.

Dan was the speaker for the Winter Quarterly Talk at Oconee State Park, and his insight into the SC-DNR's work of keeping fish stocked in Lake Jocassee was well worth the trip up the mountain for the 30 attendees. None of the work is as simple as it sounds. Before the first trout or bass could be introduced into the lake, bait fish had to be stocked so there would be food for the larger species. But a fish raised on fish chow in a fish hatchery doesn't necessarily take right to a diet of shad or herring, and a fish raised in a concrete pool doesn't necessarily take right to being deposited into a 385' deep lake. And what to do about the females, unable to spawn in the still lake water, and unable to reabsorb their eggs? Research and trial and error by DNR Fisheries experts unraveled the riddles of successful introduction, one by one, and today Lake Jocassee supports good populations of stocked trout and bass.

The lake is also home to the indigenous Bartram's bass, a species of black bass, and to the destructively invasive Alabama spotted bass, which was introduced into Lake Keowee and transferred into Jocassee via the pumping action of the Jocassee Pumped Storage Facility. These two species are hybridizing to the detriment of the Bartram's bass, which is quickly losing its native characteristics.

There was much more. Dan knows a lot about Lake Jocassee and its fish, and the continual challenges of keeping the fishery active, and he answered questions with the knowledge of someone who has lived and breathed his profession for many years.

Following the talk, FOJ members drove a little further up the mountain to the venerable Walhalla Fish Hatchery, where manager Scott Poore further enlightened us on the trials and tribulations of raising fish from eggs. While he talked, tens of thousands of young fish, separated by size into long concrete pools, swam back and forth in constantly moving schools. Predation is one challenge, as a group of vultures can make a serious dent in numbers of small fry, and raccoons occasionally make their way through the fence to feast. The biggest challenge is weather. Even a small increase in temperature is doom to trout, and the past three summers have been the warmest in recorded history. Coupled with low water volume during long, hot, dry spells, raising healthy trout is probably as challenging today as it has ever been.

Big THANKS to both Dan Rankin and Scott Poore for taking the time to educate us about the fish of Lake Jocassee!

SYNOPSIS OF PINNACLE MOUNTAIN FIRE

FOJ Board Member and DNR specialist Ken Forrester offered the FOJ Board of Directors some interesting insight into the recent wildfire that burned 10,600 acres across Pinnacle Mountain, through Table Rock State Park, and into the Greenville County Watershed property. The fire started November 9th from embers settling in dry leaves some 30 feet away from the fire ring at an overnight camping site, and spread quickly due to severely dry conditions in the mountains. Fire lines failed to hold due to dry winds and constantly falling leaves, and the fire spread at a rate of 500 – 1600 acres per day. A firefighting team from Utah joined the effort along with DNR and the SC Forestry Commission. The steep, rugged, and remote terrain of the escarpment was a challenge for the fire fighters as well as those coordinating their efforts. After many days with little containment and with high winds forecast in the days to come, a decision was made to burn out 5000 acres of wooded land ahead of the approaching blaze, and ultimately, this decision prevented the fire from spreading uncontrollably. The wildfire, for the most part, did not do significant damage to tree canopies, and it is believed that the overall effect of the fire will be beneficial to the forest ecosystem.

FIREWISE Meeting February 7: 2:00 PM – Holcombe Room, Devils Fork State Park, 161 Holcombe Circle, Salem, SC – Sponsored by Friends of Jocassee

ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY UPDATE

Hard though it may be to believe, the amount of trash picked up by FOJ volunteers in 2016 exactly equals the amount picked up in 2015. Both years totaled 113 bags of assorted plastic, glass, metal and miscellaneous detritus cast out along Jocassee Lake Rd and Boone Creek Ch. Rd., and removed by FOJ volunteers. FOJ will continue to encourage visitors to Lake Jocassee to be aware of loose items in truck beds and boats, which often sail away accidentally.

FOJ's next Adopt-a-Highway cleanup will be on March 13 in preparation for BellFest the following weekend at Devils Fork State Park. Join us... please!

ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY CLEANUP

Monday, March 13: 12:00 – 1:30 PM

Jocassee Lake Road

Boone Creek Road

FOJ HOLDS ANNUAL MEETING; ELECTS NEW OFFICERS FOR 2017

The 2016 Friends of Jocassee Annual Membership Meeting was held Thursday, October 13, following a most interesting tour of the Bad Creek Hydro Station. FOJ President Allan Boggs – who also conducted the tour - welcomed members and gave an update of FOJ accomplishments to date, which includes the BellFest festival, 1st Day 5K, two annual work days, Adopt a Highway, and community outreach to groups regularly using Lake Jocassee. Everyone enjoyed quality time together over a delicious lunch provided by FOJ.

At the FOJ Board Meeting following the Annual Meeting, new officers were elected. Sherrie Whitten has replaced Allan Boggs as President, Brook Wade remains Vice-President, Mallory Daily replaces Ray Felton as Secretary, Debbie Laughridge remains Treasurer, and Beth Clark replaces Kevin Evans as Co-Treasurer. A new position of Parliamentarian has been added to the roster of officers, and that position will be filled by Dan Whitten.

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: _____

