



# The Trail Builder

Newsletter of the Ozark Trail Association Late Fall 2008

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The Ozark Trail Association  
is a non-profit group with  
the mission to develop,  
maintain, preserve,  
promote and protect the  
rugged natural beauty of  
the Ozark Trail

## Bugged on the Ozark Trail

By Ted C. MacRae

The Ozark Trail is a renowned resource for recreational activities. Perhaps less well appreciated are the outstanding opportunities for nature study it also offers. Traversing some of the state's most pristine areas, numerous plants and animals make their homes in the diverse natural habitats found along its length. While reptiles, birds, and mammals may be the most conspicuous animals encountered, they are far from the most diverse or numerous. That honor belongs overwhelmingly to the insects.



Isn't she a beauty? Splendid tiger beetles can be found in dry, rocky soil along the OT, on sunny days during spring and fall

The types of insects found along the Ozark Trail depend greatly upon the habitat and season. Spring and early summer are the best times to observe insects, as adults of many species become active with the flush of growth of the plants on which they feed. Insects are more abundant in open areas of the trails than in the deep forest interior due to the greater diversity of wildflowers and plants that grow in sunny habitats. Many species of insects are restricted to certain types of plants and can, thus, only be found where those plants grow.

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There may be as many as 25,000 species of insects living in Missouri. The Ozark Highlands are home to a great many of these species...

—*Ted C. MacRae*

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### **The beetle beat**

An especially amusing group of insects has actually become more common along the Ozark Trail due to horseback riders. Dung beetles are a diverse group of round, black beetles that quickly find fresh droppings – whether from deer, coyote, or horses – on the trail and begin burying it as food for their brood. Some species dig directly underneath the dung, while others carve balls out of the pat, which they “roll” for some distance with their hind legs before burying. Once buried, the adult

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Sawing dead-fall in October: keeping the Ozark Trail clear is a year-round effort and storms this year caused extra blockage in many places



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## President's Report

Have you ever wondered when it is a good time to come out and build trail? The answer: RIGHT NOW.

Even as the weather turns colder, there are still plenty of opportunities to come out and be a part of the Ozark Trail Association's construction and maintenance activities. We've been working on the Courtois Section this fall with outings extended into December for the Courtois. Then we'll take a short break over the holidays and we'll pick it up again in mid-January at one of Missouri's crown jewel parks: Johnson's Shut-Ins. The park is scheduled for a re-opening in the summer of 2009 and the Division of State Parks has requested the Ozark Trail Association lead the construction efforts for the relocated Taum Sauk Section that has been closed since the December 2005 reservoir collapse. You can read more about plans for the trail at Johnson's Shut-Ins in *Notes from the Field* on page 5.

Now, the thank you section: I want to thank all of the volunteer efforts that have been contributed since the start-up of the fall construction season. We've had two very successful MegaEvents at Bass' River Resort outside of Steelville (attendance for our Megas continues to grow; 155 people attended the October event!) and several successful smaller outings. And I'd like to extend a big thank you to all of the volunteers that participate in the OTA maintenance and Adopt-A-Trail program. There is a lot of work involved in keeping the trail maintained such as performing tread repairs, sawing downed trees, repairing water damage and eroded areas, and mowing. An ice storm or a summer windstorm can drop scores of trees across a section of trail and our sawyer volunteers are there to respond.

Recently, a very accomplished hiker from American Hiking Society, Ed Talone, completed 170 miles of the Ozark Trail. When asked what he thought of the trail, Ed replied, "You can write this down; you can quote me. I've hiked over 40,000 miles. I've been on every National Scenic Trail, I've been on trails all over the country. The Ozark Trail takes a second-seat to none of them."

Wow. Not a bad endorsement, huh? And it would not have been possible without your generous volunteer efforts. Again, I thank you.

I want to also thank those of you who do work behind the scenes for OTA, whether it is contributing to a newsletter, putting stamps on membership mailings, attending a staff committee meeting or just simply (and importantly) making a monetary contribution to OTA.

I'm looking forward to 2009 and the work at Johnson's Shut-Ins. I hope to see many of you on the trail.

Happy trails,


**Steve**



# Red Jacket Awards

## Photo Gallery

Nine Ozark Trail Association volunteers were recently awarded Red Jackets for their efforts in building and maintaining the OT. Most of the honorees received their Jackets at the September 25 MegaEvent.

