



The HOBBS Adventure

Newsletter of the Friends of Hobbs State Park Conservation Area

Fall 2014

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Meet the New President of the Friends of Hobbs

By Tony Noblin, FOH President

For those of you whom I have yet to meet, I am the newest president of the Friends of Hobbs State Park, Inc., appointed to the position upon former president Tom McClure's resignation. Prior to my appointment, I had served on the Board for three years.

Hobbs Park has always been a special place to me. In my youth, I would hike, hunt squirrels, and "chase" deer (as I, apparently, lacked the skills to harvest one). Back then it was a place where I could go to truly get in touch with nature and to decompress.

To have born witness of how far Hobbs State Park has come from those days is quite remarkable. Hobbs now has 32 miles of maintained trails, a 17,000 square foot state-of-the-art visitor center, and hosts several family oriented nature programs and events.

The Hobbs Park management and staff are experts in their field and are always eager to share their knowledge. We urge you to come visit your State Park and to take advantage of all it has to offer. I look forward to meeting more of you as my time as president continues.



Volunteers Working to Save the Ozark Chinkapin Proud of Seedling Success

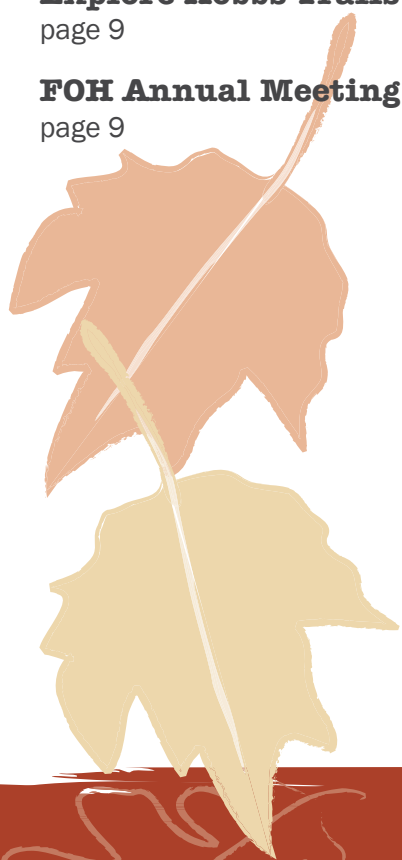
by Al Knox, Trails Maintenance Supervisor

My introduction to chinkapin trees began as a 12 year old boy growing up in Bentonville where my family visited cousins living south of town, and north of Cave Springs, near Osage Creek. West of their small farm was a holler full of large trees, mostly chinkapins. Each fall, for a couple of years, we hiked over there and picked up chinquapin nuts by the pocket full! Very good tasting and better than money in your pocket at school. However, the cousins soon moved away, and life took us in other directions.

I had not come across any of this species of tree until, as a park volunteer in September, 2002, I was operating a power weed eater, clearing a path for people to hike into the Van Winkle historic mill area, when my face almost touched a low hanging limb full of chinkapin burrs!

Wow! I had not seen such burrs in over 50 years! I picked a couple of burrs full of nuts and rushed back to the park office to show Mark Clippinger, Park Superintendent, and Steve Chyrchel, nature interpreter. Young whipper snappers that they were, they didn't know what these little acorn looking nuts were. Steve soon had his research computer buzzing, and after several years of study, meetings, and experimenting, our park is now a national leader in trying to bring back the pure Ozark Chinkapin to our woods. That park tree was located

(Continued — see CHINKAPIN p. 2)



Chinkapin, cont. from pg 1

just across Hwy. 12 from the parking lot on the north ditch edge in Van Winkle holler. It yielded chinkapin nuts for 10 years after we identified it but then died from the chestnut blight as did so many other trees before it, starting in the late 1950's. But before it died, blooms on that tree were cross pollinated with the best tree pollen from Missouri and Texas. The resulting nuts were sent to the Ozark Chinquapin Foundation and raised in a Missouri forestry plot. This year, those young trees are bearing nuts (hopefully, blight resistant).

