

# Buffalo River Ramblings



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Newsletter of the Buffalo River Chapter of the Ozark Society

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*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*



## Buffalo River Reflections

by Laura Timby

Happy New Year to all! Winter is once again upon us and with it the customary quiet and reflection that this season invites. The weather has been typical for Arkansas; one day warm, the next freezing rain and cold. So far no significant accumulation this year but there is still plenty of time for that. The Buffalo's last rise was higher than I've seen in the last several years and only now has dropped to a more normal flow. The NPS came in and moved a huge pile of sand from the entrance to the Gilbert gravel bar to facilitate accessing the river although it may still require 4wheel drive to avoid getting stuck.

The good news is that C&H Farms has been shut down and all the hogs have been removed. There is still a lot of remediation work to complete, as all of the hog waste must now be moved out of the watershed. Perhaps when this is finally accomplished we'll see the gradual return of more acceptable water quality on the Buffalo. There is an open comment period on the ADEQ website <http://water.adeg.commentinput.com> about a permanent moratorium on Regulation 5&6. The Ozark Society, BRWA and The Waterkeeper Alliance are all proposing that no medium to large CAFO's be allowed in the Buffalo River watershed. All comments must be submitted by Wednesday January 22<sup>nd</sup> by

4:30PM. Please comment. So much time, money and energy has been spent on this CAFO, it makes sense not to allow it to happen again. Governor Asa Hutchinson deserves a big thank you because it was his love of the Buffalo and his intervention that finally turned the tide.

A big thanks goes to all of you who contacted your elected officials, made comments, donated time and money and made this outcome a reality. Its true that when we work together we can make a difference.

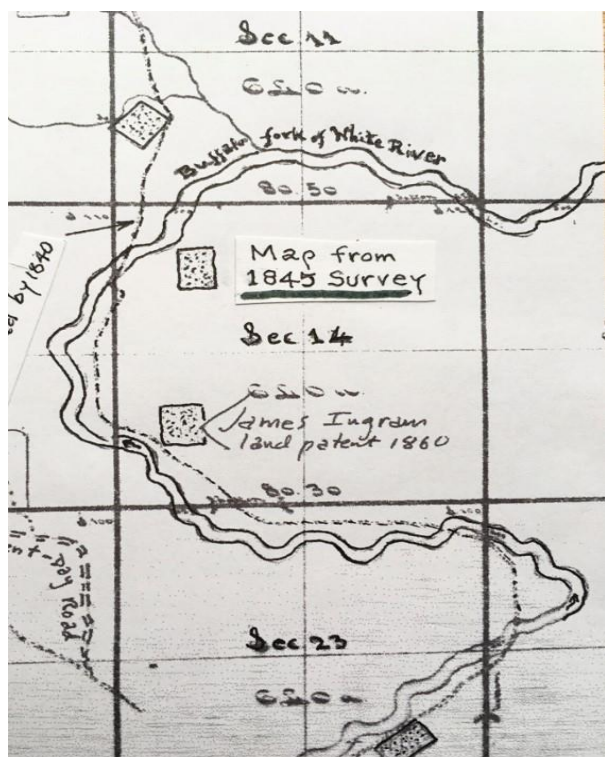
## MUSINGS FROM THE LOOK-OFF IN MARCH

by Jim Liles

We recall this month in 2001, when we began planning and building a network of foot-trails on the 45 acres acquired early that year. As Suzie and I explored our land, hepatica were displaying distinctive blue blossoms—the earliest wildflower of spring. By mid-month the snowy white blooms of serviceberry trees began to illuminate the leafless woodlands, and “sarvis” trees were much in evidence around the look-off in the northeast corner of the property. One tree in particular caught our attention, with its height of almost 40 feet and its trunk circumference of almost 40 inches. The problem with “champion-sized” trees is that they tend to be vulnerable to wind-throw or decline by disease, insect infestation, or other age-related debilitation. Our big serviceberry tree, 18 years after discovering it, is still putting on its floral display each March, diminished, however, by the loss of a major fork in the ice storm that ravaged the Ozarks over several days beginning January 29, 2009.

