



PACK & PADDLE



Winter
Dec. 2025

"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

Challenge Grant for the Ozark Society Endowment Project

By Brian Thompson, Ozark Society President



I am so pleased to announce that we have three anonymous members who have offered to match all gifts to the Ozark Society Endowment Program up to a total of \$5,000. The offer will extend to April 1st 2026 (no joke). The donors explain their support as follows:

"The Endowment provides a reliable and permanent income stream, ensuring the Ozark Society's mission will continue into perpetuity."

Please consider using this opportunity to double your giving. You can make a cash contribution with your renewal, or as a direct donation [at this link](#). Also, you can call *The Arkansas Community Foundation* at 501-372-1116 to assist with contributions of stock, real estate, or other assets. If you wish to give via a *required minimum distribution*, direct your plan administrator to mail it to the following address with **Ozark Society Endowment** clearly marked in the check memo.

The Ozark Society
P.O. Box 166
Fayetteville, AR 72702-0166
Attn: Ozark Society Endowment

So, double your support with *"the gift that keeps on giving,"* and support the Society's mission into the next millennia.

An Extra Reminder About Our PO Box

By Brian Thompson, Ozark Society President

And, please note our PO Box address as mentioned in the above article. In the past 2 years the official Ozark Society P.O. Box was changed to:

The Ozark Society
P.O. Box 166
Fayetteville, AR 72702-0166

We don't want to miss any memberships, donations, book orders, or other correspondence that might have been addressed to the old box in Little Rock.



Meet Our Latest Sassafras Hiking Award Recipient

By Brian Thompson, Ozark Society President



I had the pleasure of visiting with Bill Driscoll, the latest recipient of our Sassafras Hiking Award. Bill hails from Tecumseh, Missouri. Bill: “Well, I’m not much into awards, but considering all the trail I’ve done, I thought what the heck.” Bill is retired from the Missouri Department of Conservation, the Forest Division, having worked as a fire fighter for thirty plus years, mostly manning fire towers (pretty cool, huh.) Bill can look at a distant plume of smoke and tell you if it’s something “under control” or a possible problem. He was often on his own fighting these fires, getting help where he could depending on the location. He explained to me that in recent years, small local fire departments have formed, and that local control has inspired folks to be a lot more careful. “The fire load has dropped tremendously.”

Bill described an early major hike with his wife where they did the Colorado trail in 2006, starting out with packs in the 50-60lb range. He notes that these were some early hard lessons and that folks along the way helped them determine what gear needed to be sent home. Bill now uses a z-pack rig with a hammock and has a base weight of about ten pounds.

When asked about his favorite trail, Bill mentions that he really liked those huts on the Ouachita, but that the Ozark Highlands Trail in April was by far “the prettiest hike; flowers everywhere, birds chirping, water flowing, it felt like I was in some sort of Polynesian landscape.”

Dillard’s Ferry west to Woolum was the last stretch Bill needed to qualify for Sassafras. He noted that this stretch is ideal for stands of white oak and that the trail was like a trough full of acorns. “Everything was going great until quite unexpectedly, I slipped on what felt like a bunch of marbles.” He landed suddenly and awkwardly on his side. “I could tell my ankle was broken by the sounds it made when I moved it, and I was worried my shoulder was broken as well.” Bill called his wife, who connected him with Searcy County 911. They did a good job of locating him, making their way down the hillside to where he was, examining him, and getting him on a stretcher. Then Bill

realized they had called an ambulance. “*I did not call for an ambulance*” Bill declared, having had a previous experience where he’d had to pay \$6,000.00 out of pocket for one to transport his wife when she’d broken an ankle.

The Searcy County rescue folks stewed over this a couple of minutes, until they realized Bill was going into shock and starting to convulse. That’s when they decided to call an air evac. A helicopter flew in and they got Bill to Mercy at Springfield about 10:00 PM, his wife driving back and getting there about midnight. They operated on his ankle the very next day, patching it up with plates and wires, then they had to wait until February to operate on his shoulder, which had a severed rotator cuff and several torn tendons.

Bill got through it all, went through a long difficult rehab, then got back on the same trail, undaunted and determined to finish. On that last stretch, he encountered some of the worst weather he’d ever hiked in, but he by gosh made it to Woolum and waded across the Buffalo to meet his wife. Bill noted “it was a pretty emotional moment for me. I might have cried a little...” We get it Bill.

Bill is now a proud member of the Ozark Society and continues to distance hike. Glad to have you, Bill!

Ozark Society Fall Meeting Nov. 7-8th – a Picture Gallery

By Lowell Collins and Mary Schlatterer

The Fall meeting of the Ozark Society was held November 7-8th in Bentonville, Arkansas. Here are some picture memories of a great time.



