

Buffalo River Ramblings



May/June/July 2010

Newsletter of the Buffalo River Chapter of the Ozark Society

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Buffalo River Reflections

By Laura Timby

In typical fashion our weather has gone from winter to summer almost overnight, with very little spring in between. Although it was cold here in Gilbert earlier in the week, an official recorded low of 36°F, it has already warmed back up to a humid 82° F as of yesterday afternoon. Never have I seen a year that the pollen was as thick. I guess with everything blooming almost simultaneously, pollen was at an all time high. The river has had a yellow film for the last month. Not to complain though, its way better than oil scum!

Nonetheless, the river is beautiful right now, with good flow and the water a clear turquoise shade. It seems like there may be a little more moss than we typically see this time of year. One can't help but wonder if the sewage leak at Marble Falls might have affected that. The NPS is monitoring that problem and evidently a temporary stop to the pollution has been put in place. That is definitely welcome news!

Floating the past couple of days has been difficult because of strong winds-evidently it is fixing to blow in some serious weather. There have been plenty of vulture, hawk and eagle sightings, and every log and rock has its resident group of turtles piled up basking in the warm sun. Trips into any of the side hollows reveals an amazing array of wildflowers, although the underbrush is getting pretty thick, much more conducive to ticks and snakes than to nature hikes.

There isn't a better time than now to get out on the Buffalo and enjoy all that there is to offer. Dust off that canoe and grab your life jacket and paddle and head out for some beauty and solitude. You never know what you

might find, but its bound to be special. All of us owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Compton and the early organizers of the Ozark Society for taking on the challenge to preserve the Buffalo River. Without their efforts we wouldn't have the river as we know it today. Perhaps each and every one of us can take Dr. Compton's challenge to heart:

"The challenge goes on. There are other lands and rivers, other wilderness areas, to save and to share with all. I challenge you to step forward to protect and care for the wild places you love best." – Dr. Neil Compton

Spring, Meetings, and By-Laws

By Katie Murray

Spring has finally arrived here on the Buffalo River. The wildflowers are blooming and the River is perfect for floating. I was hiking the Lost Valley trail today and noticed beautiful Columbine, Jack in the Pulpit, and plenty of smiling hikers.

The weather was gorgeous for the membership meeting at Buffalo Point April 9-11th. It was wonderful to meet so many dedicated members and welcome new faces to the group. Buffalo National Rivers new Chief of Natural Resources and Fire, Barbara Wilson, spoke with us about some of the areas the Park is focusing on. She updated us on the General Management Planning process. We discussed concerns over River access and ramps. She told us about stream bank stabilization projects the aquatic team is working on and covered a variety of other topics. There definitely seems to be a need for volunteers to help with the plethora of projects and needs facing the Park. Volunteering in the Park is a wonderful way to put one's love for the Buffalo River into concrete action. The spring meeting also coincided with one of Ken Smiths trail

building weekends. Talk about putting love into concrete action! Ken and his crews are making great strides. Ken spent some time telling us about their latest achievements and new work underway to help protect the larger Buffalo River watershed. Overall the weekend seemed to be a good mix of sunny weather, interesting discussions, guided hikes, and a Ranger lead float. Topped off with great food, music, and dancing. What a weekend!

One important point of Buffalo River Chapter business is the By-Laws. This important document helps guide our chapter activities. Throughout the winter we have been adapting the Ozark Society by-laws to fit as our Buffalo River Chapter by-laws. During our March meeting the board and present Chapter members discussed each point in more detail. We now have a document we would like to submit to all Buffalo River Chapter members for approval. I will gladly email or mail you a copy of the by-laws. We would like to vote to approve these by-laws at our next Chapter meeting in May. If you cannot make the meeting you have the option to appoint another Buffalo River Chapter member to vote by proxy or submit your vote by email to me at katimae@eritter.net. Again, please contact me if you would like me to email or mail you a copy of the by-laws before the next meeting. You will need to be a member in good standing to vote, i.e., a current member, so now is a great time to renew your annual Ozark Society and Buffalo River Chapter membership.

I hope you all will take a minute and check the upcoming events and meetings schedule. And if you have a suggestion on a speaker, outing, or place to meet, please let me know.



Conservation Notes

By Shawn Porter

What a winter! But the cold winds are soon forgotten when the forest and meadows grow green again. The fresh air and water gives us life, but we do not take their purity for granted. Gone are the days when we can quench our thirst in a cool mountain spring without wondering when and where herbicides have been applied, and what chemicals have washed or seeped into our creeks, wells, and springs.

Earth Day Turns 40!

