



The Trail Builder

Newsletter of the Ozark Trail Association - Spring 2007

Inside

Storms

Co-Adoption Program

Membership Renewal

Middlefork Scouts

Through hiking The Ozark Trail

submitted by Don Davis

October 15-29, 2006

The Ozark Trail first came on my “radar” as a long-distance trail from a story on the CNN website. I had heard about it, but only as a weekend or day-hike trail and was fascinated that the trail was 210 miles in length according to this article. I later learned that a middle section of the trail had just been completed in the summer of 2006 making it a continuous trail from the middle of Missouri near I-44 to southern Missouri just north of the Arkansas border.

The Ozark Trail is the ideal long-distance introductory trail because the trail goes through beautiful hardwood forests with enough changes to keep it interesting. In addition to forest walking, there are river and stream crossings, walks along the banks of beautiful flowing rivers, passing by fens and lakes, bottomlands, mountaintop balds, rock creek canyons, and beautiful views. There are less than 8 miles of “road walking” (and that is on nearly unused forest gravel roads); the rest of the hike is on trails. In addition, there are less than a dozen crossings of paved highways, no towns or built-up areas, only three campgrounds, and no shelters over your head (other than a couple of picnic shelters at the campgrounds). This is “primitive hiking” in the best sense of the phrase. You must carry your own shelter and provisions and be prepared for what nature can throw at you (note: I did resupply in two places).

The trail itself is GREAT! The trailbuilders care about this trail. Much of it is designed for horses and bicycles as well as hikers and therefore the surface is wonderful for hiking—firm without being too hard on the feet. Additionally, thought was given to the route of the trail which goes past great little trail



Creek crossing along the 210 mile through hike.

The Ozark Trail Association is a non profit group with the mission to “Build, Maintain, Preserve and Protect the natural beauty of the Ozark Trail.”

Through Hike(continued on page 3)

www.ozarktrail.com The Trailbuilder, Spring 2007-1

President's Report

The Ozark Trail Association Newsletter is published four times each year and is mailed to all members. If you would prefer to receive this newsletter electronically, please contact margo@ozarktrailguide.com. Contributions are welcomed and may be emailed to the editor OTAeditor@gmail.com, or mailed to: Editor, Ozark Trail Association, 483 South Kirkwood Road #40, Kirkwood, MO 63122.

Editor-in-chief: Diane Thornton
Layout: Margo Carroll

Contributors: John Roth, Robert Smith, Don Davis, Randy Raw.
Additional Contributors: Steve Coates.



Spring Beauty blooming on the Current River Section.

I recently had the opportunity to have a sack lunch along the Ozark Trail's Middle Fork section at a small waterfall near Wolf Pen Hollow. I was out with a sawyer crew cleaning tons of downed trees from this winter's ice storms. I was struck by the peacefulness of the woods on that late-January day in spite of destruction that Mother Nature had wrought. I was also very proud to be out representing the Ozark Trail Association.

The OTA has developed an efficient trail maintenance organization responsible for much of the Ozark Trail. It's a good thing too because the weather hasn't been kind to our friend over the last several months. This maintenance requires support from people like you. A good maintenance program helps keep the trail in good hiking shape for all trail users.

We hope to continue our trail construction activities in earnest this fall. We recognize that this is important to our volunteers and we are working on a couple of exciting projects: a reroute of the Courtois Section and a spur trail off of the Brushy Creek Loop to Round Spring. We understand that trail construction is important for more than just the work itself: it builds friendships and provides a sense of accomplishment and contribution to a worthy cause.

The OTA is also involved in necessary administrative activities such as grant writing (the OTA was awarded a \$4,700 grant for the purchase of two new brush mowers), coordinating hiking itineraries, acting as ombudsmen, making presentations at conferences and workshops, and maintaining the necessary documentation to operate as a Missouri non-profit corporation. We have quarterly board meetings and monthly staff meetings. There is a lot to the business side of OTA!

And now, you have an opportunity to support our important work and get more out of your visits to the trail. It's the time of year where the OTA asks its supporters for continued financial support. The money collected through membership donations is used to support not only our maintenance and construction activities but our administration needs too. When you support the OTA either personally (\$20) or as a family (\$35) you help fund the purchase of tools, food for work outings, and our administration needs among others.