Forest giants scattered along the Buffalo River's banks occasionally succumb to another threat—the affects of

repeated flooding. From the look-off, the up-river view centers on “Hat Chute,” where the constantly changing scene offers a good illustration of the vagaries of the river environment. When I first canoed that stretch of water in 1983, a giant sycamore cast its summer shade over Hat Chute. It had likely taken root more than 150 years ago, and was flanked by large river birch trees, which leaned out over the river. The bank-lining big trees lent a special aura to the river-floaters’ experience as canoeists were swept along beneath their shade. On March 22, 2001, we joined our long-time canoeing partners Harold and Margaret Hedges on a run from Dillard’s Ferry to Rush. When we shot through Hat Chute, we were dismayed to find that one of the big arching birch trees had been toppled. It still clung by its roots to the bank, and its great trunk awash across Hat Chute presented a serious challenge to our canoes’ safe passage. Over the succeeding years, the giant sycamore and all but one of the remaining river birch trees have been swept away, and Hat Chute has been changed forever. On March 5, 2005, Harold Hedges—himself a giant among those associated with Buffalo River over the preceding half-century—passed on. Margaret, herself a “force of nature,” passed in 2010. Both remembered here.



I know of no one more conscious of the Buffalo River’s unpredictability than Suzie, whose home—a mile up

Rush Creek from Buffalo River—was flooded December 3, 1982, following the biggest rise in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (The family was evacuated by motor-boat, but lost many possessions to the flood.) Reflecting 37 years after that experience, as we gaze out over the green and thriving forest cloaking the hills as far as we can see, we conclude that nature’s powers of recovery, from disasters both manmade and natural, are indeed remarkable. One only has to look at the old black & white photos taken a hundred years ago, when the Rush district was almost devoid of trees. The heydays of serious zinc mining along the Buffalo River coincided with WW I, the metal being much in demand for the manufacture of brass cartridges and shell casings. The hills and valleys on both sides around the zinc mines were denuded of most of the trees, their timber being the essential material for fueling steam engines, building cribbing (mine supports), tram trestles, ore mills—as well as houses, shops, railroad ties, etc. Taking in the scene today, it’s hard to imagine the country as it appeared more than a hundred years ago.

The U.S. Census for 1840 gave a population of 1,286 for Marion County. Included was John Ingram (born 1794,) wife Mary, and children. They had traveled from Kentucky to settle near Buffalo River, in southeastern Marion County—perhaps even before statehood for Arkansas in 1836. They apparently moved into the small community, formerly “Shawnee Town,” renamed “Yellville,” where John Ingram was appointed its postmaster in 1840. By 1845 the Ingrams had cleared and planted in corn no less than 20 acres of river bottomland some 15 miles from Yellville by rough wagon-road—no small task using oxen, horses or mules, axes and saws. Today, that land lies directly across from our look-off; it is now a solid green forest of mature pines, illustrating the land’s resilience and recovery from alteration at the hand of man.

In the late 1820s, a federal survey crew moved slowly through the Ozarks wilderness, locating exterior lines for townships—a process that began in southeast Arkansas at the behest of President Thomas Jefferson, following the Louisiana Purchase. By the time the surveyors reached the Buffalo and White Rivers, pioneers were establishing homesteads and farms in the Ozarks. The subsequent township subdivision survey established section lines. The land survey field notes of 1845 include the sketch reproduced at the top of this article, denoting “Ingram’s cornfield” where the big pines now stand. Fifteen years later, James Ingram, a son of John & Mary Ingram, secured a land patent to the 80 acres containing the field cleared and planted by

the Ingrams prior to 1845. He also acquired land around the mouth of a Buffalo River tributary located about 5 miles upriver from the 1840s cornfield. That branch carries the family name, Ingram Creek. By 1900, records indicate that James had moved to Baker, Oregon. (In a subsequent article, we will continue the story of the Ingram Creek property and its part in the production of zinc from the Rush Creek—Ingram Creek Mining District, during the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.)

On a March day in 2002 I launched a canoe at the mouth of Rush Creek and poled, solo, up Buffalo, running bank-full from recent rains. The river had begun to clear, taking on the turquoise hue that follows the surge of muddy water. I poled the canoe past the perennial sandbar opposite the long-abandoned Red-Cloud Mine and inched against the current across the deep pool at the base of Gage Bluff, to beach on the long, curving bar on the river's east bank. Curious about the pine forest that had replaced Ingram's cornfield over the past 160-plus years, I walked into it and came upon its biggest citizen: a short-leaved pine measuring 10½ feet in circumference and over 80 feet in height. It is so much larger than the surrounding trees in the "pinery" that we view it as the matriarch short-leaf pine that gave rise to all the surrounding pines.