Awardees pictured below include Kathie Brennan, Steve Coates, Danny McMurphy, and Greg Echele. Not pictured are Jack Christopher, Bill Driscoll, Rick Henry, Ed Kindley, and Kent Koppin. 



Kathie Brennan with Steve Coates and Red Jacket



Steve receives his Jacket from John Roth



Steve presents Danny McMurphy with his Jacket



Greg Echele receives his Red Jacket

## What keeps you coming back

By Anna Kopp

When I made the transition from Ozark Trail Association volunteer to staff member, I entered a whole new world of the OTA. Between learning the ropes and keeping up with the demands of my role, I jumped right into my new role without a second to look back.

However, at the October Mega, as I sat with volunteers around the fire, I took some time to look back. For a short while, I was back as a volunteer down for a fun weekend and I didn't have to worry whether all of the tools had been collected, or if I'd written a check for the lunches. At that moment, I was meeting new people who immediately felt like old friends. I remembered what it was that kept me coming back before I was ever hired.

While I have an undeniable enthusiasm for the outdoors and I believe in the OTA's mission, I kept coming back because of how it made me feel to spend a weekend in the woods with fellow OTA volunteers. Let's face it folks; the OTA offers an experience like none other and those who attend and attend again, are a special breed worth looking forward to seeing.

For most of us, OTA events mean we get to see old friends and make new ones. And for some, a friendship formed at one event leads to a lifetime of volunteering as a couple. Take for example, Tom and Mari Erb, a mountain biking couple who got married after meeting at an OTA event. Jim Lammering and Keri Lanning recently got engaged atop Mount Kilimanjaro; during their first-ever conversation at an OTA Mega event last fall, they each discovered the other had always wanted to visit that mountain.

If you haven't been to an event, take my word for it. Join us and you'll be sorry you didn't sooner. If you are like me, a bit hesitant to jump into something so big without knowing anyone, set that fear aside. With the OTA, it doesn't matter if you are at your first or your 30<sup>th</sup> event, you are an old friend and we are always glad to see you.

Everything is going well with the OTA office and we are still waiting to hear back on most of the grants we wrote this summer. If you'd like more detail on what all I've been doing, feel free to call me at the OTA office: 573 436-0540. And if you want to know more, joining our staff is a great way to stay up-to-date while getting to see all of your OTA friends more often.



Anna



# Bugged on the Ozark Trail

Continued from page 1

female lays a single egg within each dung ball, which is then covered with soil. The eggs hatch and the larvae consume the dung from inside out. While the dietary habits of these comical beetles may be unappealing, imagine how littered the trail would become were it not for their services.

Glades are natural island communities surrounded by a sea of forest. Their shallow, dry, rocky soil conditions support tiger beetles. The splendid tiger beetle (*Cicindela splendida*) – flashing brilliant green and clay-red – can be found sunning on the bare rock surfaces in glades throughout the Ozarks. Adults emerge during fall and then spend the winter deep inside tunnels dug into the rocky soil. In spring, they re-emerge and look for mates. Male tiger beetles grab females by the neck, their jagged, toothy jaws fitting precisely in grooves on the female neck designed specifically for such, and often “ride” on top of the female for long periods of time to prevent mating by another male.

## Other insects beware

Flowers are attractive to a great variety of insects, especially bees, wasps, butterflies, and flies, as well as beetles. Other insects, however, are attracted to flowers not because of anything that the flower offers, but in hopes of snatching as prey those insects that visit the flower. An example of this is the group known as ambush bugs. These small, squat insects look like little tanks but are almost impossible to see because of their brown and yellow mottled coloring that helps them blend into their surroundings. They sit motionless on flowers and wait for a bee or other insect to land, at which time they pounce – grabbing the prey with their vise-like front legs and piercing its body with their beak-like mouthparts. An injection of toxic saliva paralyzes their hapless prey and begins dissolving the body contents, allowing the ambush bug to suck up the liquefied contents.

