

FWCCSP RECORD

Newsletter of the Friends of White Clay Creek State Park

Friends of White Clay Creek State Park

P.O. Box 9734

Newark, DE 19714-9734

www.whiteclayfriends.org

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Trail User Conflicts Addressed

There has been an ongoing compatibility issue between mountain bikers and pedestrians on the single track trails in our park. The problem arises because some pedestrians feel unsafe or uncomfortable on these trails as a result of excessive speeds and sometimes lack of control and courtesy by some mountain bikers.

The Friends leadership is not anti-biking, but we are trying to encourage some changes with the objective of making the trails safe and enjoyable for all users. Ideally, bikers would use the park as other users do – as a place to enjoy being in a beautiful natural area and to get some moderate exercise. We believe that to ensure safe passage on the trail, bikers should ride more slowly, especially in the vicinity of pedestrians or where the trail ahead is not visible, and be willing to stop for oncoming pedestrians when appropriate, just as pedestrians are willing to stop for each other. In general, the trails are not suitable for sustained fast riding, trick riding, or race training because of the presence of pedestrians. These basic courtesies, we believe, should go a long way toward eliminating the problem.

Recently, the Division of Parks and Recreation installed new signs at trailheads confirming that mountain bikers are required to yield to pedestrians on the trails. We are hopeful that this step, along with efforts being made within the mountain biking community to encourage more courteous behavior, will enable safe and enjoyable use of the trails by everyone.

Members Enjoy Recent Programs

On May 15, approximately 40 participants enjoyed a spectacular morning bird walk along the creek led by Jeff Gordon, a Friends member and professional writer and bird trip leader. Virtually all of the nesting species for the area were well seen, and Jeff provided a wealth of information about the birds and their natural history. We were delighted to be able to offer this program again this year.

Earlier, at our annual meeting on March 23, about 50 members and guests were treated to an excellent presentation by Dr. Heidi Stout, Executive Director of Tri-State

Bird Rescue and Research, who gave a brief history of the organization and some of its work, ranging from rescuing 20,000 oiled penguins in South Africa to releasing a bald eagle in the Middle Run Natural Area. She emphasized the vital contributions of the public and volunteers and described simple ways that we can all play a role in helping our feathered friends.

Also during a brief business meeting the following officers were elected for the coming year: Andy Urquhart, president; Mike Ott, vice-president; Dick Benson, secretary; and Ken Daws, treasurer.

Nest Cameras Providing a Show at the Nature Center

The video cameras installed and maintained by the Friends at the Nature Center are again providing wonderful views of songbirds raising their young. The Eastern Phoebe nest on the front porch currently has 4 eggs that are being incubated by the mother bird. Previously, these parents raised two young birds (two eggs didn't hatch), and they are now working on their second brood.

The bluebird box behind the Nature Center again has House Wrens nesting, and there are at least five very hungry babies that hatched on June 7th and are being fed by the parents. This box has an infrared light and camera so the interior appears dark to the birds, and their nesting is not affected. All of this activity is displayed on a monitor in the Nature Center – stop by and see the show!

Kestrel Nest Boxes Still Waiting for Kestrels

Volunteers have been diligently monitoring and maintaining our five American Kestrel nest boxes. This year, two of the boxes were not occupied at all, for unknown reasons. The other three boxes have been persistently occupied by European Starlings, despite having their nests repeatedly removed in an attempt to keep the boxes available for kestrels. At this writing, it appears that the starlings have finally given up on one of the boxes, and Tree Swallows have occupied one, leaving just one box still with starlings.

Unfortunately, it appears that kestrels were considering one of our boxes back in April, but we may have inadvertently frightened them off by checking the box when we thought it might have been taken over by squirrels. We are hoping for better luck next year in trying to assist the kestrels, which have experienced a drastic decline in Delaware and throughout the eastern US.

Note from the Nature Center – Thanks for the New Shed!

The Nature Center Staff extends its thanks to the Friends and to Sal Gioia for the purchase and installation of the new storage shed for the Nature Center. The shed is of high quality and looks great! It will surely help with organization in the Nature Center by making a place for outdoor equipment and room for organized storage of taxidermy and other program supplies. The manner in which this Friends project was carried out was

very organized and thorough. Sal did a great job researching sheds, communicating with Friends and staff, purchasing and installing the shed, and seeing the project through to completion.

Friends Volunteers Staff the Nature Center

Again this summer, the Friends of White Clay Creek State Park will be conducting our program for staffing the Chambers House Nature Center on Sundays and some Saturdays from April through November. This makes it possible for the center to remain open to visitors during the busiest weekends. This year our volunteers will spend over 250 hours welcoming visitors to the center.

Each year, new volunteers are needed to replace people who leave or are unable to continue staffing. Volunteer activities include welcoming visitors, providing them with information, performing tasks to help the Nature Center function smoothly, answering the phone, helping someone on the naturalist staff to get ready for a program, or answering questions from the visitors.

What do volunteers enjoy about the program?

- Satisfaction of doing something that directly benefits park visitors
- Learning more about the park's history, natural features, and programs
- Meeting and interacting with other outdoor people
- Spending a few hours in our beautiful park

If you would like to become a volunteer at the Nature Center in 2009, contact Project Coordinator Jim Ries.

Volunteer Recognition Program Continues

This summer the Division of Parks and Recreation will again be offering a program to recognize its volunteers. Anyone who volunteered more than 10 hours during 2008 will have the opportunity to choose an award. Volunteer hours as recorded by Project Coordinator Jim Ries will count toward this program.