As I begin to write this article on the 40th anniversary of Earth Day, thousands of acres in the Ozark National Forest, along with thousands of miles of and utility ROW's, are scheduled to be sprayed with herbicides. As annual applications of these herbicides increase, chemicals are released into the environment in direct contact with target plant species, and, as run-off and drift. These chemicals eventually find their way into the food chain via insects and forage, or by seeping through the

karst limestone and down into the ground-water. Current (but outdated) regulations allow the USFS and EPA to rely on incomplete data from testing done by the herbicide manufacturers. Complete and current independent analysis of herbicides clearly shows they are not safe, and, that they do persist in the environment. Recently, the Ozark Water Protection Alliance (OWPA) formed to coordinate efforts aimed at reducing herbicide use. Email ozarkwaterpal@gmail.com or call 870-446-6126 for more information.

Spring / Forest Burning

Many Ozark residents are also familiar with spring days when the sky is dark with smoke from "prescribed burning". The Forest Service (USFS), Arkansas Game and Fish (AGFC), and National Park Service are collectively burning 50,000 to 100,000 acres of public lands in the Ozarks every year. The biological, global, and human health impacts of prescribed burning are numerous and complex, as are the arguments both for and against the practice. Tax subsidized funding to conduct these burns appears to be a steady source of revenue for our local USFS districts. USFS land managers are also moving towards burning in the summer, as well as, in the spring. Some of these summer burns are related to the USFS expanding Rocky Mountain Elk onto the Ozark National Forest in the area of Richland Creek. Burning and herbicides are being used to create pastures for the elk in areas that were once natural forest. While my research indicates that it is technically illegal for the USFS to convert forest into pasture, until or unless they are successfully challenged in court, the practice will continue.

Bearcat Hollow Phase 2

An Environmental Assessment (EA) for Phase 2 of the Bearcat Hollow Project is expected any day. Approval of that project would cement plans for the elk to range up Richland creek, eventually crossing into the Bayou district of the ONF. Some might think this is a good thing. Think again. The closest metaphor is that of a bull in a china shop. The rare plants and unique ecosystem of Richland creek will certainly be altered by the introduction of non-native elk. Exactly what the effects will be are not clear. In a tragic twist of ineptitude, neither the USFS nor the AGFC, (or the NPS for that matter) have studied the current effects, or the probable, potential impacts that an expanded elk population will have on the environment and native species of the Ozark National Forest or the Buffalo National River.

Mulberry Headwaters On Chopping Block

The Lynn Hollow Project and the Catalpa Project are both on schedule in the Mulberry River Headwaters. Thorough comments and appeals were filed on the Lynn Hollow Project, but no relief was offered. USFS land managers are pushing ahead with plans while ignoring public concerns. These two projects encompass approximately 16,000 acres. Another project in the same area has just been added, called the Cougar Project. The exact size of

the Cougar project is unknown, but if historical averages prevail, it is likely to be 5000-10,000 acres. Impacts to the headwaters of one of our cleanest and most popular streams are likely as forest managers continue to plan these intensive projects, relying on chemical treatments, burning, and over-cutting of the forest. Anyone interested in the fate and future of the area are urged to contact the USFS Pleasant Hill District office 479-754-2864.

The South Fork Project

Comments and appeals to remand the South Fork Project (USFS; Little Red River) have recently been completed and submitted on behalf of the Ozark Society. The revised EA, issued with the decision, made a complete 180-degree reversal on the issue of using tank mixed herbicides. Originally the EA stated that "no tank mixed herbicides" would be allowed. The revised EA allows the use tank mixed herbicide applications. It is outrageous, but not completely unexpected that the USFS would issue an EA for public comment, and then revise it with the issuance of the decision notice to be more harmful to the environment, while prohibiting further comments.

This Earth Day I am happy to live in a place that is worth fighting for...for relatively clean water and air, and for a multitude of diverse and beautiful species that share this Ozark mountain home. I am happy to know I am not alone in caring so deeply, but remain deeply frustrated with the lack of accountability within the USFS and area electric cooperatives. Please take the time to explain your concerns to those who manage our public and private lands. More information regarding the USFS projects mentioned above can be found at:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/oonf/ozark/projects/planning/planning.html> other questions or comments regarding this article can be sent to me at ozarkwaterpal@gmail.com

The Mystery Hike

By Farrel Couch

A group of eight inquisitive hikers including myself met on a bright February morning at the Parthenon Post Office for a day of adventure at a seldom-visited area. After condensing our group into two high clearance vehicles, we drove toward our destination; the views of the valleys and mountains were beautiful. It had snowed the week before and all the mountaintops were still cloaked in snow, while the valleys had very little or none at all. We were reminded of the snowcapped peaks of the Rocky Mountains. After arriving at our destination along the Little Buffalo, in a Hollow called Wild Cat, we stopped and talked to the owner who had given us permission to enter the property via a mutual friend. This creek is visited by hunters but very seldom by hikers because it is on private property.