Our members enjoy a walk in the Crystal Bridges Sculpture Garden. Monochrome by Rubens is made from BNR canoes



The Sugar Creek Chapter hosts a Taco Bar dinner. It was a zero-waste event in keeping with our conservation mission



OS members took advantage of the miles of trails in Bentonville to include a cruise through the Walmart Campus



The family home of Dr. Neil Compton in Bentonville

OS Youth Grants: Youth Lead the Way

By Lowell Collins, Youth Grants Committee

The Ozark Society Youth Grant Program gets a few proposals every year submitted by students. Some of the most interesting and unique projects are those that are developed and led by the students themselves. The following are some interesting examples.

Fayetteville High School's eco-Fashion Club came up with a great idea to keep textiles out of landfills. The club gets a lot of donations in the form of clothes and other textiles. Most of the donations are used for projects like upcycling, pop-up markets, and clothing swaps. But some textiles couldn't be put to good use. In order to recycle the unusable textiles, the club used a textile recycling business that requires the material to be submitted in Retold Recycle bags which each have a cost. The Ozark Society grant funded the purchase of 10 Retold Recycle bags to divert these unusable textiles from landfills and give them a second life. Throughout the year, students were able to fill the bags with textiles and project scraps that would have ended up in the landfill. To keep this program going, they've used the money from their pop-up markets to buy additional bags.

The forestry class at Salem R80 High School wanted to do

something in honor of National Public Lands Day, 22.



They investigated the area and learned of the historical and environmental significance of the Ozark chinquapin. They chose a project at Pulltite Campground for a hands-on conservation project. Under the guidance of Steve Bost from the Ozark Chinquapin Foundation, the students planted 10 native Ozark Chinquapin trees along the edges of the campground. This initiative not only contributed to the restoration of a crucial tree species but also fostered a sense of environmental stewardship among the students.

A group of students from Bentonville Old High Middle School, noticed an overgrown flower bed out the science room window. They decided to turn it into a beautiful nature-friendly garden. They did some research and came up with a plan to support the Diana Fritillary, the

state butterfly of Arkansas. They teamed up with the NW Arkansas Master Naturalist to get their garden started. They solicited a donation of soil and other garden materials from Lowe's. The students wrote a proposal to the Ozark Society to get funding for signs and a walking path in the garden. It was so rewarding to see the excitement and sense of ownership on the students' faces when they found out their proposal was approved! As an aside, the flagpole base near the garden, includes the name of Neil Compton, the founder of the Ozark Society.

These youth-led projects are all about encouraging students to take initiative and create projects that make a positive difference in their community and the environment. A successful grant application affirms their vision and effort. We hope that this experience will inspire them to keep leading social and environmental change throughout their lives.

Engaging the next generation in conservation is one of the ways the Ozark Society is fulfilling its mission of conservation and education. You can support the Youth Grant Fund when you renew your membership or make a donation at:

www.ozarksociety.net/donate/

What's Not to Like About a Lichen

By Fred Paillet, OS Education Chair

We all enjoy a pleasant walk in the deciduous forests of the Ozarks at any time of the year. In my case, the varied textures and seasonal changes of our oak and hickory forest provide so much more visual interest than the dark spruce-fir forests of Colorado or the lodgepole pine deserts of Yellowstone. One important component of this scenery is the lowly, often overlooked lichen. Lichens inhabit virtually every hard surface in view, be it composed of tree bark, bedrock, or even exposed soil. When we take time to look at individual lichens we are often amazed by the variety of sizes, shapes and colors we see. Lichens figure into historical accounts where desperate and starving arctic explorers like Alexander McKenzie and John Franklin subsisted on the boiled tissue of rubbery lichens they called rock tripe – not the most appetizing but easier to digest than shoe-leather stew.

The excruciatingly slow growth of lichen colonies is now used as a measure of elapsed exposure time for surfaces in front of receding glaciers – a science known as lichenometry. The lichen's intimate partnership between disparate life forms (fungus, alga and bacteria) took a long time to discover and engendered a lot of strident controversy over what exactly this partnership represented. Was it a form of botanical slavery or one of mutual benefit to the life forms involved? That controversy eventually contributed to the recognition of symbiosis as a major process widespread throughout nature. It's time to give this lowly life form its due consideration.

The concept of lichens as something more than another variety of moss took a while to develop. Early microscope observations described green globules enmeshed in the fungal fibers (hypha) of tough lichen tissue (thallus). They were initially inferred to be sexual organs (gonidia).