Whenever we contemplate the former Ingram farm, now pine forest across the river from the look-off, we reflect on the labor required to convert that ground to a life-sustaining crop, and how—over subsequent decades, after the land-clearing settlers' moved away—corn gave way to pine. Like dozens of former farmsteads carved from the wilderness along the entire Buffalo River, the abandoned pioneer Ingram farm has long since returned to wilderness. Both the former Ingram field and the Ingram Creek area are, in fact, within the 22,500 acre "Lower Buffalo River Wilderness Unit," which adjoins the 16,838 acre "Leatherwood Wilderness," managed by the Forest Service—together a large roadless area with a natural assemblage of native species of plants & animals. While we have found no remains of the Ingram cabin, about a mile upriver is another patch of old pine trees, perhaps once another pioneer cornfield. Upon exploring that site we have found remnants of a stone foundation, the much-rusted body of a Model-A Ford, bedsprings and other items of "old iron." With the passage of time rendering such places less and less discernible, Buffalo National River is a fading cultural landscape, as well as an emerging "wilderness"—a work in progress.

## OS and BRC Dues are now Due for 2020.

Its that time of year again folks. Annual dues are now due. If you go to the Ozark Society website, [www.ozarksociety.net](http://www.ozarksociety.net) you can pay your dues to the OS as well as the Buffalo River Chapter. Thank you for your continued support.

## Welcome New Members!

- Brian & Martye Blaylock
- Basil & Mary Ellen Hicks
- Marcia Zamora
- Linda Van Blaricom
- Richard Stiefvater
- Lowell Collins & Daryl Boles
- Gordon King



**Hikes ...** *Editor's note: Please contact Farrel at [wildsofa.fc@gmail.com](mailto:wildsofa.fc@gmail.com) or 479.200.2621 prior to the event to sign up or to check on any changes. Don't wait too long as the hikes tend to fill up quickly. All hikes have a 15-person limit (unless otherwise noted) and require you to sign a release waiver. Thank you.*

### **Sunday, Jan. 26<sup>th</sup>, Rock Creek Bushwhack.**

Meet at the store in Deer AR at 9:00 am to shuttle to our starting point. Rated strenuous, approximately 5 miles, possible wet crossings, with waterfalls and caves to explore. Call Farrel for more details and to sign up.

### **Sunday February 9<sup>th</sup>, Atkins Creek.**

Approximately 5 miles, rated strenuous. Meet at Fallsville at 9 am. There will be waterfalls and lot of fossils to look at. Contact Farrel for more information and to sign up.

### **Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, Indian Creek top to bottom.**

Meet at Kyles Landing Campground at 9:00 am to shuttle to the upper parking area to start. Rated strenuous, a very rugged 6-mile bushwhack to some of the most beautiful country along the Buffalo River, including waterfalls and unique geologic formations. This is *mostly* a downhill trip. Contact Farrel for more information and to sign up.

**Sunday April 12<sup>th</sup>, Cecil Cove Hike.** Meet at the intersection of Hwy 206 and Hwy 7, south of Harrison AR at 9:00 am at the White Oak Station. From there we will shuttle to the Cecil Cove Trailhead. This 6-mile hike is rated moderate and may have wet crossings, but they are worth it! We will see waterfalls and unique geology; a great hike! Contact Farrel for more information and to sign up.

## Upcoming Events...

### Harrison Library Lecture Series

Jim and Suzie Liles will be giving an hour-long program on Boxley Valley at the Harrison Library, January 28<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm (a half-hour talk followed by a video). All are welcome.