We gathered our stuff and made our way up a road that led to hunting cabins up on the mountainside. After about 200 yards the road headed steeply uphill and we made our way up the creek in true bushwhack fashion. I had visited this creek some twenty years prior with a friend of mine looking for another feature that we never did find (Hannah Rock). I was hoping that my memory hadn't faded so much that I couldn't find the areas unique to Wildcat Hollow. As we made our way up the creek we noticed a large bluff on the left side, just as the creek made a sharp right turn. The bluff was dark and gray, with many ledges and nooks. Soon we turned into the first tributary of Wild Cat creek, I'm not even sure it has a name. We made our way carefully up the creek, which grew even narrower, with large boulders we had to scramble over. After a quarter mile of scrambling, we began to notice a dark shape on the creek as we approached, climbing ever more steeply. As we neared our destination, on the right we could see a huge formation at the edge of the bluff with water pouring down from a dark hole beside it. Directly in front of us was a large arched opening, and as we entered this area we noticed the creek had bored out a sinkhole. This natural bridge has a very interesting feature; as you approach, it just looks like a natural bridge. Once you get in past it, you see that the creek had to turn immediately to the right, down a long rock hall for about eighty feet, maybe more, where water would have plunged from a twenty foot waterfall on the left, that today was only ice.

We had our lunch below the natural bridge on large slabs of rock by the creek. After lunch we made our way along a narrow band of rock to first see where the creek once flowed, before taking the sinkhole shortcut, which was obvious from that point of view. My memories from twenty years earlier were different from what now stood before us. The large dark rock that we had seen on the right as we approached the natural bridge is a large heavily weathered flowstone from a cave that opened into the area. The flowstone was eroded and moss covered looking almost like a dark green shaggy beard hanging down from a twenty-foot bluff overhang. Immediately to its left was a huge dark opening that you could peer into and see a large stalagmite feature standing up maybe six foot tall. Beyond that water splashed noisily over a waterfall in the darkness. I believe in the years past when we checked it flowed off of a small ledge too small to go into but very beautiful to see. After visiting this feature for a while we made our way back down to the main creek and continued upstream to see the other wonders. After a short walk we made our way up another small tributary to a great bluff that overhangs the creek completely as it makes a sharp left turn; so sharply in fact that you could not see the other end of the bluff. As we made way further around the turn we noticed a rectangular entry into the bluff near where the creek flowed over a large waterfall. We later found out it was an abandoned lead mine from the pioneer era.

Once again we returned to the main creek and made our way further up stream to an area where the creek poured over a waterfall into a beautiful blue-green pool. To go beyond could mean even more treacherous climbing, much more than we were prepared to do. One member of the group did scale up to the top of the falls where they reported back to the group below that the creek poured from pool to pool before leaping over the falls we could see. We then returned back down the creek, quite invigorated by the sights we had seen. Upon returning to our cars we again thanked the landowner for allowing us to visit such an unusual and seldom seen place. Once back in Parthenon we said our goodbyes, the mystery hike a mystery no longer. Thank you to all who participated.



BRC Updates

Once again the Buffalo River Chapter has voted to sponsor a camper to attend the Halberg Ecology Camp 3rd year advanced camp as a recipient of the Gene Cutrell Memorial Scholarship. Graciously, the Ozark Society Foundation has offered to match our contribution, for which we are very grateful. This is an incredible camp that offers students with a passion for science and the out-of-doors a wonderful learning experience. Our chapter is proud to be a sponsor of this worthwhile program and this is just one of the ways that your annual dues are utilized.



News & Notes...

New Members: Welcome to the BRC!

- Carolyn McAllester
- Joe & Jody Rath
- Mike McArthy
- Charlie Transue



Meetings... Everyone is welcome!

Tuesday May 18th the BRC will meet at 5:30 pm at el Acapulco, Hwy 65 in Marshall for dinner (if you wish) and a brief meeting to vote on the BRC by-laws. We hope to see you there. Contact Katie Murray for more info at katimae@eritter.net

Tuesday June 8th the BRC will meet at the Harrison Public Library at 5:30pm. Our speaker is Erica Doerr, a geologist with the Arkansas Geological Survey. Erica's presentation will be about **Earthquakes**. Should be fascinating, so plan on joining us. As always, the public is

welcome. Contact Laura Timby at ldtimby@ritternet.com if you have questions.

