



The Trail Builder

Newsletter of the Ozark Trail Association - Summer 2005

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Eighty volunteers worked in wet conditions and enjoyed a great BBQ at the May Mega Event, sponsored by Alpine Shop and Patagonia.

President's Report

by Steve Coates

Well, it's been a fun start to 2005. Since taking over as President in December of last year, I have learned how much work this "OTA-thing" really is! BUT, I'm not complaining... not in the slightest. This organization continues to amaze me with what we can accomplish and the fervor behind it. On May 14th, we had 80 volunteers show up to build trail on a day that started out looking pretty nasty. But in typical OTA-fashion, these folks stuck it out and were rewarded later that morning with a glorious day of trail building followed by a wonderful evening of food, music and camping. That's what I feel the OTA is all about: people coming together for a common cause, to have some fun, build some trail and share friendship.

Many of you know that John Roth was the first OTA President and served in that role for two years. When I was approached by John to see if I was interested in following in his footsteps, I was both eager and a bit nervous to do so. I mean...follow John Roth as President? That's like batting after Albert Pujols has just hit a grand slam. John's mark is all over the OTA. But many others have made their own mark on the OTA as well. So, the eagerness in me won out over the nervousness and here I am. John is still very active in the OTA coordinating work outings, SCA crews and with the US Forest Service. We are fortunate to have John able to dedicate as much of his time to the OTA as he does. As for me, I have taken on much of the administrative responsibilities of the organization. This isn't quite as glamorous as the on-the-ground trail work, but it's a needed cog in the wheel of the OTA.

I want to touch on a few goals set by the advisory board back in January in Potosi and give a brief status update of each:

Membership: In the first half of 2005, we have spent extensive volunteer hours getting our membership roster up-to-date. Danny McMurphy is our new membership chair (or membership jockey as he calls himself) and he's done a super job managing the database and renewals. He took over from Patrick O'Brien who started the push for a membership drive. I feel our membership activities are well on track for 2005. As of April 30th, we had 228 members on the active roster.

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."

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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 margosky@aol.com. Contributions are welcomed and may be emailed to the editor or mailed to: Editor, Ozark Trail Association, 483 South Kirkwood Road #40, Kirkwood, MO 63122.

A special thanks goes to Diane Thornton for stepping in as editor while Patrick is away.

Editor-in-chief: Diane Thornton & Patrick O'Brien

Contributors: John Roth, Gwen Fuehring

Additional Contributors: Steve Coates, Danny McMurphy.



President's Report (continued from page 1)

Adopt-A-Trail: The Adopt-A-Trail program is coming along nicely thanks to the efforts of Robert Smith. He has stepped up to take on the responsibility of this program and has managed to coordinate many trail adoptions. These range from short (a mile and a half) to long (14 miles). This will eventually become part of an online database to be used for trail condition reports and maintenance needs. Many thanks to Robert for pulling this together.

Business Plan: I am in the process of completing an OTA business plan. At the advisory board meeting in Potosi, we brainstormed ideas for goals, then categorized, and listed the goals. The goals are being used to help develop the business plan. The base list for the goals basically plays off of the mission of the OTA: *to develop, maintain, preserve, promote and protect the rugged, natural beauty of the Ozark Trail*. The plan will expand on each of these mission objectives.

Fund Raising: We're a young organization and we're still navigating through the fund raising maze. Larger organizations have at least one, and sometimes many, fund raising personnel. We're doing it with volunteers right now and we've managed to land several grants, most notably, a \$100,000 Recreational Trails Program grant (partnered with the US Forest Service). This grant has made it possible to hire crews from the Student Conservation Association (SCA) and Americorps to accelerate the completion of the Middle Fork Section. OTA volunteers helped to write and manage the grant. We're also waiting to hear the results of an \$80,000 grant submitted to a private foundation back in March. An announcement on our application is expected in June.

Folks, 2005 has seen the completion of 8 miles of trail. That's since January! Seven thousand hours have been logged on the Ozark Trail in that time. Look at how far we've come in just 30 months! We are now looked upon by many as a trail-building machine. The decades-old dream of the Ozark Trail is alive and finding renewed vigor because of volunteers like you. We are poised to do great things.

