



Summer
June 2016

"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

Bear Attack on the Appalachian Trail David Peterson, Pulaski Chapter Chair

Derrick's Knob is on the AT about 10 miles south of Clingman's Dome in the Smokey Mountains National Park, the highest point on the trail at 6600 feet. When Eddie Vollman (OS), Little Rock pediatrician Eric Fraser, and I arrived on May 10, 2016, hikers at the shelter were in frenzy. The night before there had been a bear attack at Spence Field shelter just 6.1 miles further down the trail. Some hikers stocked up on water and set off to put as many miles between themselves and the bear(s) as possible. Others were gathering wood for a roaring fire that night, and there was talk of an all-night watch schedule.



These shelters used to have a cyclone fence across the front to protect hikers from bears but those were removed years ago because of the "reverse zoo" effect. Some hikers were sloppy with their food and this bred too much familiarity. Bears would wander up to check out the hikers and some fools would reward them by feeding them through the fence. Even though park rules on the AT forbid staying anywhere but in shelters, some people still pitch tents for more privacy. The shelters are very public places. On the night after the nearby attack, 14 of us slept uneasily in the shelter and one brave soul spent the night in a tent nearby. Real close.

Two nights before the attack and thirty miles south of the park at Sassafras shelter, my wife, Donna, and I had pitched our tent some 50 yards from the shelter. Like everyone else along the trail, we hung our food from bear cables or ropes. To thwart the omnipresent mice from invading packs, Sassafras had clever strings with bottle baffles for the packs.

The actual attack at Spence Field occurred in a grassy meadow about 40 yards uphill and to the right of the shelter. There were other tents scattered around, but the victim's was the most isolated. He had cabled his food but had a pack that sort of bulged out of the tent, which the bear was sniffing and pushing with his nose. Some say the victim had swabbed on coconut sunscreen during the day. At any rate, he kicked at the bear through the tent and it bit his calf pretty hard, twice, with four puncture wounds. Bleeding profusely he ran from the tent yelling, "I've been bit by a bear." Normally you are told not to run from black bears, it just excites them into a chase. You are supposed to keep your composure, stand tall, yell, and confront them but in this case he made a mad dash to the shelter and made it.

Other campers immediately applied first aid and moved the other tenters into the shelter. By some miracle, someone had two bars on their phone and was able to call 911.

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Membership Form

Dues are for one calendar year and include a subscription to the Society's newsletter, *Pack & Paddle*, and conservation bulletins. **Remit to: The Ozark Society, Inc., P.O. Box 2914, Little Rock, AR 72203** using the form below, or you can renew online at: www.ozarksociety.net – click on the “About Us/Membership” link.

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 - Contributing/Sustaining: \$25
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 - Sugar Creek Chapter - \$5 (Bentonville Area)
 - Pulaski Chapter - \$10 (Central AR)

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MEMBERSHIP: Dues for membership in the Ozark Society are: Individual and Family: \$15; Contributing: \$25; Sustaining: \$25; Life (one-time fee): \$200 under 65 years, or \$100 for those over 65.

Chapter membership adds to the fun of Ozark Society membership, but is not required. However, chapter membership requires membership in the Society. Their dues structure is as follows: **Mississippi Valley Chapter of Cape Girardeau, Missouri:** \$5; **Bayou Chapter of Shreveport, Louisiana:** \$10; **Highlands Chapter of Northwest Arkansas:** \$10; **Sugar Creek Chapter of Northwest Arkansas:** \$5; **Buffalo River Chapter of North-Central Arkansas:** \$10, or \$5 for email newsletters only; and **Pulaski Chapter of Central Arkansas:** \$10; **Student Membership:** \$5. Mail one check for both Society and chapter dues to: Ozark Society, P.O. Box 2914, Little Rock, AR 72203.



The Trailblazer



*Ken Smith and
Ellen Compton*



*Ken Smith and admirers at the
film screening*

“The Trailblazer,” a short film about Ken Smith and the Buffalo River Trail, was screened at Cafe211 in Bentonville on May 5. The purpose of the Chris Engholm film is to tell the story of the Buffalo River Trail and celebrate the role that Ken Smith has played in its design and construction over the decades. The film includes the backstory of how the park was created and how the trail was planned. It also includes interviews. Comments on the film included “A great film about a great man,” and “The film is very well done as it captures the spirit of a legend of our time.”