## Winging it

The many aquatic habitats found along the Ozark Trail also provide homes to a great variety of flying insects. Many, such as dragonflies and their smaller, more delicate relatives the damselflies, depend upon these small ponds and lakes to complete their life cycles. While adults are conspicuous due to their large size and acrobatic flight capabilities, the immatures – called naiads – spend their lives unseen beneath the water’s surface, where they are predators of smaller aquatic insects. When they are ready to transform into adults, they climb above the water and shed their skin to allow their wings to expand and harden before flying off. One can often find the shed skins that they leave behind on cattails or other plants. At least one species, the Hine’s emerald dragonfly (*Somatochlora hineana*), is restricted to a



Ted C. MacRae (with beetle gathering gear,) author of the blog [Beetles in the Bush](#), and research entomologist with Mansanto

handful of calcareous wetlands in the Ozarks. Because of its small population and the rarity of the habitat in which it lives, the species has been added to the Federal Endangered Species List.

Of course, not all flying insects encountered along the Ozark Trail are desirable. A variety of biting flies, from gnats and mosquitoes to horseflies and deerflies, conspire to make your trail experience less enjoyable. Ticks and chiggers, which are not insects but actually more related to spiders, also can be encountered in more brushy areas along the trail. These annoyances can be minimized by the proper use of insect repellents, especially those containing DEET

## Trailside serenade

Some insects along the Ozark Trail are more easily heard than seen. Cicadas – large relatives of aphids and leafhoppers – sit high in the branches of trees and sing during the day. As a group, they are among the loudest animals in the world. Only the males sing, and each of the 13 species in Missouri has a characteristic song that can be used to identify the species without even seeing the insect. Occasionally an individual may be found sitting low enough to approach, but only those who do so very slowly will be rewarded with seeing this extremely wary insect before it shrieks and takes flight. Katydid, resembling large, leaf-like grasshoppers, are another of the singing insects. Filling the night air, their rasping sounds are produced by rubbing special structures on their wings together. Several species can be found in the Ozarks, many of which are especially fond of the many oaks and hickories found along the trail.

The next time you hike the Ozark Trail, take a moment to look more closely at the plants and flowers along the trail. You’ll be amazed at the diversity of insects that can be seen, and your trail experience will be richer because of it. 🐞

# Notes from the field

## Construction and Maintenance Committee Column

By John Roth

Rollin' on the river! Our volunteers keep on churnin' and the OTA keeps on burnin' as over 300 people hacked out another two miles of trail in the Courtois Creek valley this fall. The Construction and Maintenance Committee gives a big round of applause to our friends and families that opened a new piece of Ozark Trail between the Meramec River and the Courtois Creek. We had a great time at the September and October MegaEvents. Safety, Fun and Building Trail: that's what it's all about!

Many thanks to Stephan and Julie Bass at Bass' River Resort for providing free camping at the Fall 2008 MegaEvents, supplying us with food, building great bonfires and being such kind hosts. We are also indebted to them for allowing the Ozark Trail to be extended through their property.

The 12-mile trail from the Meramec River to the Courtois Creek is now officially open. We'll be working on connecting this trail with the remaining Courtois Section next fall: right after we rebuild the Taum Sauk trail this winter/spring.

That's right, our next target is the Taum Sauk trail through Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park. We'll begin construction in January of three miles of trail, a two-mile reroute through the area damaged by the December 2005 reservoir collapse plus a one-mile connector trail over to a new trailhead at Highway N. Our construction schedule is shown at right and any changes will be reflected on the schedule posted on the OTA website: [www.ozarktrail.com/workparties](http://www.ozarktrail.com/workparties). Our goal is to open this trail when Johnson's Shut-Ins reopens in late spring. Don't miss out on these exiting events on Missouri's best-loved trail.

Construction isn't all we do. There are hundreds of miles of trail to maintain, and winds from Hurricane Ike didn't help. Volunteer sawyers have been busy cutting the many downed trees along the trail. You can help by becoming a "certified sawyer" and pledging at least three sawing outings a year. The next certification class will be held in early 2009.

Call the office at (573) 436-0540 or email our Sawyer Coordinator, Matt Atnip, ([matt.atnip@ozarktrail.com](mailto:matt.atnip@ozarktrail.com)) to register. You can also assist by "swamping" for our sawyers, carrying limbs and branches away from the trail, at scheduled events throughout the year. Check the OTA website for the schedule.

What's next after the Taum Sauk and Courtois sections are opened? The Current River! In October we met with the National Park Service to begin clearances on a 12-mile trail from Round Spring to Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry, which links into the Blair Creek section of the OT. We hope to begin construction in 2010.