We're going into maintenance mode for the summer months. Check the website for a schedule of events. I look forward to our AHS volunteer Vacation September 24- October 1 and our fall construction kick-off when we'll be partnering with REI, Inc. for our first mega-event of the fall.

I am very proud to be a part of this organization and I highly value the friendships I have made. Thank you all for your time, talents, muscle, wit, music, money, generosity, skills, humor, food, and love of the trail.

Happy trails,
Steve



A Very Special Kind of Vacation

by Gwen Fuehring

Where can you find a vacation experience that includes invigorating physical activity, camping in a lovely forest setting, hearty meals cooked and consumed in open air, and the satisfaction of contributing to a project that hikers will enjoy for years to come? The answer is American Hiking Society (AHS) Volunteer Vacations. These vacations come with the added benefit of being easy on the budget as food and camping/lodging are usually provided, and the fee is only \$95 for AHS members (\$115 for non-members). Sponsoring trail associations usually invite their members to participate free of charge.



The Ozark Trail Association (OTA) has hosted 2 one-week volunteer vacations, both of which were led by Gwen and David Fuehring with support from John Roth and Frank Pointer. A third volunteer vacation is planned for the last week of September, 2005. Our first volunteer vacation in May 2004 attracted 9 volunteers through AHS and a similar number of OTA members. We completed one mile of hiking-only trail along Neal's Creek above Barton Fen on the Middle Fork Section. In May 2005, we continued building hiking trail west of the fen to connect with the multi-use portion of the Middle Fork Section. This stretch of trail features a 20-foot stone crib wall which raises the trail above creek level. The OTA's two volunteer vacations have included volunteers from Arkansas, California, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Nebraska, Ontario (Canada), Tennessee, Texas and, of course, Missouri. Each week of shared purpose and camaraderie resulted in new friendships and renewal of ties among those who had worked together before.



As much as Gwen and Dave love to work on the Ozark Trail, they cherish memories of the 9 other volunteer vacations that they have participated in since 1999. The locations included Zion National Park (Utah), Buffalo National River (Arkansas), Moraine State Park (Pennsylvania), White Water State Park (Indiana), Crowley's Ridge State Park (Arkansas), the Cumberland Trail (Tennessee), the Pine Mountain Trail (Kentucky), and the Ozark Highlands Trail (Arkansas). The projects included trail building, trail maintenance, exotic plant control and tree planting.



There is a saying that 'You can never really appreciate a wilderness trail until you have built one.' It is also true that "You can't appreciate a volunteer vacation until you have been on one." The catalog of AHS volunteer vacations is on-line at <http://www.americanhiking.org/events/vv/index.html>. Be forewarned . . . you may be so enamored by the descriptions that you will want to sign up for one immediately!

First Annual OTA Through Hike

Have you ever hiked in the western mountains? Glacier National Park, for instance? A Midwesterner visiting an area like that is immediately struck by the waterfalls. The visitor is astounded to see and hear torrents of water falling hundreds of feet and landing in deep gorges before rushing down the mountainside. Streams are everywhere, and the hiker soon learns to expect new sounds and higher waterfalls at each turn in the trail.

The Missouri Ozarks, in late winter, is a far different place. Comparing the two is like comparing a float at the Rose Bowl Parade to a Zen garden. The forest is quieter, the water more subtle and a hiker can learn to appreciate the nuances nature presents. Each trickle of water, each spring pool filled with the lively greens of watercress,

each narrow stream has a unique appearance and the hiker never tires of exploring their uniqueness.



Members of the Ozark Trail Association were treated to these sights and sounds on their First Annual Ozark Trail Long-distance Hike. On March 10, Robert Smith, Dave and Gwen Fuehring, who were joined by various others along the way, began a trek which was scheduled to end some two weeks and 220 miles later.

The hike began at the northernmost trailhead of the contiguous trail, located on Forest Service Road 2265, near the town of Butts. The trailhead was heavily decorated with surveyor tape by John Roth, one of the few people who knew how to find it. Our plan was to

hike each section of trail in two days, and that necessitated daily distances of up to 15 miles. We quickly discovered, however, that we had to hike as much as 19 miles in a day in order to keep to our schedule. The distances on the maps were prior to the advent of GPS technology so the actual mileage differed significantly.