These were eventually identified as identical to free-living algae and cyanobacteria that are often confused with algal species but are true bacteria. Some species of which provide the additional bonus of nitrogen fixation. Years later a Swiss biologist named Schwendener proposed that lichens were a composite organism combining the cells of a fungus and an alga – to widespread ridicule. That concept eventually gained traction to develop into the recognized role of symbiosis in so many other successful life forms. The situation got even more complex when studies showed that other bacteria were also a vital ingredient in almost all lichen species. DNA analyses indicate

that lichens originated about a billion years ago. The tough, drought-resistant tissue of lichens is thought to have been the vehicle by which aqueous algal ancestors of plants were able to find their way onto dry land. Pretty pretentious ancestry for such a lowly but ubiquitous part of our Ozark scenery.

One obvious question concerns the specific benefits each of the partners receive from their mutual interaction. Initially, Schwendener hypothesized that the algae trapped in the fungal thallus fiber nets were simply slaves (we call them photobionts) to a fungal master harvesting their sugary output. Then it was inferred that the fungal component provides photobionts with shelter from harsh conditions, protection from intense solar UV, and refuge from potential alga predators. The additional bacterial component adds vital nutrients to the lichen even while consuming some of the photobiont output. All of this begs the question of why lichens are universally such slow growers with all the help they receive from their several components. One of the steps in proving the symbiotic nature of lichens was to create them in the lab by combining bits of pure fungus and alga. That experiment takes literally months to see results and has been successful, but very rarely repeated. If lichen fungi possess a factory producing a bounty of carbohydrates from enslaved workers, why don't they exhibit explosive growth measured in inches per week rather than millimeters per decade?

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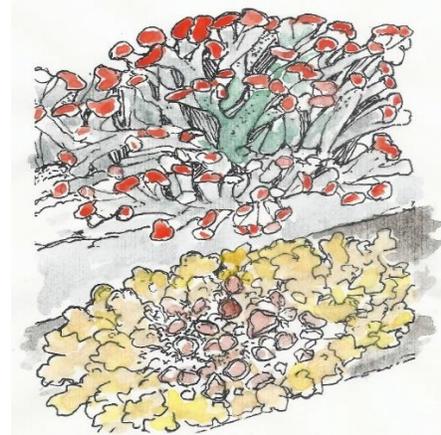
Lichen...continued

One clue is that the carbohydrates produced by many photobionts are sugar alcohols and not simply glucose. Sugar alcohol is used in grocery processing to shield foods from desiccation by replacing vaporizing water to protect otherwise fragile products. Lichens have found their niche by being able to live in harsh environments where they have no competition. When perched on an exposed rock surface in the desert lichens have only a few minutes on a few days per year when their photobionts are moist enough to provide any output. If that output includes sugar alcohol, they are equipped to go into a condition that biologists describe as an inert crystalline state. Exactly how inert has been demonstrated in satellite experiments showing that lichen samples could survive long periods of exposure to the frigid vacuum of deep space. The lichens we admire on rock slabs and tree trunks in our woods are an amazing testament to the evolution of survival mechanisms over the extent of earth history.

The dark side of lichen science is the way they confound and confuse taxonomists. When lichens were recognized as composites of fungi with other life forms, taxonomists adopted the "one lichen one fungus" rule. Lichen genus and species are assigned based on the fungal partner. Old established genus names based on macroscopic appearances were simply grandfathered into the textbooks. This was abetted by the fact that the exact same fungus with the same DNA as the lichen fungus usually adopts a different form when growing on its own. If the fungal partner is associated with both alga and cyanobacteria, the thallus can

be a mosaic of two different looking (and colored) forms. What do taxonomists do when two fungal partners are present in the mix? The trend at present is to let DNA be the guide and muddle through as best as possible.

British soldier (above)
and Sunburst lichen
(below)



One important application of lichen biology is in monitoring environmental conditions, and especially air pollution. Measurable changes in lichen diversity are associated with increasing levels of contaminants in air. The steady improvement of air quality in our major cities over recent decades has been demonstrated by the restoration of earlier levels of lichen diversity in places like New York City. But some increases in lichen diversity are not good news as they signal invasive species continuing to advance into new habitats. Such is the case of the maritime sunburst lichen (*Xanthoria parietina*). This colorful, bright-yellow species was originally confined to shoreline vicinities frequented by nesting seabirds. Abundant bird guano filled the surrounding air with an enrichment of nutrients.

In my experience as an Alaskan wilderness guide, I was able to thrill

bird watchers by pointing out the location of gyrfalcon nests on cliffs showing conspicuous aprons of bright orange lichen beneath rock ledges. The nitrate-contaminated air of inhabited cities has allowed nutrient-demanding lichens such as the sunburst to colonize walls and tree trunks over all of Europe and a major part of North America.