Thanks to everyone who helps build and maintain the Ozark Trail. 🍷

## Winter and Spring schedule for Taum Sauk

The Taum Sauk trail through Johnson's Shut-Ins has been closed for three years due to a massive reservoir break in 2005. On January 3<sup>rd</sup> we start work to rebuild a section of damaged trail in preparation for the Shut-Ins park opening in mid-2009. Volunteers will get an early peek at the park as we build nearly four miles of new trail.

The schedule:

- January 3: Kick-off outing at the new Highway N trailhead
- January 10
- January 17
- January 31
- February 15: Sunday in the Park
- February 21
- February 28
- April 4: Alpine Shop MegaEvent! The biggest event of the year
- May 2: 2<sup>nd</sup> MegaEvent to finish the trail!

All January and February outings will meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Highway N trailhead north of the park entrance (look for signs.) The April and May MegaEvents will meet at the park's main parking lot. You must sign up online at [www.ozarktrail.com/workparties](http://www.ozarktrail.com/workparties) to attend these events.



The scour valley and rhyolite rubble caused by the Taum Sauk reservoir breach

## Trail preview The “Courtois Gap”

By John Roth

*For two decades a lonely seven-mile section of the Ozark Trail has languished in obscurity, cut off from its closest neighbor by miles of gravel road. This wee bit of trail was cobbled together from pieces of pioneer road, informal creek-side paths and a slice of new construction, starting just south of the Meramec River and ending abruptly on a narrow ridge overlooking both the Courtois and Huzzah valleys. Miles to the east is the Berryman Trail, an old 24-mile horse loop built in the 1930s and connected to Ozark Trail at the turn of the millennium. In between is a “no-man’s land of Federal forests and private property along with some gravel roads. Welcome to the “Courtois Gap.”*

*At the last MegaEvent in October, we cut the “Gap” nearly in half. Next year the Gap will disappear completely as we finish construction on new trail that will give the OT a clear run for 230 miles between the Meramec and Eleven Point Rivers. This is your preview to the OT’s newest section of trail!*

### **PART ONE: NARROWS TO BASS’ RESORT**

Coming from the north, the existing trail ends on a gravel road at the Narrows, a sliver of land that has barely survived the constant erosion from the Courtois Creek on one side and the Huzzah Creek on the other. After a short trek on this old wagon road the trail veers into a forest of mixed hardwoods with scattered pines. The pines quickly give way to a young stand of trees that fight for sun, which just as quickly give way to a second-growth of hardwoods that line a ridge towards the Huzzah. It’s a peaceful stretch of trail that leads straight to a bluff overlooking Cannonball Valley, a tremendous vista that overlooks a site along the Huzzah Creek where Union and Rebel soldiers battled during General Ewing’s epic retreat from Fort Davidson to Leasburg.

After leaving the bluff-top, the trail winds downhill and passes the face of the bluff before descending for a half-mile later into a dark hollow. The subsequent ascent of the next ridge passes through two stretches of blackened soil where charcoal was made in the 1870s to fuel the nearby Scotia iron smelter. This area is begging for interpretive trips! It’s a trail through Missouri history.

Two switchbacks and a mile later you’ll travel through another section of shortleaf pine that grows defiantly at sharp angles from steep and rocky hillsides. You’ll soon pass lush fern-covered rock outcroppings, and then like most of the trail in the Ozarks... right back up another ridge. The ridge’s north side holds a special treat: a wet-weather waterfall that drops from bedrock through a series of fractured boulders. This is a great place to take a break, or you can travel a bit farther to a cedar-lined pool of water enclosed by mossy dolomite—a cool place in any season!

## MegaThanks!



Volunteers at the September 27<sup>th</sup> MegaEvent who helped to build 1.25 miles of new trail



Start them early: one of the youngest of the record-setting 155 volunteers at the October 25 MegaEvent



Narrowing the Courtois Gap at the October Mega: building a new section of trail near the Huzzah Conservation Area

Your adventure then winds beneath thick white oaks before entering a stand of pines that line the next ridge. You’ll cross a gravel road and make a meandering mile-long trip down hill into the Courtois valley, exiting the forest at the entrance to Bass’ River Resort.