This was a slackpacking, not a backpacking trip. We moved our vehicles each day, and spent a great deal of time shuttling cars and people from starting and ending points. This allowed us to hike with daypacks and it also allowed other participants to meet us at trailheads for a day or two or more of hiking. Of the nearly one dozen individuals who hiked one or more days, only three of us, Robert Smith, Dave Fuehring and Gwen Fuehring, hiked the entire trip (but none of us completed all 220 miles.) No, for sure, this was not a grueling ordeal. At the end of each day, Dave and Gwen Fuehring opened their van, (with its satellite radio) and turned on the computer. By the time Dave downloaded our track from the GPS and copied the daily photos from his digital camera, Gwen typed her notes on her laptop and I called Memphis with our position and plans for the next day, it began to feel like we were the control center for a Steve Faucett* attempt at another world record.

The weather was great, as was the camping. During the entire hike, we only met one other hiking group, and this was on the second day. We arranged for John Roth to meet us for the uncompleted portion of the Middle Fork

Section so he could guide us. Although we are certain that others have hiked from Hwy 32 to Oates, we are equally certain that this was the first through hike of the Middle Fork Section of the Ozark Trail. We know this because John laid out the trail and only he knew which of the vast array of surveyor ribbons out there actually marked the official trail. He forced us to hike every foot of it, including the switchbacks and briar patches so thick that we could barely see through them.

So, what was the best part of the trail? That is a hard question to answer. It could be the newly-built section just south of Henderson Creek. The trail climbed a steep hill that had recently been harvested. The trail construction was done at the same time. As we climbed the hill, it was a beautiful clear morning. The sky was as blue as only a winter sky can be, and the air was crisp. We could see for miles around us, as all was silent, except for the occasional call of the winter birds. It was spectacular! Or, the best part might have been when we stopped for lunch on the third day near a small spring. We sat on the cold ground and listened to the water. Five friends, with nothing to say, but all sharing in the same experience. Or, perhaps it was the bluffs on the Blair Creek section, high over the Current River. It was much warmer that day, and the flowers were blooming everywhere. We were down to only three hikers, and we had only one day left on our trip, but we didn't know it then.

It was a great trip. We hiked for ten days and traveled 175 miles, ending at the north fence of Peck Ranch. Why not all 220 miles? It was all Danny McMurphy's fault. He is Irish, and it was St. Patrick's Day. He insisted we celebrate at a restaurant. So in the end it wasn't the blisters that got us. It wasn't the long miles, falling off cliffs, bad weather or worn out equipment. It wasn't even too much time spent together. It was a few mild cases of food poisoning picked up at the salad bar at a small restaurant in South Missouri. That's what did us in! Stay tuned. If there was a First Annual OTA Long-distance Hike, there needs to be a Second Annual OTA Long-distance Hike. This time we'll skip the food poisoning and make it a true through hike!

Submitted by Robert Smith, who coordinated this hike during his Spring Break from college.

***Steve Faucett is a millionaire businessman-turned-adventurer who is known for his record-breaking balloon flights**

SCA Crew works on the OZARK TRAIL

From March 2 through May 24, five young adults have been tirelessly working on the Ozark Trail. They are a part of the Student Conservation Association. The Student Conservation Association (SCA) is a national leader in natural resource conservation, providing service opportunities, outdoor skills and leadership training to thousands of young women and men each year. SCA's Mission is "to build the next generation of conservation leaders and inspire lifelong stewardship of our environment and communities by engaging young people in hands-on service to the land." Bethany Humble headed our SCA intern crew. Other interns were Creedence, Megan McAlonis, Scott Hanson and Justin.

Your volunteer hours brought these interns here. Collaborating with the US Forest Service, the OTA received a Recreation Trails Program grant that provided almost \$100,000 for the trail. The SCA interns receive a small stipend and a \$1,200 scholarship toward continuing their education. You may have worked with them on the trail or shared a bonfire with them. They are an interesting group with a wide variety of experiences and it has been a challenge for them to build solid group dynamics, but they succeeded and our trail benefited.