The Ozark Trail is near and dear to our hearts. It is a jewel and it wouldn't be that way without your contribution. *On behalf of the Ozark Trail Association board, I would like to thank you for your support of this wonderful trail.*

Happy Trails,
Steve





The scenic beauty of the 210 mile through hike section of the Ozark Trail

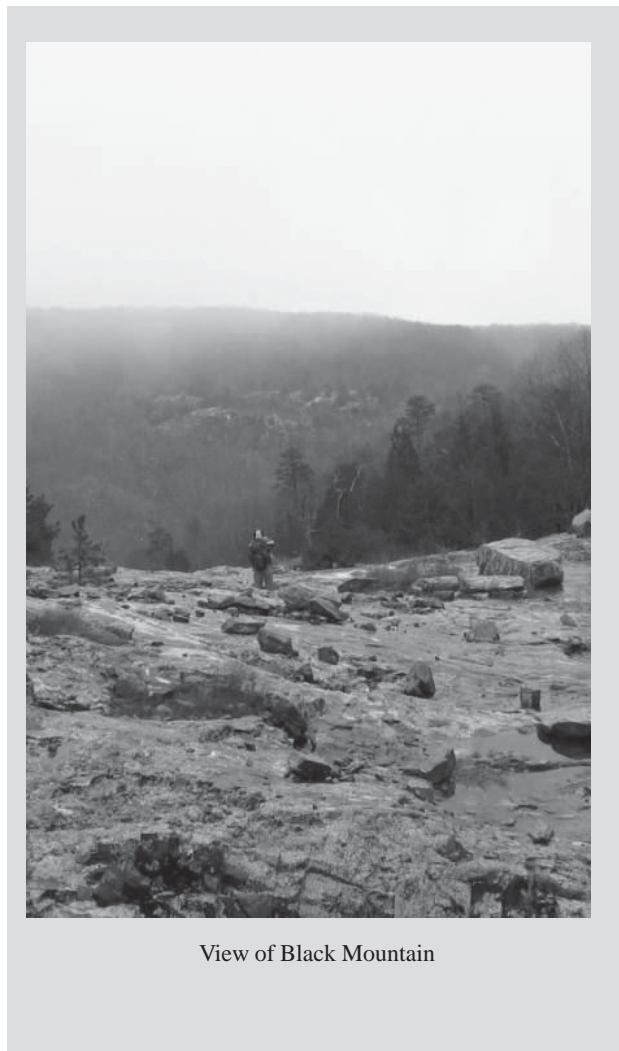
Through Hike(continued from page 1)

surprises. The Trail goes through several “sections,” each with its own personality.

I have been backpacking on trails that are designed as a test of strength, but The Ozark Trail doesn’t do that; it’s incline is easygoing with plenty of switchbacks. Overall, this is a very pleasant hike for a long distance backpacker that leaves you exhilarated, but not beat down by the trail. Drinking water is only an issue for the backpacker in a couple of places. For the most part the trail goes past enough creeks and springs so that you don’t have to carry large quantities of water to get you through (always filter and/or treat water).

The Ozark Trail is a great trail for long-distance hiking. As a matter of fact when I tell people about my long-distance experiences, many say that they would like to do it. All I can think is that most people who say that don’t know what long-distance hiking involves. I tell them to go out for a couple of weeks and then decide. Now I can tell them where to hike to get a long-distance experience in two-weeks; the Ozark Trail.