Volunteers helped to plant saplings on a south facing ridge slope on park property, cleared by a State Forestry bulldozer on April 19, 2014. A dozen NWACC students volunteered to assist in planting the seed nuts and received extra class credit. Supervisors were Master Gardeners Jim Gately and Bruce Pertle, Mark Curtis of Beaver Lake Environment, Roland Goicoechea and Al Knox, Hobbs staff, and Angela Danovi. 52 sites with grow tubes were seeded with chinquapin nuts furnished by the Ozark Chinquapin Foundation, officed in Salem, Missouri. 32 seeds sprouted leaves. Six have since died. To date (Sept. 2), one tree is 6 inches out of the top of the 4 foot grow tube. One other is an inch out the top, and five others appear to be within reach of the top by this Fall. The other young trees range in growth from one to two feet. Park staff sprayed to control insects and hand watered twice this summer. Three foot square weed barrier cloths were installed by volunteers from Universalists Unitarian church of Bentonville. A 50% survival rate is considered good by forestry officials. We are pleased so far with this exciting experimental project! Many thanks to all who have helped.

Chinkapin blooms, 4-6 inches long, thin, white and yellowish, show in late May and early June. I drove by them dozens of times over a two year period of doing volunteer trail work but didn't recognize them because I had never seen blooms before. As kids, we only saw the big tree trunks and the nuts



Blooming chinkapin tree. They have both male and female parts, but cannot self fertilize. Chinkapins need birds and bees, or wind, to spread the pollen naturally



Ripe chinquapins ("chinkapin" a more accepted ozark spelling) are ready to fall to the ground when the burrs open in the fall.

and burrs on the ground. Leaves and blooms were way up high.

Al (The Trail Guy) Knox holds the only Trail Supervisor position in Arkansas State Parks. Come join Al the 2nd Saturday of every month to work on maintaining the existing trails on Hobbs State Park Conservation Area.

The annual meeting of the Chinkapin Society will be held next year at the Hobbs Visitor Cener.

Birds and Breakfast

By Jay T. Schneider, Hobbs Asst. Park Supt.

2014 marked the second successful year of the Birds and Breakfast program series.

One Saturday a month from January until May park visitors were educated about song bird and research with live capture song birds, all while munching on breakfast; what a great way to start the day.

This program is a partnership between Hobbs State Park, Wild Birds Unlimited, 3-D Pet Products; and the University of Arkansas Wildlife Society. The birds were fed by 3-D Pet Products, the visitors were fed with a Wild Birds Unlimited sponsored breakfast; the Wildlife Society and Hobbs staff handled the song birds and education.

The University of Arkansas Students from the Wildlife Society under the permit of Kim Smith captured song birds. Once the birds were captured near the visitor center feeding station, they were taken inside the visitor center. Students and staff then shared about the birds in general and demonstrated what characteristics they would use for data in different types of research. Park visitors then witnessed this unique scientific process up-close and helped us release the birds back into the wild.

Most Saturdays, goldfinches, nuthatches, titmice, and chickadees were the standard live birds. Depending on the month, several woodpeckers were seen in addition to Pine Warblers, House Finches, and a few other surprises.

Plans are underway to have another successful year of Birds and Breakfast in 2015; program dates and details will be announced on friendsof-hobbs.com well in advance.

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Assistant Park Supervisor Jay Schneider, introduces a bird to one of the young participants



Don't Tread on Me... Pretty Please

By Kory Roberts, Rogers High School Biology Teacher

The Gadsden flag—bright yellow, with a menacingly coiled rattlesnake and the accompanying phrase "don't tread on me"—became an iconic symbol in the days of this nation's birth, first found on the drums of an early Marine company. The color yellow for caution! The snake, daring, defiant, and dangerous, ready to strike at the least provocation. The phrase forthright, lacking any of today's politically-correct sensibilities. But how reflective of a snake's true nature is it?