Scott "Squirrel" Hanson



Bethany Humble



Meg

Swimmin' Holes along The Ozark Trail



by John Roth

“It’s summertime, and the trail season is over in Missouri.” (However “Uncle John’s” countdown to the top swimming holes on the OT might lure you out!)

How often have you heard that? If you’re a seasoned trail user, you’ve probably said it yourself. Why fight the heat, humidity and bugs when you can take a trip through the beautiful Ozarks in fall, winter or summer? One reason: swimming!

I adore summers in Missouri. I grew up camping in the summer along the clear streams of the upper Meramec, the Courtois, and the Castor. While Mom & Dad fished for bass and bluegill, my brother and I went exploring for new places to swim. Sometimes it was in fast crystal-clear rapids, sometimes in shallow pools in a dolomite-strewn hollow, sometimes at the end of a rope-swing aside a deep hole of water.

Years later, when I rediscovered backpacking, I sought out trails that took me past waterholes reminiscent of my youth. I’d brave the heat, sweat out the humidity, and swat away mosquitoes because I knew at the end of the day I’d be splashing in the spring-fed waters that lay ahead.

For the kid in all of us, I present a few swimming holes along the Ozark Trail that will make your summer trail experience a truly chilling experience:

#6 – The Courtois Creek. Five miles down the Courtois section of the OT, you reach its namesake, with bluffs to your north and the rippling waters to the south. Take a dip in the 5’-6’ hole of water at the bend of the creek, or venture further down the trail to the shallow water near the campground.



#5 – Greer Recreation Area. Go during the hottest time of year, for this is just downstream of Greer Spring on the Eleven Point River and its cold, cold, cold! I hiked the Eleven Point section of trail one August, and the water made the 95-degree weather seem like springtime. Refreshing!

#4 – Sutton Bluff. This is in the middle of the Karkaghne section on the Middle Fork of the Black River. Pretty bluffs, a nice hole of water, a rope-swing, and a great place to cool off. It's best to visit during the week, as summer weekends can be crowded and noisy with local ATV traffic.

#3 – Powder Mill. This is at the intersection of the Blair and Current River sections, although you can travel two miles south on the trail to another spot on the river. This area sports some great 'gravel bar' camping and swimming in the Ozark National Scenic Riverway.

#2 – Rocky Falls. This is a short side-trip from the Current River section of trail and features a beautiful waterhole at the bottom of cascading falls. This is a "can't miss" section of trail no matter the season.

#1 – Johnson Shut-Ins. The BEST place to swim in Missouri. Along the Taum Sauk section and in Johnson Shut-Ins State Park, it has flumes, miniature waterfalls, spa-like jets of water, and a deep swimming hole next to rhyolite bluffs. Downstream and along the trail you can find private spots to chase away the hottest of summer days.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. There are dozens of places to swim along the Ozark Trail, such as the St. Francis on the Wappapello section at Highway 34, Lost Creek on the Courtois section, Little Creek on the Middle Fork section, Crane Lake, Blair Creek... well, the list goes on.

Summers and water go hand-in-hand in the Missouri Ozarks, so take a day-trip or a weekend to explore the trail and get wet!

Change of address/phone/e-mail form:

Name _____ OTA# (from membership card) _____

New Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

New Phone Number: (_____) _____

New E-address: _____

Please do not mail my newsletter, I prefer an electronic newsletter _____

and my email address is _____

Mail to Ozark Trail Association, 483 S. Kirkwood Road, #40, Kirkwood, Missouri 63122

Or - e-mail your changes to the membership jockey, Danny McMurphy, at mcmurfy1@yahoo.com

The OTA needs your support even if you can't come out and work. You can obtain a personal membership for only \$20 per year (family memberships of two or more are only \$35 per year).

Sign up at the OTA website, <http://www.ozarktrail.com/> and then mail in your \$20 (\$35) to the OTA address posted on the membership page. Membership includes the OTA 2005 Guide to the Ozark Trail, a laminated membership card, and an OTA patch for your jacket, patch or hat. Join us today!

Members Welcome: OTA Meetings

The Ozark Trail Association meets at 7:00pm on the second Tuesday of each month, usually at the Powder Valley Nature Center in Kirkwood. 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.



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483 S. Kirkwood Road #40
Kirkwood, MO 63122

SUMMER NEWSLETTER