**Mark your calendar! The Spring '20 BRT work session** is scheduled for April 20-24. There will likely be some work happening April 17-19 and maybe the 25<sup>th</sup> as well. We'll be camping at Tyler Bend again in the main campground (sites #22-26 at no charge) so join us for a day, the weekend, or the whole week. If you can join us for the week, or most of it, there is an option where you can pay \$50 into a fund to cover food and camp expenses and then participate in our group meals (Sunday dinner through Saturday breakfast). There is also a 3-day option for \$35. Contact me for more details. Otherwise you will need to supply your own food and cooking/cleaning utensils. Regardless, everyone needs to supply their own sleeping accommodations, water containers, eating utensils and work gloves. Safety glasses are very beneficial for some tasks. A daypack for carrying your stuff on the trail is very useful. The Park Service supplies the tools, though you can bring your own if you'd like. The campground has potable water, flush toilets, and hot showers. I don't yet know whether we'll be able to do new construction to finish the trail or whether it will all be maintenance. Contact me at [merreed@runbox.com](mailto:merreed@runbox.com) for more info.

Some parts of the BRT/OHT between Richland Creek and AR-14 are looking for adopters. The Ozark Highlands Trail Association now has overall responsibility for coordinating this so see <https://ozarkhighlandstrail.com/maintenance/> for more information and contact [OHTmaintenance@gmail.com](mailto:OHTmaintenance@gmail.com).

**Buffalo River Chapter Meeting, Potluck and Float, Sunday April 19<sup>th</sup> 12Noon.** Meet at Laura Timby's place in Gilbert (50 Frost Street) to discuss over lunch the upcoming OS Spring Meeting that our chapter is hosting. Following that we will float the Buffalo from Bridge to Gilbert, weather and water permitting. Contact Laura ([laurab2053@gmail.com](mailto:laurab2053@gmail.com)) for more information.

### Ozark Society Spring Meeting April 24-26<sup>th</sup>

The Buffalo River Chapter of the Ozark Society will be hosting the Spring OS Recreation meeting the weekend of April 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>. Activities on Saturday will include hiking, boating and a Potluck supper, followed by entertainment by BRC member Dave Smith. More details to follow on the OS website, but here is what we have to date: The Ozark Society will meet Saturday April 25<sup>th</sup> starting at 8:30 am at the Group Pavilion at Tyler Bend Campground, BNR. The spring meeting and encampment is a recreation-based event so plans are for boating, hiking etc. on Saturday. Registration is (\$5/person and \$10/couple or family), a light breakfast, and a brief overview of the days planned activities will take place. Group site #1 has been reserved for the Ozark Society Friday and Saturday April 24 and 25<sup>th</sup>. The cost for adults is \$10/per night; children are \$5/per night for the first two-no charge after that. Sunday morning at 10am there will be an OS Board meeting at Laura Timby's place in Gilbert-all are welcome to attend.

### Paddle the Salmon River Idaho July 29- August 3<sup>rd</sup>

Aggipah River Trips (Bill Bernt, [www.aggipah.com](http://www.aggipah.com), 208-756-4167) has agreed to host Ozark Society members on a 5-night 6-day trip of the Middle Fork of the Salmon River in Idaho. The trip will launch from Boundary Creek on July 29, 2018. There are two trip options: row or paddle your own boat, or ride with Aggipah. The cost of the trip is \$2250 to ride with Aggipah or \$1575 to take your own boat. A 25% deposit is needed to secure your place on the trip, which is \$563 for a ride or \$394 with your own boat (Aggipah, PO Box 425, Salmon, Idaho, 83467). If you have any questions please call Bill Bernt at Aggipah 208-756-4167 or Stewart Noland ([bosshq@aol.com](mailto:bosshq@aol.com), 501-666-2989). If you sign up for the trip, please let Stewart know so we can coordinate logistics. If this date is not good for you, Aggipah has other launch dates listed on its website.

## BRC Jan-April 2020 Calendar

- Tuesday January 28<sup>th</sup> Harrison Library
- Sunday 1/26/20 Rock Creek Bushwhack
- Sunday 2/9/20 Atkins Creek Bushwhack
- Sunday 3/15/20 Indian Creek: Top to Bottom
- Sunday 4/12/20 Cecil Cove Hike
- Sunday April 19<sup>th</sup> BRC Meeting, Potluck & Float.
- April 24-26<sup>th</sup> OS Spring Meeting & Encampment
- July29 -Aug 3<sup>rd</sup> OS Middle Fork of the Salmon Trip

*"We must be the change we wish to see in the world."  
~ Mahatma Gandhi*

See you on the River. LT