Authors note: I received LOTS of help from The Ozark Trail Association and John Roth in particular. THANKS! zoots2000@gmail.com



View of Black Mountain

Boy Scouts on the Middle Fork

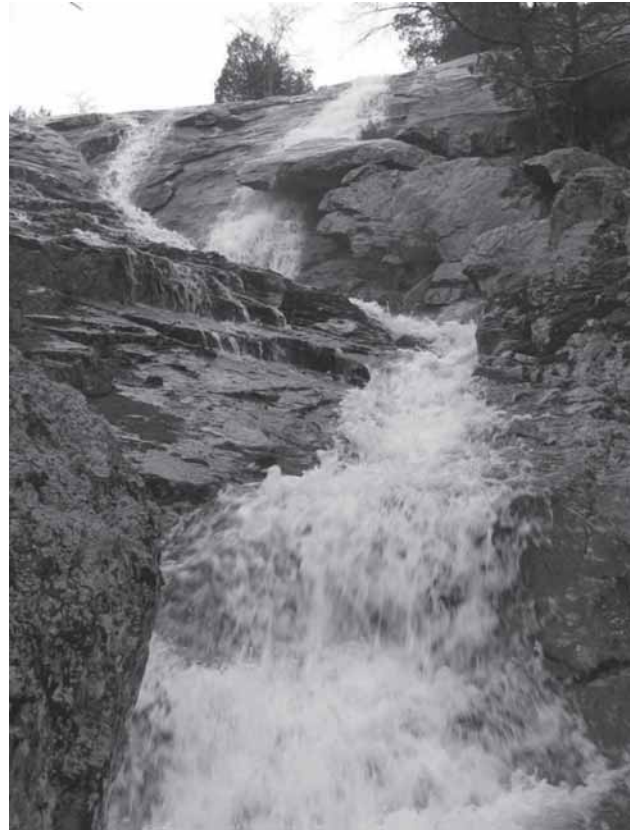
Middle Fork with the Boy Scouts, by Randy Raw

Part of my Boy Scout troop hiked the twenty-five mile Middle Fork section of the Ozark trail over Labor Day weekend. We had a blast! We took three days to hike the trail, traveling about 9 miles a day. The Middle Fork trail was a beautiful section of trail to hike. We saw birds, lizards, and even two F-18 fighter jets doing practice maneuvers!

The trail was nicely shaded by trees, but not so dense that we couldn't look around. The ups and downs weren't too hard to hike, but weren't so easy that we felt unchallenged. When we would get to the top of a hill, the view was always worth a couple of pictures. There was no sight of civilization anywhere, just miles and miles of rolling, forested hills. There was a nice quiet stream or bubbling brook every mile or so. We never ran out of water but every time we saw a stream, it was still great to sit down and cool our feet off on the rocks while we topped off our water bottles. I remember one of these streams in particular. We had just finished a good hour and a half of hiking downhill when we came across a little stream that marked where the downhill section finished and the uphill section started. The spring came out of the rock about 100 feet upstream from where we were and what began as a trickle created the most picturesque stream I have ever seen. I will always remember it..

As we went through the trail, I was amazed at its neatness and diversity. Through the three days we were there I didn't see a single piece of trash, except the ones we packed in and packed out. Even as the trail changed from oak forests to cedar groves, the only things we saw were nature's natural actions, and the efforts of the trail's maintenance crew to keep the trail clear of all debris.

Overall, this trail was definitely an impressive one. I never got tired of the sights and smells of the trail. We would be hiking along when suddenly we'd reach a stream or cut-back and be able to perfectly identify where we were on the trail. If I ever get the chance, I will definitely take more scouts on this beautiful trail.



Upper Mina Sauk Falls along the Taum Sauk Section

**Welcome to our new
board members !**

**Roger Allison
Todd Horn
Linda Meade
Chris Schwab
Melissa Schwab**

Watch the website (www.ozarktrail.com) for volunteer opportunities. There are tasks for everyone and all are welcomed at Ozark Trail Association events. Plus, you'll meet lots of nice people and have a fun time!

Storms, storms and more storms

submitted by Steve Coats

The Ozark Trail has taken a beating from Mother Nature these last few months. Between tornados, thunderstorms, and ice storms, the weather hasn't been too kind to our beautiful trail. In the past year, storms have hit Missouri so badly that we're ranked #2 nationally for storm damage in 2006. It's been a mess.

In September, late summer thunderstorms generated destructive tornados through the Ozarks. The Taum Sauk section on Goggins Mountain was hit by a tornado, and the Department of Natural Resources is working to have this portion of trail cleared by spring. The Bell Mountain Wilderness Area remains a problem, as we need



certified cross-cut sawyers to clear this portion of trail (chainsaws aren't generally allowed in Wilderness areas).