The awards are given out at an August picnic sponsored by the Division and the Friends to express appreciation to the many volunteers who help support the park. It's always a fun event. Every year we have 30 to 50 or more volunteers who are eligible for an award.

In 2008, we had 12 members who volunteered more than 100 hours each. In addition to actually working at the park, these members also spent many hours organizing and leading our projects. This year's top award winners were Dick Benson, Ken Daws, Cathy Duffus, Sal Gioia, Wendy Keeports, Mike Ott, Jim Ries, John Schwander, John Thomas, Andy Urquhart, Bill Walsh, and Lisa Wool. Congratulations to these leading volunteers and to everyone who will receive an award this summer.

Summer Concert Series is Underway

Once again, the park has scheduled an outstanding concert series this summer. As in previous years, the concerts are on Wednesday evenings, from 6:30 pm until about 8:00 pm, at the Carpenter Recreation Area. Bring a picnic supper, blankets or lawn chairs, and top off the evening with some cool water ice sold by the Friends. This is truly a great way to spend a summer evening. In addition, there will be a special holiday concert at 3 p.m. on Labor Day, September 7.

The concerts are free; however, park entrance fees are in effect. Call the Nature Center (302-368-6560) for updates on delays or cancellations due to weather conditions. The summer concerts are listed below.

June 10	Newark Community Band (Marches, Classical)
June 17	The Dixie Stompers (Dixieland)
June 24	New Direction Band (Reggae, Calypso)
July 1	Steve Lewis Band (Swing & Big Band Music)
July 8	Red Alert (Funk, Motown)
July 15	Dean Sapp & Harford Express (Bluegrass)
July 22	Libby McDowell (Jazz)
July 29	Chesapeake Brass Band (Brass Band Music)
August 5	The Rivers Rockabilly Trio (50's Rock, Rockabilly)
August 12	Scott Bandy & The Texas Heat (Country, Rock)
August 19	The Draw (60's, 70's, 80's Rock)
August 26	Sin City (Americana, Folkabilly)
September 7	Almost Fab (Beatles Tribute Band) Special 3 p.m. Holiday Concert

If you are interested in helping with the water ice sales, please contact project leader John Schwander at 302-733-7901. This is truly a fun activity, combining the concert atmosphere and eager kids buying water ice!

Membership Support is Appreciated – Keep Renewals Coming!

We thank all of our new and renewing members for their support of our organization. We are now about 470 members strong. There are still some members who need to renew, and we ask that they send in their dues to help us continue to improve and preserve the park.

Memberships are \$15 for families, \$10 for individuals, and \$5 for students. No special form is needed; just send dues checks payable to Friends of White Clay Creek State Park to P.O. Box 9734, Newark, DE 19714-9734.

Calendar of Scheduled Activities

June 22 Executive Committee and Advisory Board Meetings

July 11	Trail Work
August 1	Trail Work
August 10	Executive Committee Meeting
September 12	Trail Work
September 14	Executive Committee Meeting
September 20	Newark Community Day
October 3	Trail Work
October 12	Executive Committee Meeting
November 8	Trail Work
November 9	Executive Committee Meeting
December 6	Trail Work
December 14	Executive Committee Meeting

Projects and Project Leaders

Adopt-a-Highway: Dee and Dick Benson,
410-398- 4180

Adopt-a-Trail: Mike Ott, 738-6652

Advocacy: Andy Urquhart, 239-2471

Birders Guide: Andy Urquhart, 239-2471

Bluebird Boxes: Debra Chiczewski, 234-0919

Conservation: Andy Urquhart, 239-2471

Historical Publications: Fraser Russell,
731-4293

Judge Morris Support Group: Cathy Duffus,
731-9794

Kestrel Boxes: Andy Urquhart, 239-2471

Light Construction: Nick McFadden,
368-6900

Member-led Park Programs: Angel Burns,
368-6560

Nature Center Exhibits: Andy Urquhart,
239-2471

Nature Center Staffing: Jim Ries, 239-1658

Newark Community Day: Open

Oral Histories: Fraser Russell, 731-4293

Park Office Plantings: Carolyn Stoner and
Jayne Fernsler, 453-8440

Reforestation: Christa Stefanisko, 369-1933

Scholarship Funds: Angel Burns, 368-6560

Trail Benches: Andy Urquhart, 239-2471

Trail Improvement Work: Mike Ott,
738-6652, and Joe Castagnola,
610-255-0365

Water Ice Sales: John Schwander, 737-7901

Website: Rick Hall, 831-1295, and Pat Walters

Executive Committee

President: Andy Urquhart, 239-2471, aurqu@aol.com

Vice-president: Mike Ott, 738-6652, MikeOtt52@aol.com

Secretary and Newsletter Editor: Dick Benson, 410-398-4180, rbenson6@comcast.net

Treasurer: Ken Daws, 737-8120, wahkegan@hotmail.com

Membership Chair: Lisa Wool, 562-9788, lwool@delawareestuary.org

Projects Committee Chair: Jim Ries, 239-1658, dries@udel.edu

Membership Application

Join us! If you are not already a member and would like to join, please return this form with your check made payable to Friends of White Clay Creek State Park. Annual dues are \$5.00 for students, \$10.00 for individuals, and \$15.00 for families. Any extra donation with your dues would be appreciated and put to good use.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone (____) _____ E-mail _____

Friends of White Clay Creek State Park, Inc.

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