

# Buffalo River Ramblings

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Newsletter of the Buffalo River Chapter of the Ozark Society

*all. I challenge you to step forward to protect and care for the wild places you love best.” -Neil*

*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

A lot has been happening up here in Buffalo River Country. Like most of Arkansas it has been an extremely dry summer with many days well over 90 and a few scorchers over 100 degrees! Humidity has matched the temperatures but, unfortunately, not the rainfall. Except for a week earlier in August, when my rain gauge showed three inches, there hasn't been any appreciable rainfall around here since before Memorial Day.

The Buffalo is as low as I've seen it in the 40 plus years I've lived in Arkansas. And the algae is thicker than ever. So thick that there have been reports of people becoming ill or developing a rash after swimming. So bad that ADEQ has listed many sections of the Buffalo as impaired. So impacted that the Buffalo National River was designated as one of the most endangered rivers of 2017; and is definitely in the running for 2018! This is not good. The Buffalo River, our first National River, is a special place of unsurpassed beauty. It offers a home to countless species of wildlife and provides many hours of enjoyment to the people of Arkansas and visitors alike. The tourism industry it supports benefits not only the counties in the watershed, but the state of Arkansas as a whole.

What will it take to restore our river so that once again we can benefit from the healing waters of the Buffalo? *We the people* who love our river; who want it protected; who want it preserved so that we, and our children and grandchildren can enjoy it for future generations; we need to speak up.

Contact your representative, your senator, the Governor. Let your voice be heard. If they won't step up to save our river then elect someone else who will.

What else? As an individual practice *Leave no Trace*, participate in river cleanups, algae sampling, and attend rallies that support our environment. It all helps. Together we can make a difference!

## GEOLOGY OF THE BUFFALO RIVER – PART II

By Jim Liles

The previous article offered an overview and introduction to the general area's geology. This presents geological information more specific to Buffalo River. Please bear with me – it's not a simple subject!

The requisite essence of geology is time. Try as we might, we can only begin to comprehend the extraordinary age of Earth and the amazing array of forces and changes that have affected Earth over that vast sweep of time. Keep in mind that the entire sequence of rocks exposed along the Buffalo River was formed, intermittently, over a mere 170 million years, while the earth's age is calculated to be 4560 million years. And from more than half of those 170 million years over which "our" rocks were laid down, deposited, no rocks at all remain. Either conditions were not right for rocks to develop in our part of the world, or they formed and were subsequently eroded away. For example, no rocks of the Devonian System can be found in the Ozarks – a period spanning about 50 million years. (In other parts of the country, such as Wyoming, Devonian rocks record important episodes in the development of life: the emergences of fresh-water fishes and arise of amphibian life.)

In our part of the Ozarks, about half the rock formations exposed along Buffalo River are pre-Devonian, namely, from the periods called Ordovician (our oldest rock) and Silurian (next oldest; incidentally those weird names were adopted by

early 19<sup>th</sup> century geologists, sorting out the complex geology in the British Islands—names originally applied by the invading Romans for two unconquerable tribes they encountered in Wales, almost 2000 years earlier.) The other half of our rock formations were formed during post-Devonian time—the Mississippian and subsequent Pennsylvanian Periods. After the 50 million year “gap” in the history of this region’s geology, conditions returned for development of sedimentary rocks – those laid down in shallow, inland seas of a proto-North American continent. The first significant rock formation found along Buffalo River, dating to post-Devonian, is called the St. Joe limestone. It can be found essentially from the headwaters the Buffalo River to bluffs along its lower course. In Boxley Valley, it is the river’s bedrock. Due to faulting, the St. Joe limestone (along with rock found below and above it) lies at shoulder-height on the Goat Trail across the face of Big Bluff.

The St. Joe limestone has been referred to as “marble”; however, a true marble is denser and harder – a product of alteration of the limestone by a greater degree of heat and pressure than was generated by the uplift of the Ozarks. Nevertheless, the State of Arkansas chose the red “marble” quarried along highway 7, between the Buffalo and Jasper, for its contribution to the construction of the Washington Monument... From an exposure of red “marble” some 300 feet above the Buffalo River, The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) quarried the St. Joe for rock to construct the cabins in Buffalo State Park.