December and January hit the trail with a fury, coating trees with so much heavy ice that many just toppled over. Portions of the Middle Fork, Taum Sauk, Trace Creek sections of the trail resembled tornado damage, with hundreds of trees uprooted.

Each time a section of trail was cleared, another storm came along. Volunteers rose to the challenge, and have logged over 1,000 hours of sawing time since September. Crews have been concentrating on the Trace Creek and Middle Fork sections the past few weeks. Most of the Middle Fork section is cleared, plus most of the southern half of the Trace Creek section. Pending any additional storms, these trails will be clear for the spring trail season.

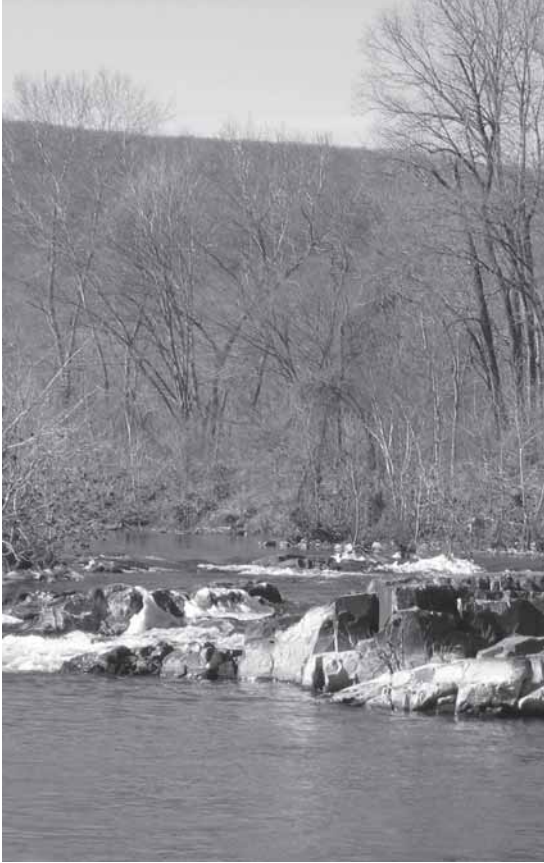
Many thanks to the hearty volunteers who have been working so hard to clear these trails. A special thanks goes out to Dave and Gwen Fuehring for their tireless work sawing and clearing.

Trail Tips

- Always use caution** near downed trees. Often they will block the trail and make finding the trail again difficult.
- When out hiking the OT **make a note of where you see downed trees blocking** the trail. Report these to the Ozark Trail Association so that a trail clean up crew can be notified.
- Volunteer!** Almost all of the work done on the Ozark Trail is done by people just like you. Volunteer on a trail clean up crew.
- Become a sawyer!** Sign up with the OTA and take the classes necessary to become certified to use a chainsaw on the OT.

The OTA Implements a Trail Co-Adoption Program

By Robert Smith



In the spring of 2005, the Ozark Trail Association implemented an Adopt-A-Trail Program, copied loosely from the Missouri Department of Conservation's own program with that same name. We began this program after several individuals and groups had made commitments to trail maintenance with the various agencies that owned property along its length. It was felt that the maintenance of the OT should be somewhat uniform and standard throughout its entire distance of more than two hundred miles.

We had a few goals when we began the AAT program. We asked the volunteers to make at least three complete maintenance trips each year. We asked them to remove any small trees or limbs from the trail, to erect a reasonable number of reassurance markers (trail signs), to remove any trash from thoughtless trail users, to remove loose rocks and debris, and to cut back limbs and other vegetation which were encroaching the trail corridor. We

did not expect them to saw large limbs or trees, or to make serious tread repairs. Instead, they were asked to report any issues to the AAT coordinator, who, in turn, would list these items for OTA maintenance outings.

The program took off rapidly, and by the end of 2006, more than 90% of the constructed trail had been adopted. However, it soon became evident that we had two problems. First, although we had more prospective AAT volunteers than we had trail to adopt, the prospective volunteers were not always interested in the segments that remained as orphans. Second, despite the best of intentions, some of the volunteers were unable to meet the standard of three complete visits each year. To face these issues, the OTA has formed the AAT Co-Adoption Program.