If one simple word were to capture how most people feel about snakes, it would be fear. What gets conjured up are concepts like snakes are sneaky and cunning, with nefarious intentions; they kill lots of people; they vary so much in appearance it's impossible to tell which ones are dangerous and which ones aren't; the only good snake is a dead snake. It's shocking that even to this day, with numerous reliable resources available, so many anecdotes about snakes persist and propagate that are just flatly wrong. Baby snakes are not more dangerous than adults: Snakes do not unhinge their jaws to eat, though there is a stretchy ligament between two separate halves of the lower jaw. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission did not transfer hundreds of rattlesnakes for release anywhere, at any time, by any method, or ten, or even one. Venomous snakes do not hybridize with nonvenomous snakes to create innocuous-looking killers. Female snakes do not swallow their young to protect them. Snakes in Arkansas, even Cottonmouth, do not chase after people, particularly with the intention of biting them, though they can certainly bite underwater. They do not congregate in massive mating balls, a la Lonesome Dove, nor do they "nest" in coordinated groups. The snakes that tend to bask in tree branches over rivers and drop unexpectedly into canoes, which is true, are nonvenomous water snakes; Cottonmouth tend to bask on the bank or in lower snags. Snakebite should not be treated with cutting, sucking, ice, or tourniquet; get thee to a hospital for antivenom! Be very, very skeptical of any monster snake accounts forwarded to your email inbox; camera angle tricks and accompanying "facts" are a ruse.

Snakes, rather than wickedly cunning, are shy, secretive,

and stealthy. They have many predators to elude and prey to hunt and are often cryptic in coloration to be successful at both. Humans are large, aggressive, hazardous, to be avoided. Staying perfectly still till the bipedal danger passes, relying on camouflage and not drawing attention with movement, usually works. Western Cottonmouth, Timber Rattlesnakes, and others often tolerate, without any retaliation whatsoever, even being stepped on! (A fact many people may find more troubling than comforting – that they could actually step on a venomous snake and not even know it!) Some snakes, such as the North American Racer and Eastern Coachwhip, will dash away if approached too closely, a startling moment for most people! Safe refuge may be in the water, in thick brush, or under a rock, never mind if a human is positioned in that general direction. They aren't attacking, they are escaping. If avoidance is not possible, then snakes may coil in a protective stance. Even nonvenomous snakes will vibrate their tails to make some sound and motion, as if to say "hey, here I am already, so leave me alone". (It is not to imitate a rattlesnake, per se, as some presume. It is a behavior seen in snakes throughout the world.)

Quite as a final line of defense, snakes may bite; always as a defensive, never offensive, measure. Even venomous snakes would rather deliver a message than deliver death, only injecting venom perhaps 50-60% of the time. When I hear of encounters that paint the snake as aggressive, mean, striking wildly and viciously, I inquire if it acted like that before or after it was beaten with a stick.

Yes, snakes do kill people, but rarely, particularly in the United States and especially since the advent of widely available and effective antivenom. A 2007 University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture report found only three confirmed native snakebite deaths for the state, all from the 1960s. This is not to suggest venomous snakes are child's play. Just earlier this summer, a Missouri man died after being bitten by a Copperhead he encountered at one of their state parks. Bizarrely, this mildly venomous species lacks the quantity and potency of venom to deliver a fatal bite. Note, however, these reported facts: 1) he intentionally picked up the snake, 2) it bit him multiple times, 3) he had been complaining of chest pains for several days prior, and 4) he fell into anaphylactic shock that quickly doomed him. Although speculative, the severe allergic reaction suggests this was not his first exposure to snake venom. An eerily similar event resulted in the death of a Tennessee man in 2011. Statistically, however tragic all of these deaths may be, the mortality rate for snake envenomation in the United States is a minuscule

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Just a few inches across, this Western Pygmy Rattlesnake fades into the gravel.



A Western Cottonmouth, or "water moccasin" threatens with its signature white mouth.



A Western Copperhead coiled for warmth.

0.07% and almost always involves contributing factors.

One challenge many people find with snakes is simply in proper identification. On one hand, this is completely understandable. All snakes have long, tubular bodies (though generally very short tails!); they are legless. Many overlap in general coloration: browns and blacks are common colors. Many undergo coloration changes as they age from youth to adulthood. Some occur in a wide array of color morphs. Many go by multiple, and often confusing, common names. Add to this a wave of recent genetic research that has completely transformed our understanding of many snake delineations: distribution range maps have been redrawn, many subspecies have been elevated to full species status, and new cryptic species have been discovered in the midst of identical-looking ones. No resources currently available, not even my website (HerpsOfArkansas.com) which I update at least annually, are 100% accurate and up-to-date. Nevertheless, a reasonable grasp on basic identification is not as formidable as one might presuppose. The approach should be no different than learning to identify birds, trees, or wildflowers. Reference the best resources available, read the descriptions, and look carefully at images to sort out the key distinguishing characters for each type. Use caution in applying clichés, rhymes, or shortcuts commonly applied to snake identification, as all of these have unreliable application. "Red touches black, venom lack. Red touches yellow, kill a fellow."... until you take a vacation to Central or South America and can abruptly throw this little rule out the window. "Venomous snakes have a triangular-shaped head"...unless it's a nonvenomous snake, such as a Hog-nosed Snake or water snake species, spreading out its head in defensive display. "Nonvenomous snakes have round pupils, whereas venomous snakes have elliptical ones"...unless the lighting is dim and the venomous snake's pupils have dilated. Also, let's not approach a snake so closely!!! Limit your circle of trust for information and help in identification; your neighbors are probably not the snake experts they might claim to be. Take a photo, please, when you can't immediately ID something. A good place to start would be with the local venomous snake species.