Following deposition of that distinctive “marker bed,” rock formed in ancient sea-beds continued to be developed over a period of at least 50 million years, but rock-building came to an end as the sea-beds began to be uplifted and the Ozark Mountains were born. All that’s left of rocks from the era of Ozarks mountain-building—ending in the last (youngest) Pennsylvanian period of time represented along Buffalo River, for example, are a couple hundred feet of Hale limestone and Atoka sandstone capping higher topography, like Pilot Mountain, the 1400 foot peak located 3 ½ miles north of Tyler Bend, and visible from many points on the Buffalo River Trail. To give an idea of the immense quantity of material lost from our Ozarks, just during the Pennsylvanian Period, consider that deep drilling has verified up to 9,500 feet of Atoka sandstone underlying the Arkansas River Valley south of the Boston Mountains. That formation is entirely gone from our Buffalo River Ozarks, but for cap-rock atop higher places like Pilot Mountain, in Searcy County, or the point bearing towers less than a mile north of the Center Point trailhead, in Newton County. Thus, any rock that may have been deposited over the past 300 million years has been eroded – reduced to sand & silt and washed down ancient predecessors of the White, Kings and Buffalo Rivers to the great delta of the Mississippi—relocating the former bulk of the Ozarks to the Gulf of Mexico.

Incidentally, the Boston Mountains were named long ago, to identify the higher Ozarks, stretching across northern Arkansas. The Buffalo River, with numerous other tributaries, drains the central Boston Mountains. Those rivers may well have had their origins in a span of time, marked by the Ouachita Orogeny, beginning with the Osagean Age, about 340 million years ago, and ending with the close of the Atokan Age, about 320 million years ago. That span of about 20 million years encompassed the uplift and erosion of not only the Ouachita and Ozarks Highlands—but a second (or third?) uplift of the Appalachian Mountains to the east and the Rocky Mountains to the west. Even more mind-boggling is the “consensus” among Earth scientists today that all of that activity was progressing while our North American continent was drifting north from a location near the equator. Add to that information the scientifically accepted fact that “our” continent was mostly covered—and recovered, repeatedly—with vast inland seas teeming with invertebrate life. The evidence of those ancient plants & animals is here for all to ponder: pick up almost any rock from any Buffalo River gravel bar and see the encased fossil remains—various parts, or casts, from warm water corals, trilobites, brachiopods, cephalopods, gastropods, ostracods, bryozoa, and – especially crinoids. Ponder the evidence of the primitive colonial algae of the genus *Cryptozoon*, found in the oldest of Ozarks rock, deposited over 450 million years ago. Look for the dome-shaped, concentric structures, 1 or 2 feet across, on the edge of the river, opposite the mouth of Clabber Creek. And ponder the fact that essentially all of those species represented in Buffalo River rock evolved in a tropical marine environment and are now extinct . . . look for a wrap-up article on Buffalo River’s geology in the next issue of the Buffalo River Ramblings.

*Dear Friend of the Buffalo River,*

*I'll have to ask you for money, to benefit the River and the people who enjoy it, but first the story...*

*The story begins with a businessman in Louisiana, J.H. Roberts, now long gone. A grandson tells us that J.H. “hated the government.” And the government, the National Park Service, was buying land to create a park--the Buffalo National River. J.H. owned 88 acres--isolated hillsides--extending from the Buffalo River to the Buffalo River to the park's south boundary, upriver from Maumee in Searcy County.*

*J.H. had his lawyer deal with the National Park Service. The NPS emerged with ownership of a 24-acre strip of river frontage. And a scenic easement on the rest, 64-acres, uphill to the park boundary. The Park's land-buyer (said to have been in poor health) had caved in. And NPS higher ups had not realized the mistake. The area under easement--entirely inside the park--would be closed to the public!*

*The Roberts deal was done in 1982. Decades later, the Park Service decided that the best location for a hiking trail,*

*already approved from Highway 65 to Highway 14, would be on the south side of the Buffalo River. Which meant crossing the 64-acre "Roberts Tract" (public entry prohibited). The Park Service meant to buy the Roberts land, but then failed to pursue the issue. And the money dried up.*

*Also without money for a crew to build the trail, the NPS let volunteers build it. In spring and fall, for eleven years, the volunteers built—made available for public use—essentially all of the 28-mile trail. All but the half-mile across the Roberts. Though the Roberts Tract has an old logging road across it, usable as the trail, the NPS cannot invite the public to walk across; the Roberts' land is private property.*