*White Rock View
Drawing by Fred Paillet*



BEAR ATTACK

(Continued from Page 1)

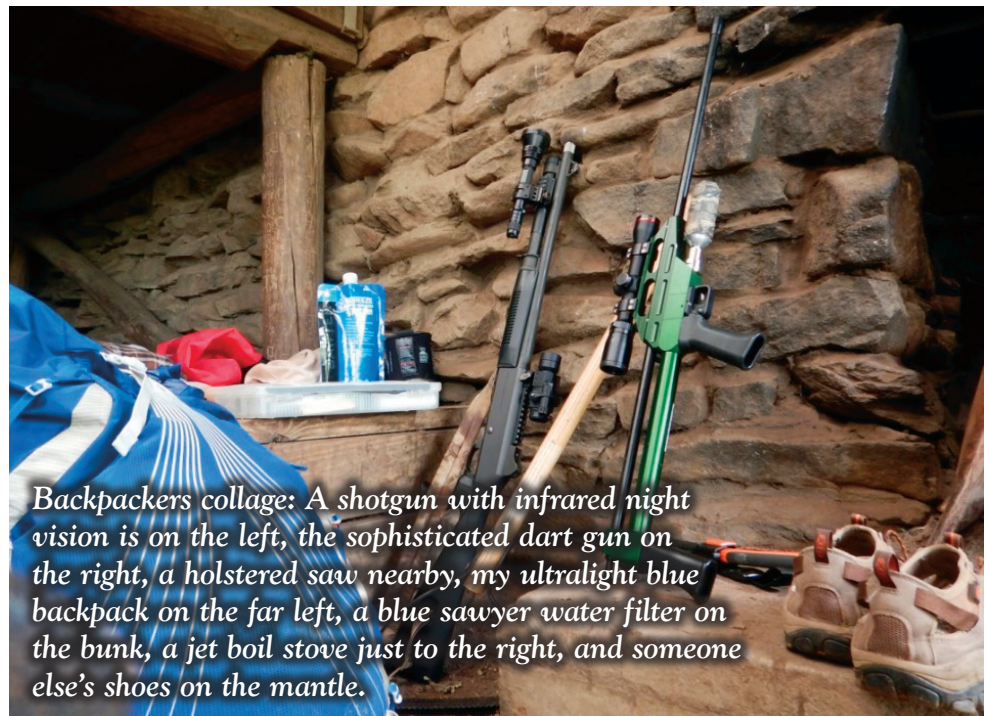
The park immediately dispatched two rangers with horses 5 miles up from Cades Cove. But the bear hung around much of the night, smashing one tent and ripping another.

When the rangers arrived, the younger one walked around the perimeter and then went into the woods with night vision goggles looking for the bear. Some 200 yards from the shelter he got a shot at a large wild boar and killed it, adding more excitement to the whole affair. But no bear was seen.

The victim rode a horse down the mountain and after a short stay in the Gatlinburg hospital, he was discharged. The rest of the hikers mostly stayed awake all night and headed out early the next morning.

Eddie, Eric and I assumed that the Spence field shelter would be closed and so we made alternative plans but still had to go by the shelter. On the way we learned that it was still open. The ranger in charge of bear control in the park had arrived at Spence and we and three others were allowed to spend the night. The rangers had a shotgun with slugs and a dart gun for tranquilizing the bear if possible. The chief ranger assured us that if a bear entered the shelter it was a dead bear, but just in case we should sleep on the top bunks (although the victim's dried blood was spattered about up there). Eddie and I slept on the bottom bunk next to the guns by the fireplace.

The chief ranger had a M. S. in wildlife management from the University of Tennessee, having studied under Dr. Joseph Clark, renowned bear expert who worked for the AG&F, 1983-1990. The ranger knew bear behavior, having trapped more than a hundred bears



Backpackers collage: A shotgun with infrared night vision is on the left, the sophisticated dart gun on the right, a holstered saw nearby, my ultralight blue backpack on the far left, a blue sawyer water filter on the bunk, a jet boil stove just to the right, and someone else's shoes on the mantle.

in the Smokies. But there are lots of bears in the woods - 2.5 bears per square mile in the Bote Mountain region around Spence Field. The plan was to capture the bear, tranquilize it, take a DNA sample, install a \$3,000 radio collar, and release it. If the DNA sample matched bear slobber left on one of the tents, the bear would likely be euthanized. Meanwhile, some bear was actively feeding on the previously killed hog. And it was a big bear, having dragged the 200-300 pound hog some 200 yards around on the mountain not far from the shelter.