While northwest Arkansas is occupied by nearly 30 total snake species, only 4 are venomous: the Southern Copperhead, Western Cottonmouth, Timber Rattlesnake, and Western Pygmy Rattlesnake. Two other venomous species, the Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake and Texas Gulf-Coast Coral snake, range farther south in the state.

The Southern Copperhead (*Agkistrodon contortrix contortrix*) is tan with dark brown bands. From a side view, the dark bands approximate the color and shape of Hershey's Kisses. From the top, the dark bands are hourglass-shaped. It is the most abun-

(Continued — see SNAKES pg. 6)

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Snakes, continued from page 5

dant and commonly encountered venomous snake in the state. Active movements tend to occur at dusk. It eats a variety of prey, but during the summer it favors emerging cicadas, occasionally even pursuing them up trees and, in very rare instances, congregating in large numbers to feast.

The Western Cottonmouth (*Agkistrodon piscivorus leucostoma*), or "water moccasin", is dark brown or black in coloration. It tends to occur in or by the water. Fish and frogs, even dead ones, are common prey. It may gape in defense to display a cottony-white mouth and can emit a foul-smelling musk. Despite its much maligned reputation, it is lazier, I'd say, than aggressive.

The Timber Rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*), or "velvet-tailed rattler", is brown, yellowish, or gray with dark bands and a rusty middorsal stripe. It is an ambush predator of small mammals. Coiled in the leaf litter, it all but vanishes from sight. It will not rattle unless fully exposed, nor strike unless severely provoked.

The Western Pygmy Rattlesnake (*Sistrurus miliarius streckeri*), or "ground rattler", is small and gray with dark bands and, usually, a rusty middorsal stripe. The diminutive rattle can only be heard as a faint, insect-like buzz. Prey is primarily frogs and lizards.

To propose that these species are bad just because they are venomous seems simplistic and self-serving. Venom is for food, for life! Someone who chooses to extinguish a mouse found in their house may either set a snap trap (nonvenomous snakes constrict) or use poison (venomous snakes envenomate). It is important to be quick and efficient to minimize the contact time between a snake and its parlous prey. Venoms are essentially complex concoctions of modified saliva delivered through hollow fangs. (Poisons, by contrast, are absorbed or ingested.) Compositions vary from species to species and even, though to a lesser degree, between individuals. The dose delivered is carefully metered per prey size and type; a frog may require slightly more venom than a lizard of the same size, for example. Since most prey still does not die instantly, some nonlethal chemical components allow a snake to track not just any, but the exact scent trail left by that particular envenomated prey. Venomous snakes are no worse for handling their food with venom than we are for handling our food with a fork and knife, rather than chopsticks.

So what of this snake depicted on the Gadsden flag, dar-



A Timber Rattlesnake on the forest floor.

ing, defiant, and dangerous? As housing divisions and strip malls extend rapidly across the landscape, as people clear wooded lots and then shockingly find snakes invading their yards, as new roads are constructed and people intentionally swerve to strike snakes dead, as antiquated attitudes and persecutions persist ("the only good snake is a dead snake"), snakes are not just standing their ground, they are losing it. Never mind that confrontations with humans are mistakes 100% of the time. Never mind that it is illegal to kill any snake in Arkansas unless it is an immediate threat to person or property (i.e. pet). A trophy photo of a large, dead Timber Rattlesnake dangling limply at the end of a stick may represent a fear triumphantly squelched for some. For me, it represents a uniquely fascinating predator, perhaps 25 years old, that had eked out a quiet, unassuming existence in the shadowy leaf litter that, in an untimely moment of chance, was stumbled upon by a human and summarily executed out of fear and for no logical reason. Was the snake itching for a fight? Was it licking its chops at the chance to strike? No, of course not. Given the chance, snakes will always choose to be left alone. Unfortunately, snakes encountered by humans rarely get that chance it seems. For snakes, it isn't a dare. It's a plea. So, "don't tread on me...pretty please!"