*So the Park Service lacks money to buy out Roberts. Instead, volunteers building the trail and seeking its completion have tried to buy the Roberts Tract. Without success. Just three years of frustrating effort. Letter-writing. Phone-calling. Meetings. A trip to Louisiana to see the Roberts grandson. An attempt to locate a bypass to the NPS riverside strip—subject to flooding! Now, at last, the several Roberts heirs have agreed to sell ownership of the Roberts Tract to the nonprofit Buffalo River Foundation.*

*Yes, the Park Service has no money to buy the land. We, the public, must raise \$80,000 to pay for the Roberts Tract, including costs of an appraisal and a land survey, and for a permanent trust endowment. The money must be raised by October 31, 2018.*

*I have mailed my contribution. I marked it "Roberts Tract." The address: Buffalo River Foundation, PO Box 55, Ponca AR 72670. I hope that you, too, can contribute. Any amount (or more!!) will help. Or got to the BRF website at <https://www.buffaloriverfoundation.org/complete-the-buffalo-river-trail>*

*Your gift will help to complete the Buffalo River Trail. So that all of us in all seasons, at all stages of life, can possess—can use—this trail. Your gift will let us more fully enjoy our National River. Thank you!*

*Ken Smith  
479-466-7994 or  
[kennethsmith616@yahoo.com](mailto:kennethsmith616@yahoo.com)*

## **Buffalo River Trail Building** By Michael Reed

Mark your calendar! The Fall 2018 Buffalo River Trail construction session is October 12-19. 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 there is enough interest the work can continue on the 20th and maybe the 21st.

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). I've also started a 3-day option for \$35. Contact me for more details. Otherwise you will need to supply your own food and cooking/eating/cleaning utensils.

Regardless, everyone needs to supply their own sleeping accommodations, water containers 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, although you can bring your own if you'd like. The campground has potable water, flush toilets, and hot showers.

In April we began clearing the corridor for 2 reroutes downstream of Red Bluff Road, about where construction stopped a couple years ago. By October we should have approval to finish those. There is another reroute pending further downstream on the west side of Little Rocky Creek that we will flag so the approval process can begin there. In addition, there will be plenty of maintenance work that can be done on existing trail.

Most of the BRT between Richland Creek and AR HWY14 is still looking for adopters. The Ozark Highlands Trail Association now has overall responsibility for coordinating this so see <http://ozarkhighlandstrail.com/maintenance/> for more information and contact [OHTmaintenance@gmail.com](mailto:OHTmaintenance@gmail.com).

The Buffalo River Foundation has begun a fund-raising campaign to purchase the Roberts Tract - a piece of private property within the park that is hindering completion of the segment between Red Bluff and South Maumee Roads. You can help!  
<https://www.buffaloriverfoundation.org/complete-the-buffalo-river-trail>

## **Welcome New Members!**

- Tim & Cyndy Eubanks
- Duane Roberts
- Deb Bartholomew
- Denise Pearson
- Duane Roberts

**Remembering a Friend...**I'm very sorry to report that on July 28<sup>th</sup> Ozark Society member Roy Senyard passed away suddenly while vacationing in Idaho. Roy will be remembered for his boundless energy, his friendly and outgoing manner, and his great sense of humor His many contributions to building and maintaining trails here in Arkansas and out west in Colorado will stand as a legacy to Roy's spirit of volunteerism and his commitment to the natural world. Our thoughts are with his wife Norma and the family. The family has asked that those wishing to honor Roy's memory make a contribution in his honor to Roberts

Tract Fund, or the Ozark Society Buffalo River Legal Protection Fund. We will miss you Roy.



**Hikes...** Editor's note: Please contact Farrel at wildsofa.fc@gmail.com or 479.200.2621 prior to the event to sign up or to check on any changes. All hikes require you to sign a release waiver. Thank you.

**Sunday Sept. 16, 2018 Erbie Historic Hike.** Approx. 4 miles total, rated easy, possibly 2 wet crossings. Meet at the Parker Hickman Historic cabin at **10:00 am** for an easy start to hiking season. Bring bug spray, as the ticks may still be active. Visit many of the homesteads and scenic places in the old community of Erbie including a great lunch spot. Hunter orange recommended.