The rangers set two leg snares near the shelter attack sites, using camper debris as a lure in one case. The spring loaded trap was about 10 feet to the left of the reconstructed tent seen above. They dug a hole for the snare and anchored it to a tree, and then put used freeze dried food packages, leaves, branches, and such around it. An angry bear cabled to a tree would have been self-evident, but they checked the snares periodically for signs of activity, with no luck by the next day when we left. The rangers figured they might have

to wait until the hog was eaten before expecting it to approach the shelter again.

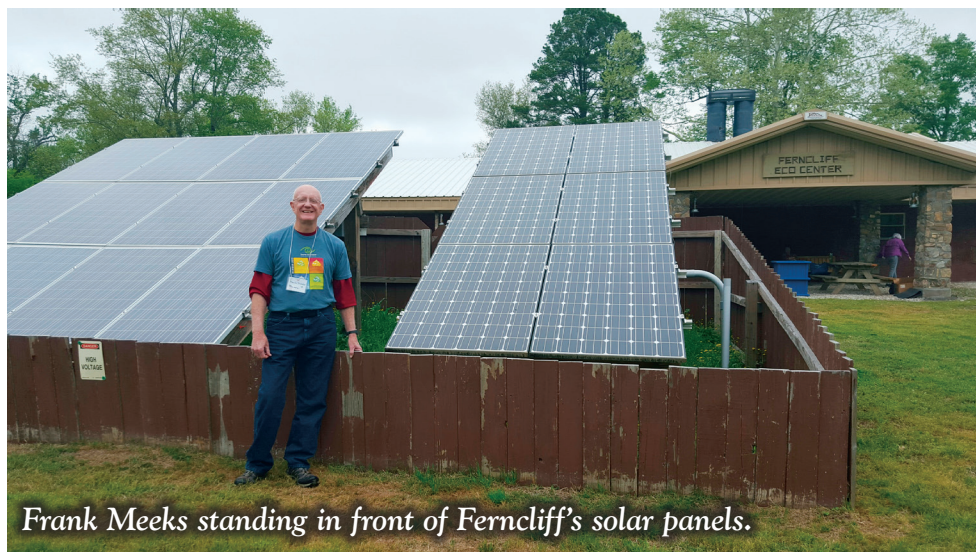
Smoky Mountain bears have relatively small home territories, usually less than a mile or two, so if not captured the Spence Field bear could remain a problem for some time. We had seen some impressively big and fresh bear scat on the trail and had undoubtedly passed near more than a few bear in 63 trail miles – but bears usually leave hikers alone and we don't detect their presence. However the next shelter, Russell Field remains closed due to bear activity, so there was a serious bear problem locally. How do you prevent human/bear incidents? A few hikers had bear bells on their packs to alert bears to their presence, cute but ineffective for the most part I think. The rangers attached bells to the damaged tent to alert them to a bear's presence, ineffective for a deep sleeper I think. The last we heard, Spence Field shelter would be enclosed with an electric fence – making a bigger “reverse zoo” than before.



Spring Meeting Recap — Ferncliff Conference Center

The Spring General Membership “Non”-Meeting took place on April 15-17 at Ferncliff Conference Center outside Little Rock. It was so called because there was no business meeting, just activities related to the conservation topics at Ferncliff.

The accommodations at Ferncliff were comfortable, including a new cafeteria. The programs on Saturday started off with a presentation by Chris McRae, a solar energy expert and creator of “Solar Under the Sun”. He showed the group how his organization installs solar panels for water filtration and electricity in countries that do not have access to them. He and solar power professionals conduct



Frank Meeks standing in front of Ferncliff's solar panels.

several sessions a year at Ferncliff, usually three days training teams and individuals from churches and other organizations around the country. The courses cover specific aspects of solar development and

installation, including how to negotiate covenants, evaluate sites for solar projects, assemble off-grid solar energy systems and practice safety and maintenance. Trainees return home to form mission teams, fundraise and travel to one of the 30-plus Haitian cities anxiously awaiting new solar-powered water filtration or electrical systems. McRae hopes to mobilize volunteers to Honduras and the Ukraine soon, in response to pleas from

locals in need there.

There were also presentations by Don Culwell of the Arkansas Native Plant Society. Faron Usrey, an aquatic ecologist with the National Park Service, gave two presentations, about erosion and water quality issues on the Buffalo River. His knowledge, humor, and passion about the Buffalo made his presentation quite compelling.