Additional information about Arkansas's herps--the amphibians and reptiles--may be found at HerpsOfArkansas.com. For questions or feedback, please feel free to contact the author at webmaster@HerpsOfArkansas.com

Hobnobbing With Nature

*Jo Barnes, co-editor,
Friends of Hobbs Newsletter*

Once again, we had a wonderful gathering of Hobbs' friends at the annual Hobnob in June. Music, good food, and charity are always at the heart of this event, and the friends who support the efforts at Hobbs are generous, fun loving, and entertaining!

The auctioneers this year were Jay Schneider, Asst. Park Superintendent, and Scott Swearingen, board member of FOH. They entertained and excelled at their duty while adding to the total auction contributions of \$5,300.00 (silent auction and live event).

The sumptuous dinner was, once again, provided by Spring Street Grill, and the music was by Brick Fields. Eighty four friends enjoyed this evening together. The net revenue came to \$5000.00. Thanks to all who attended and a special thank you to all who donated items for the auctions. So many people and businesses in our area show their appreciation for Hobbs through their contributions to allow the abundance of programs provided at Hobbs State Park for the public to enjoy.



A happy gathering of "Friends."

Cathy Ross, Grimsley Graham and Carol Graham share a moment.



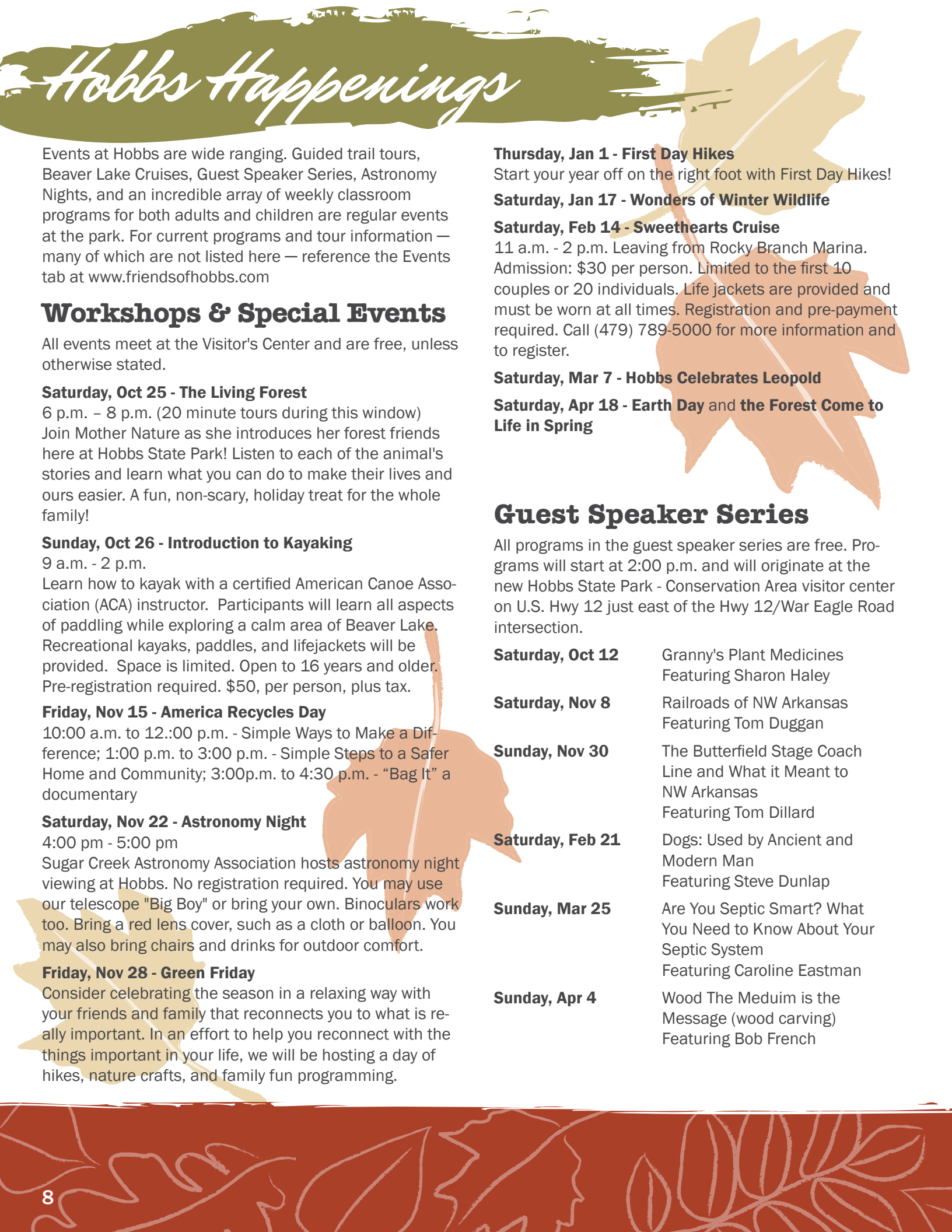
Marilyn Swearingen and Jenny Harmon

Hobnob entertainment: Brickfield (below)



Tim Fox laughs about his silent auction acquisition.

**Ask about
becoming an
Active Service
Volunteer with
the "Friends"**



Hobbs Happenings

Events at Hobbs are wide ranging. Guided trail tours, Beaver Lake Cruises, Guest Speaker Series, Astronomy Nights, and an incredible array of weekly classroom programs for both adults and children are regular events at the park. For current programs and tour information — many of which are not listed here — reference the Events tab at www.friendsofhobbs.com

Workshops & Special Events

All events meet at the Visitor's Center and are free, unless otherwise stated.

Saturday, Oct 25 - The Living Forest

6 p.m. – 8 p.m. (20 minute tours during this window)
Join Mother Nature as she introduces her forest friends here at Hobbs State Park! Listen to each of the animal's stories and learn what you can do to make their lives and ours easier. A fun, non-scary, holiday treat for the whole family!