**Wednesday October 17<sup>th</sup> Buffalo River Trail Work Day.** Lets join *Ken's Krew* for the day and help out with some trail building/maintenance. The fall colors should be beautiful and the camaraderie can't be beat! Meet at the Tyler Bend campground outside the big white cabin tent at 8am. Michael Reeds' article in this Rambling's issue will give you all the details.

**Sunday Oct. 21, 2018 The Grand Tour Hike** through the Ponca Wilderness. Approximately 10 miles total, rated strenuous with 5 wet crossings, 12-person limit. Visit many of the best-known spots on the Buffalo River at a beautiful time of year. Meet at Kyle's Landing at **9:00 am** to shuttle to Center Point Trailhead to start. Hunter orange recommended. *Note: Check with Farrel prior to hike about meeting place as Kyles Landing road may be closed due to scheduled road construction.*

**Sunday Nov. 11, 2018 Buzzard Roost Rocks, Natural Bridge and Pam's Grotto.** 12-person limit. Bushwhack, approx. 6 miles, rated moderate. Meet at Hawkins Store near Pelsor at 10:00 am. Hunter orange recommended.

**Sunday Nov 2, 2018 The Penitentiary and Pipe Organ Bluff.** Limit 12. Bushwhack approx. 6miles, rated strenuous. Meet at the turnout near the entrance to Lost Valley Road at 9am. Hunter Orange recommended.

## Meetings...

**Fall 2018 Buffalo River Algae Survey.** This 2-day Citizens Science event will take place the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> weekend of September (depending on water levels and weather). The program involves a mandatory Saturday afternoon training, followed on Sunday by collecting algae samples from different sections of the Middle/Lower district of the Buffalo River. The base of operations will be in Gilbert AR, the only town on the Buffalo National River and, coincidentally, the

"Coolest Town" in Arkansas! For more information and to sign up contact Teresa Turk at teresa\_turk@hotmail.com

**The Ozark Society Fall Membership Meeting** is scheduled for the weekend of October 12-14<sup>th</sup> at Lake Claiborne State Park, Louisiana, to be hosted by the Bayou Chapter. In addition to the Ozark Society general membership meeting and Saturday evening potluck, the park offers hiking, mountain biking, swimming, fishing and 2 disc golf courses. Sounds like fun for everyone! For more information call (318) 927-2976 or (888) 677-2524 or visit the Lake Claiborne State Park or the Bayou Chapter Facebook pages. Here's a tentative schedule for the event:  
**Friday, October 12<sup>th</sup>** Arrive at Lake Claiborne and relax! No scheduled events until the morning.

### Saturday, October 13

8:00 – Breakfast and registration

9:30 – General meeting

11:00 – speaker

Noon– lunch on your own

Afternoon activities--We hope to have a hike leader for trails in the park, we also may have an orienteering event, people can also bring boats and paddle in the lake, or we can schedule something in a local bayou

6:00 – potluck--We may have a Dutch oven cooking contest, not sure yet

7:30 – music, and maybe dancing

### Sunday, October 14

9:00 – Board meeting, in someone's cabin

Check your Fall Pack & Paddle for more info.

### BRC Hike, Potluck & Meeting, Sunday November 4<sup>th</sup>.

Meet at 2pm at Laura Timby's place in Gilbert at 50 Frost Street. From there we will carpool to a section of the Buffalo River trail for a 2-3 hour moderate hike. Returning to Gilbert for potluck and the BRC chapter meeting, approximately 5:30 or 6pm. I hope you can make it!

## BRC Sept-Dec 2018 Calendar

- Sept. 16<sup>th</sup> Erbie Historic Hike
- Sept. Buffalo River Algae Survey
- Oct.12-14<sup>th</sup> OS Fall Meeting at Lake Claiborne, LA
- Oct. 17<sup>th</sup> Trail Work on the BRT
- Oct. 21<sup>st</sup> Grand Tour Hike
- Nov. 4<sup>th</sup> BRC Hike Meeting & Potluck in Gilbert
- Nov. 11<sup>th</sup> Buzzard Roost bushwhack
- Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup> Penitentiary Bushwhack

*"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts."*  
~Rachel Carson

See you on the River. LT