Sunday July 18th at 11am meet at the NPS Tyler Bend Visitor Center for a Ranger Guided Tour to a secluded cave, Back of Beyond, along the Buffalo. Following the cave tour the **BRC will meet at 4:30 pm** in the **Tyler Bend picnic area** for a membership meeting. Those planning to attend the cave tour need to wear appropriate clothing and bring water and snacks. The cave tour will be limited to 12 participants but everyone is welcome to join us for the meeting. Hope to see you there. Email Katie at katimae@eritter.net for more info.



Hikes...

Editor's note: Please contact the trip leader prior to the event to confirm attendance and to check on any last minute changes. Thank you.

Saturday May 8th Leatherwood Creek - bushwhack, Hideout Hollow-trail, and McFerrin's Point-trail. Approximately 6 miles total-rated moderate. Meet at the Ponca Bridge at 9:30 am. Limited to 15 participants. For more info and to sign up contact Farrel at 479-200-2621.

Saturday May 15th BRT Steel Creek to Kyle's Landing. Approximately 8 miles, rated strenuous. Meet at the upper end of Kyle's at 9:30 am. Trip limit is 15 participants. To sign up contact Farrel at 479-200-2621.



Floats...

Buffalo National River Partners (BNRP) is hosting a Buffalo River Cleanup in coordination with the NPS and Concessionaires on **Sunday June 13th**. Several sections of the river will be targeted so volunteers are needed. If interested contact Laura Timby @ 870-439-2968 or email ldtimby@ritternet.com

The Ozark Society Summer Float on the Buffalo River will leave from Tyler Bend (probably), at noon, on Tuesday June 1st. We will have lunch, and then start down the river. The trip will end on Saturday afternoon, June 5 at Shipp's Ferry on the White River

There will be a johnboat to carry community gear for each 20 - 24 person group, however you should leave room in your canoe for one community ice chest. This is a strenuous trip. If you are not in good enough physical condition to assist with all the chores such as lifting, carrying, cooking, clean up, setting up and breaking camp, this may not be the trip for you. Each person will be responsible for their own canoe and camping gear. If you need a canoe, they will be available from our

outfitter. We plan to limit the group to 60 people, and no pets (please)! The trip fee for members will be \$150 for adults and \$125 for children under 18. You must be a member of the Ozark Society and will be required to sign a release form in order to participate in the trip. If you are not currently a member, the family or individual membership is \$15 per year. The fee will include food, a shuttle from Tyler Bend to Shipp's Ferry, johnboat expense, ice, etc.

To find out if slots are still available contact the trip leader, Alice Andrews, ASAP at 501-219-4295 or email alice209ok@yahoo.com

Richard McFadden has been posting information on the Ozark Society and Arkansas Canoe Club message board for upcoming float trips on the Buffalo. You can type in the following links to access the thread on the message boards www.ozarksociety.net or visit the ACC Forum under recreation at www.arkansascanoecub.com



BRC May-July Calendar

- **Sat. May 8th Hike Leatherwood Creek, McFerron's Point & Hideout Hollow**
- **Sat. May 15th Hike BRT Steel Creek to Kyle's**
- **Tuesday May 18th BRC Meeting 5:30PM**
- **Ozark Society BNR Float June 1-5th**
- **Tues June 8th BRC Meeting 5:30 PM**
- **Sunday June 13th BNR cleanup**
- **July 11-17th OS Colorado Trip**
- **Sun. July 18th BRC Meeting and Cave Tour**

Dues Reminder

Note: At the December meeting the board voted to offer a reduced BRC membership of \$5 dollars to those wishing to receive only email newsletters.

The Ozark Society and Buffalo River Chapter dues are now due for 2010. Dues for the Ozark Society are \$15 for an individual or family, \$25 for contributing, or \$200 for life (\$100 for seniors 65 and older) a one-time fee. BRC dues are \$10.00 annual, \$5.00 email only, or \$100 life (also a one-time fee). To become a member of the BRC you must first be a member of the Ozark Society. One check made payable to the **Ozark Society/BRC** and sent to **BRC, PO Box 105, Gilbert AR 72636** or to **Ozark Society, PO Box 2914, Little Rock AR 72203** will take care of your general Ozark Society membership plus your chapter dues. If you are a **new** member and paid dues after October 1, 2009 your dues will be good through 2010. Thank you for your continued support.

See you on the river. LT

"Conservation is a state of Harmony between man and land." ~Aldo Leopold



BRC chair Katie Murray welcomes the crowd.



Ken Smith tirelessly planning trail work while Farrel and Tamara Couch look on.



Millie Phillips describes various items to Avie Timby on the touch table.