Sunday, Oct 26 - Introduction to Kayaking

9 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Learn how to kayak with a certified American Canoe Association (ACA) instructor. Participants will learn all aspects of paddling while exploring a calm area of Beaver Lake. Recreational kayaks, paddles, and lifejackets will be provided. Space is limited. Open to 16 years and older. Pre-registration required. \$50, per person, plus tax.

Friday, Nov 15 - America Recycles Day

10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. - Simple Ways to Make a Difference; 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. - Simple Steps to a Safer Home and Community; 3:00p.m. to 4:30 p.m. - "Bag It" a documentary

Saturday, Nov 22 - Astronomy Night

4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
Sugar Creek Astronomy Association hosts astronomy night viewing at Hobbs. No registration required. You may use our telescope "Big Boy" or bring your own. Binoculars work too. Bring a red lens cover, such as a cloth or balloon. You may also bring chairs and drinks for outdoor comfort.

Friday, Nov 28 - Green Friday

Consider celebrating the season in a relaxing way with your friends and family that reconnects you to what is really important. In an effort to help you reconnect with the things important in your life, we will be hosting a day of hikes, nature crafts, and family fun programming.

Thursday, Jan 1 - First Day Hikes

Start your year off on the right foot with First Day Hikes!

Saturday, Jan 17 - Wonders of Winter Wildlife

Saturday, Feb 14 - Sweethearts Cruise

11 a.m. - 2 p.m. Leaving from Rocky Branch Marina.
Admission: \$30 per person. Limited to the first 10 couples or 20 individuals. Life jackets are provided and must be worn at all times. Registration and pre-payment required. Call (479) 789-5000 for more information and to register.

Saturday, Mar 7 - Hobbs Celebrates Leopold

Saturday, Apr 18 - Earth Day and the Forest Come to Life in Spring

Guest Speaker Series

All programs in the guest speaker series are free. Programs will start at 2:00 p.m. and will originate at the new Hobbs State Park - Conservation Area visitor center on U.S. Hwy 12 just east of the Hwy 12/War Eagle Road intersection.