Students from the Arkansas School for Science, Mathematics, and the Arts, presented their award-winning research papers on water quality in Arkansas.

After the evening potluck dinner, the attendees were treated to the music of folksinger Lealon Worrell, ending with a singalong. Then the tables and chairs were pushed back for dancing.

On Sunday Fred Paillet presented a program on regional forests, followed by various outdoor activities. It was a busy and interesting weekend.



Lealon Worrell

Highlands Chapter Outing Recap

By Luke Parsch

The Highlands Chapter finished its hiking season recently. Below are some notes and statistics about their adventures.

Hike Leaders. Our hiking season would not be successful without persons who volunteer to lead hikes. This past season, 18 OSHC members led hikes. Many thanks to these 18 hike leaders whose names appear to the right:

OSHC Hike Leaders 2015-16 Season

Brenda Brown	Judi Nail
JB Clark	Luke Parsch
Lowell Collins	Tom Perry
Bob Cross	Charlie Reese
Barbara Fell	Norma Senyard
Terry Fredrick	Kathy Sparks
Rodger Keesee	Sally Stone
Irene Markum	Brian Thompson
Robert Medley	Judy Woltjen

Summary Statistics for Outings. I have assembled several statistics which summarize the number and type of OSHC outings for the 2015-16 season, as well as the number of persons who participated in these weekly events. A total of 703 persons participated in our seasons outings which amounted to an average of 18.5 persons per weekly event from May to September. The Classic drew 62 participants.

Summary Statistics for 2015-16 OSHC Outings Season

Total number of scheduled outings (incl. Classic), Sep-May	38
Total number of cancelled outings, Sep-May	0
Total number of participants (38 outings), Sep-May	703
Average number of participants (38 outings) per outing	18.5
Total number of outings leaders, Sep-May	18
<u>Season (excluding Classic)</u>	
Total number of day hikes	35
Total number of hikers	641
Average number of hikers per outing	18.3
Total hike distance, miles	188.5
Average hike distance, miles/dayhike	5.4
Total number of predominantly trail day hikes	24
Total number of predominantly bushwhack day hikes	9
Total number of maintenance/trailbuilding outings	2

Thanks again to all of the leaders who volunteered to lead our outings, and for all of you participants who made these treks into nature so much fun. See you in September



WHAT LIES BENEATH?

- Why do sinkholes sink?
- What makes the Buffalo River bluffs spectacular?
- How do they get their shapes and colors?
- Why are there more caves in Newton County than anywhere else in Arkansas?

If you would like to know more about the Buffalo River, its bluffs, its waters, and what its hydrogeological history can tell us, Dr. Van Brahana will be leading a workshop on July 16th, Saturday, 10:30-12:30 at the Ponca Elk Center in downtown Ponca. Join him for an introduction to the karst geology of the river. The group will take a field trip to Steel Creek swimming hole to view firsthand how air, water and rock have combined to make one of the loveliest places on earth.

This event is for people of all ages. You might want to bring a lunch and stay afterward for a swim and a picnic at the swimming hole. The more we know about our Buffalo River watershed, the more we appreciate its remarkable natural features, and the more we learn to care for it.

If you haven't visited the Ponca Elk Education Center, it is a treat and worth the trip all by itself.



Dr. John Van Brahana tells an enthusiastic crowd about CAFOs and karst geology on the Buffalo National River on June 7, during the “Science and Song” event in Little Rock. The program also featured Still on the Hill, who shared songs about their love of the Buffalo River.

Fall General Meeting October 7-9 Petit Jean State Park

The next General Membership meeting is scheduled for Petit Jean Mountain the weekend of October 7-9. A group campsite has been reserved for those dates. **If you would like to stay at the lodge or a cabin, you should make the reservation as soon as possible:** petitjeanstatepark.com, or call 501-727-5431 or 800-264-2462. More details about the program will be available later in the summer. Be sure to check www.ozarksociety.net and the fall P&P for more information. It will appear on the website first!



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If you wish to participate in Ozark Society outdoor events, please make note of the following statement and requirement:

I acknowledge that I understand the nature of this event and represent that I am qualified, in good health and proper physical condition to participate in the activity. I understand the risks to my person and property associated with the event. I agree to release from liability and not to sue the Ozark Society (including the individual Chapters of the Ozark Society) and their officers, directors, the event leaders, coordinators or instructors for any injury, damage, death or other loss in any way connected with the event.