The idea is to have AAT co-adoption volunteers conduct periodic maintenance on sections of trail which already have primary adopters. The co-adopters are not required to conduct three visits each year. They can do as little as one maintenance outing, but, if they do only one, this outing must be done in late spring or early summer, when the maintenance needs are greatest. They can co-adopt as much or as little as they choose, and there is no maximum number of volunteer agreements that can be in place for any particular area. Any time the primary adopter terminates his/her agreement, the co-adopter will be given the first opportunity to assume the duties of the primary adopter.

Is this new program for you? If you are one of the many individuals who appreciate the Ozark Trail, but who might not have the time or inclination to conduct three maintenance outings each year, then you are encouraged to take a closer look. As most OTA members are aware, the building and maintenance of the Ozark Trail is nearly exclusively a volunteer activity. Without the involvement of volunteers, the OT would cease to exist.

More information on the Ozark Trail Association's two adoption programs can be found on our website, www.ozarktrail.com. Click on the 'Volunteer' link, and then go to the AAT section. Take a look at the sections, and then follow the links to contact the Adopt-A-Trail Coordinator, Robert Smith. Or, simply email Robert at OTAdopt@msn.com.

It's time to renew your Ozark Trail Membership

Support the OTA's mission to develop, maintain, preserve, promote and protect the Ozark Trail. New members receive an OTA patch, a membership card and an Ozark Trail Guide, plus the satisfaction of helping out a great cause. There are three membership types: Individual (\$20/year), Family (\$35/year) and Lifetime (\$250). If you are registering your family, please include all family member names in the "Other Information" box if they also want membership cards).

All funds go towards trail construction and maintenance, maps & brochures, website maintenance and slight administrative costs. There are no salaries—the OTA is a volunteer-run organization! Please take a moment to clip and mail your renewal or, *new this year*, pay via PayPal

- Family membership \$35
 Individual Membership \$20
 Lifetime Membership \$250

Name _____

Address _____

City _____, State _____ Zip _____

(optional) Phone _____ Email _____

Other information: - please list any special skills, experience, or resources (trail maintenance, equipment, etc) that you have and that you would be able to share with the OTA (family memberships should also include all family names here):

mail to: Ozark Trail Association
483 South Kirkwood Road #40
Kirkwood, MO 63122

or PayPal (<https://www.paypal.com>) to **OTAmembership@ozarktrail.com** (this account can accept credit card payments and checks.) Use the "send money" feature and enter the name, address, etc. information in the "note" section.

Check here to have your newsletter sent via email!

Volunteer!!

March 24th – Courtois Reroute – This is a tentative date for a little construction project to reroute a portion of the Courtois section off of ATV-damaged roads. Camping is available at Hazel Creek, just a short distance from the work site.

April 21st – Spring cleanup at Winona – Enjoy the spring flowers as you do some Ozark Trail maintenance. Free lodging at the Winona bunkhouse, an evening BBQ and campfire, and lots of great trail talk. Full day of maintenance on Saturday with an optional half-day on Sunday (or just go out and enjoy the trail!)

Daily operations tasks are also available, such as marketing, promotions, and many more!

For general volunteering information, or to become a certified Trail Leader, contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Jeff Goetter at ota.volunteer@gmail.com

**If you'd like to receive your newsletter in pdf format via email Margo:
margo@ozarktrailguide.com**

Members Welcome: OTA Meetings

The Ozark Trail Association meets at 7:00pm on the third Monday of each month. This time slot has been changed from the previous one on the 2nd Tuesday of each month. Check out the website (www.ozarktrail.com) for exact times and location. If you can make it, stop in. The meetings are open to the public and input is welcome. Meetings are professionally run so you can count on finishing at 9:00pm. But the group usually goes out to Growlers or Ruby Tuesdays for a late snack and some great camaraderie afterwards. So join in the fun, we'd love to see you.



**Ozark Trail Association
483 S. Kirkwood Road #40
Kirkwood, MO 63122**

Spring NEWSLETTER