Saturday, Oct 12

Granny's Plant Medicines
Featuring Sharon Haley

Saturday, Nov 8

Railroads of NW Arkansas
Featuring Tom Duggan

Sunday, Nov 30

The Butterfield Stage Coach
Line and What it Meant to
NW Arkansas
Featuring Tom Dillard

Saturday, Feb 21

Dogs: Used by Ancient and
Modern Man
Featuring Steve Dunlap

Sunday, Mar 25

Are You Septic Smart? What
You Need to Know About Your
Septic System
Featuring Caroline Eastman

Sunday, Apr 4

Wood The Medium is the
Message (wood carving)
Featuring Bob French

You Are Invited to The Friends of Hobbs Annual Meeting, Sunday, Nov. 2!

Friends of Hobbs members and guests, along with the Hobbs Park staff will gather at the Hobbs Visitor Center the evening of Sunday, November 2nd, for the annual Friends meeting. **A business meeting will take place from 4:00—5:00 pm, followed by dinner from 5:00—8:00 pm.** All are welcome to attend both the business meeting and/or the dinner. Hamburgers will be served at 5:30 and the program will begin around 6:30.

We are using our newsletter as a way to invite our members to the Friends Annual Meeting this year, to avoid duplicating on mailing costs. If we have your email address, you should receive notice about the Annual Meeting by email as well. But however you hear about it, you are welcome to come, even if you are not a member and just want to learn more about us.

All are welcome, and the event is free. Dress is casual. We hope to see you there.

Be A Hobbs Volunteer!

Volunteer round-ups are offered at various times of the year, but you don't have to wait till then. Just call the Hobbs State Park Conservation Area Visitor Center (479-789-5009), and ask for Roland who will get you going in something that is challenging and rewarding!

Get Moving on Hobbs Trails for Hiking, Biking, and Horseback Riding!

Hobbs State Park Conservation Area has 6 different trails, all 95% shaded with a canopy of oak, hickory, and pine trees: a trail for every season, most every reason, and most every age group.

Ozark Plateau Trail - $\frac{3}{4}$ mile - starts and ends at the Hobbs Visitor Center. Wheel chair accessible on two separate loops: one $\frac{1}{4}$ mile concrete, one $\frac{1}{2}$ mile hard surface crushed stone.

Historic Van Winkle Trail - $\frac{1}{2}$ mile - starts and ends at a parking lot on Hwy. 12 East. Wheel chair friendly hard surface. Accesses the remains of a Civil War era mill and house through a tunnel under the highway.

Sinking Stream Trail - $\frac{1}{2}$ mile - starts and ends at the same parking area as the Historic trail, but this $\frac{1}{2}$ mile foot-traffic-only trail is a single track, natural gravel/soil surface that follows a small creek up one side and back on the other side.

Shaddox Hollow Trail - 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ mile - starts from a parking lot on Hwy 303 North, is foot-traffic-only, and has a more difficult single track natural surface. A short spur trail leads to Beaver Lake at the bottom of a fairly steep hill.

Pigeon Roost Trail - 8.4 miles - starts and ends at the park area on Hwy 12E. Two loops, each 4+ miles, includes overnight camp sites near the lake.

Hidden Diversity Multi-Use Trail - 24 miles - starts at two different trailheads, one on Piney Rd. and another on Townsend Ridge Rd. This is the only trail on which horses and mountain bikes are allowed. Four separate loops range from 4 to 9 miles in length.

Free trail brochures and maps are available at each trailhead, and the Visitor Center.

****Hikers are encouraged to sign in and out on trailhead clipboards for their own safety and park management needs.**



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*Don't Miss The
Friends of Hobbs
Annual Meeting on
Sunday, November
2nd!*

Keep Up With Hobbs Happenings and Help Us Go Paperless!

If you are receiving a paper copy of this newsletter, please send your email address to steve.chyrchel@arkansas.gov to receive a pretty color version!

If you are not receiving email reminders from Steve about upcoming Hobbs events, send him your email address! Don't miss a thing AND save a few trees in the process! Send Steve your email TODAY!

Continue Your Membership Then Invite Your Friends To Be- come a Friend of Hobbs

Visit the web site www.friendsofhobbs.com for a membership form (or use the one below). Contributions to The Friends of Hobbs provide major financial support to Hobbs State Park - Conservation Area.

Thank you for your contribution towards furthering our mission of resource stewardship!

Support Membership - Friends of Hobbs State Park - Conservation Area

Membership Level

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☐ Renewal

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