You’ve just traveled five-and-a-half miles through oak, hickory and pine; past scenic bluffs and gurgling waterfalls; through a piece of American history—its’ a great stretch of trail, and officially open this fall! 🌿

In the next newsletter: **COURTOIS GAP, PART TWO: BASS’ RESORT TO EXISTING TRAIL EAST**



# Applause heard on the Ozark Trail

By John Roth

On Thursday November 13, I drove seven miles off of Highway M in Carter County, down a long bit of gravel known locally as Pike Creek Road. Many of our "seasoned" OTA volunteers know this place--- we've driven it for access to the southern Current River section just uphill from Mint Spring and again two trail miles later near a deer camp. Today I found Ed Talone between these two spots, walking down Pike Creek Road with a backpack filled with gear but little food. He'd been on the trail for twelve days. I stopped my truck, rolled down my window, and smiled. Ed didn't recognize me at first. "Is this Pike Creek Road?" "Hiya, Ed. Did you have good trip!" "John-- it's you! It was SPECTACULAR!"

I had picked up Ed at the train station in Kirkwood twelve days prior and delivered him to the northern OT trailhead in Huzzah Conservation Area. For me, it was twelve days ago. For Ed, it was 170 miles. When we met back in Kirkwood we agreed that I would pick up him on Pike Creek Road at 4pm on November 14th. The date, time and place seemed too specific to me for a twelve-day trip, so I gave Ed my cell phone and asked him to call near the end of the hike; just in case.

I should have never doubted Ed, who works for the American Hiking Society and has hiked all over America. He's walked coast-to-coast. He's done the Appalachian Trail twice. He's covered the Continental Divide, the Pacific Crest, the North Country; well, he's hiked a lot. He's got his trail speed and distance down like a train schedule.

We ate that evening at a diner in Willow Spring where Ed wolfed down a steak. Between bites he talked about the trail. He told me about his stay-over at Brushy Creek Lodge, getting a ride to the Bixby Store for a hot meal, and dodging cars along Highway 72 on a resupply trip to Bunker. What I really wanted to know, however, is what he thought of the trail. As we left Willow Spring for our trip to Springfield where he's walking the Frisco Trail, Ed leaned over and confided, "It's really amazing what the OTA has done. This is some of the best-maintained trail in the country." Ed then promised to write a feature article on the OT in an upcoming issue of the American Hiking Society's magazine.

And that, my friends, made my day. Here's a big round of applause for everyone who adopts and maintains trail, rebuilds and saws down trees. Nicely done! 🍷

## Ozark Trail honored by Department of Natural Resources

By Anna Kopp

Volunteers and users alike have one more reason to be proud of the Ozark Trail. At the Missouri Trail Summit in Columbia Oct. 3, 2008, a section of the OT received a special designation that is unique to the state. Thirteen miles along the Western Taum Sauk section have received the **Jessica Terrell Trail Award**.

Jessica Terrell was the Missouri Statewide Trail Coordinator before she took a similar job in New Mexico. In January 2008, she lost her life tragically in a car accident. According to Chris Buckland, Section Leader of Grants Management for the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, "this Award is given by the friends of Jessica Terrell to honor her contribution to the trails of Missouri."

The award will be given annually to an organization that offers a trail in a "rustic, tranquil setting" with something unique to see, adding up to an experience Terrell would have enjoyed, Buckland said.

The OTA Trip Planner's description of the Western Taum Sauk makes it obvious why this section was chosen. According to the Planner, the trail runs over "one of the oldest exposures of igneous rock in North America. When the Appalachians started forming, the St. Francois range was already twice as old as the Appalachians are today. What that means to hikers is big open rhyolite glades, huge boulders, scree fields, and great vistas."

OTA Executive Director, Anna Kopp, accepted the award during the Keynote session of the Trail Summit amidst trail professionals, public agencies and private organizations. This is the inaugural year of the Terrell award and the OTA-built trail has set a high precedent for all trails hoping to receive the Jessica Terrell Trail Award. The designated section of the OT will be marked with a sign describing the award. 🍷



Anna Kopp holds the Jessica Terrell plaque in front of the OTA display at the Missouri Trail Summit

# Volunteer with the OTA!

For general volunteer information or to become a certified Trail Leader, contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Jeff Goetter at [OTA.Volunteer@gmail.com](mailto:OTA.Volunteer@gmail.com)

## Members Welcome: OTA Meetings

The Ozark Trail Association meets at **7:00 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month**. Check out the web site at [www.ozarktrail.com](http://www.ozarktrail.com) for exact times and locations. 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 9:00 p.m. But the group usually goes out for a late snack and some great camaraderie afterwards. So join in the fun; we'd love to see you!



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