One of the most beloved lichen species native to eastern North America is the British Soldier Lichen (*Cladonia Cristatella*). This colorful species is a relative of the much more common reindeer "moss" that we often see as a kind of long-haired shag carpet on very dry rock outcrops. This is the ubiquitous ground covering in subarctic America and Asia that provides winter fodder for vast caribou herds. The thallus clumps of the British Soldier have the same light greenish gray seen on reindeer moss but grow a bit closer to the ground and have a brilliant red spore capsule (apothecium) on the thallus stems that recalls the color of coats worn by King George's colonial soldiers. This is just one of the many interesting and intricately branching lichens that we see on our outings. If you look closely, you will notice that the distinctive patches of lichen on the bark of trees can dominate their visual character, and the woodland would be a lot less interesting without that addition. Think how dull the sandstone blocks lying around rock shelters and scenic ravines would be without the variously colored mottling of lichens with which they are decorated. On your next Ozark adventure take some time to appreciate the lowly lichen for the miracle of its composition and even more for its contribution to the character of the landscape.



The Ozark Society Membership Application/Renewal



Join us, or renew now! Dues are for one year, January-December, and they include a subscription to the Society's newsletter, *Pack & Paddle*. To join or renew, go online to the Ozark Society website at www.ozarksociety.net and click "MEMBERSHIP."

Or you can fill out this form and send it with a check written to "The Ozark Society." See below for our address.

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

City, State, and ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

Email 1: _____ Old Email (if changed)

Email 2: _____ Old Email (if changed)

Please check one:

- New Member Start at **Section A** for your OS and Chapter Membership
- Renewal Start at **Section A** to renew your OS and Chapter Membership
- LIFE Member Start at **Section B** to renew just your Chapter Membership

Section A: Please specify both the Level of Membership and the Chapter you are joining:

Level: (choose one)

- Friend: \$30 = \$20 OS +\$10 Chapter
- Associate: \$60 = \$50 OS +\$10 Chapter
- Supporter: \$110 = \$100 OS +\$10 Chapter
- Sponsor: \$260 = \$250 OS +\$10 Chapter
- Patron: \$510 = \$500 OS +\$10 Chapter
- Benefactor: \$1010 = \$1000 OS +\$10 Chapter

Chapter: (choose one)

- Bayou (Shreveport, LA)
- Buffalo River (North Central, AR)
- Highlands (Fayetteville, AR)
- Pulaski (Central, AR)
- Schoolcraft (Springfield, MO)
- Sugar Creek (Bentonville, AR)
- No chapter, all to central Ozark Society

Section B: For Members who wish to join more than one Chapter or Life Members renewing their Chapter Membership only

(Choose as many as you wish and add \$10 for each chapter)

- \$10 Bayou (Shreveport, LA)
- \$10 Buffalo River (North Central, AR)
- \$10 Highlands (Fayetteville, AR)
- \$10 Pulaski (Central, AR)
- \$10 Schoolcraft (Springfield, MO)
- \$10 Sugar Creek (Bentonville, AR)

Section C: Donations to our Funds

(Choose any amount)

- \$_____ Conservation Fund
- \$_____ Endowment Fund
- \$_____ Legal Fund
- \$_____ Youth Grant Fund

My Total is: \$ _____

Please remit to: The Ozark Society, PO Box 166, Fayetteville, AR 72702-0166.

Please contact ozarksocietymembership@gmail.com for questions.



Ozark Society
P.O. Box 166
Fayetteville, AR 72702-0166

Please Note: If you would like to save a tree and receive *Pack & Paddle* by email, not through US Mail, please contact Carolyn Shearman at oscomms@ozarksociety.net.

The Officer, Director, and Chair List

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BUFFALO RIVER TRAIL COORDINATOR: Michael Reed, mereed@runbox.com

OZARK SOCIETY STORE: Brittany Plouch, outreach@ozarksociety.net.

OZARK SOCIETY ARCHIVES: Stewart Noland, stewartnoland51@aol.com

OZARK SOCIETY DEPOSITORY: Special Collections Division, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville, AR 72701, (479) 575-5577.

MEMBERSHIP: Dues for membership in the Ozark Society include the overall Society and one Chapter of your choice. The levels are Friend \$30; Associate \$60; Supporter \$110; Sponsor: \$260; Patron \$510; and Benefactor \$1010+. You can join more than one Chapter however, by just adding an additional \$10 for each extra one. www.ozarksociety.net/membership or mail your check including our Membership Form to: Ozark Society, P.O. Box 166 Fayetteville, AR 72702-0166.