



REMEMBERING A LAKE JAMES LEGEND: BUCK PERRY – “THE FATHER OF STRUCTURE FISHING”

As North Carolina State Parks celebrate “The Year of the Fish” it’s a perfect time to recognize one of the icons of modern sport fishing, who just so happened to start his long and storied career here on Lake James.

Elwood “Buck” Perry was born in 1915 in Hickory, N.C. Throughout his youth, he accompanied his father on hunting and fishing excursions around Lake James. The lake was in its infancy those days and the bass fishery was only beginning to gain notoriety. Legend has it, young Master Perry addressed his father after another fishless day on the lake, “Dad, you know, the deep water is the home of the fish.”

That simple statement at 13-years-old was the beginning of Buck’s lifelong study of fish and how to catch them. After he graduated from Lenoir-Rhyne University, Perry taught mathematics and physics at Hickory High School. During World War II, he served in the European Theatre as a lieutenant colonel in the Army Transportation Corps.

After the war, Perry went back to school at N.C. State University



Buck Perry

and earned his advanced degree in engineering. It wasn’t long afterward that he combined his love of fishing with his expertise as an engineer and developed the fishing lure that would make him famous – the Spoonplug.

Perry’s patented lure had humble beginnings, as he and his wife, Marjorie, manufactured each and every lure in their garage on 9th Street in Hickory. The Spoonplug was designed for both casting and trolling,

giving anglers the unique ability to control both the speed and depth at which it ran.

After proving his lure and his techniques on the reservoirs of western North Carolina, Buck took his show on the road, marketing the Spoonplug all over the country and gaining a reputation for catching massive stringers of bass and other gamefish at lakes and ponds the locals considered “fished out.”

Along the way, he was the subject of many magazine features and was inducted into the Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame in 1984, as well as inclusion in the Lenoir-Rhyne Distinguished Alumnus in business and membership in the Kentucky Colonels.

Perry passed away at the ripe old age of 90, but his legacy lives on in the bi-monthly National Spoonpluggers of America magazine. If you’re interested in local fishing history and honoring a legend, Spoonplugs are still manufactured and still catching fish. Maybe there’s space in your tacklebox for one.

SUMMERTIME BOAT TOUR – SUNDAY, JULY 1

The waters and shoreline of Lake James is bursting with life and there's no better way to explore than by boat. Park Ranger Earl Weaver will be your captain and guide aboard the park patrol boat as we search for ospreys, otters, eagles and scenic vistas. The weather could be hot and muggy, so be sure to watch the forecast and dress appropriately for the day (remember it's always cooler out on the water) if you are one of the eight lucky participants. Registration is required and available on a first-come, first-served basis. Call the park office at 828-584-7728 to reserve your spot. Meet at the Paddy's Creek Area East Picnic Shelter at 9:45 a.m. for a briefing and prompt 10 a.m. departure.

KIDS IN THE CREEK – TUESDAY, JULY 10

Aquatic life in our creeks and rivers goes far beyond the fish and crawdads you see with a casual glance. The ecosystem of moving water can be incredibly diverse, depending on water quality and other factors. At Lake James State Park, we are lucky to have a waterway of fantastic biological diversity and this program will show participants many of the hidden animals that call Paddy's Creek home. Armed with nets, seines and buckets, participants will collect aquatic insects,



crustaceans, fish, amphibians and more with Park Ranger Kevin Bischof. This program is suitable for all ages, especially those who are willing to get wet and have a great time. We will meet in the parking lot for the Holly Discovery Trail at the Paddy's Creek Area at 10 a.m. Wear clothes you don't mind getting wet and water shoes or waders if you have them.

CAMPFIRE, S'MORES, AND FISH! – FRIDAY, JULY 13

What's better than a discussion of fish than by camp fire? By doing it with S'mores! Meet Ranger Kevin Bischof in the Paddy's Creek Area campground for a fireside program on fish. The program will happen near the bathhouse so bring your camp chairs and prepare to learn about the park's finned residents. The program will start at 8 p.m. so don't be late! S'more supplies are limited, so please contact the park office at 828-584-7728 to reserve your spot.

Continued Next Page

ASTRONOMY FOR EVERYONE – SATURDAY, JULY 14

Lake James State Park Superintendent Nora Coffey will be co-hosting with the Catawba Valley Astronomy Club for a night of star gazing. Learn some basic star gazing tips and take home your own star chart. There will be telescopes and binoculars set up for viewing the night sky, but feel free to bring your own if you have them. Folding chairs are also recommended. We will meet in the upper parking lot of the Paddy's Creek Area at 8:30 p.m. to get oriented and cover some tips for the evening's events before it gets dark. Register by calling the park office at 828-584-7728.

TREE ID HIKE – FRIDAY, JULY 20

A lot of the resource management decisions made at the park are based on the existing landscape and how it can be restored. Trees are an integral component of the ecosystem and there is great interest in learning how to identify them. Park Ranger Clay Veasey will lead this hike along the Sandy Cliff Overlook Trail and explain how to use bark patterns, seeds, nuts and cones and fallen leaves and needles to figure out what trees are towering above. Meet at the Catawba River Area breezeway at 2 p.m.



BEES, BUTTERFLIES AND OTHER POLLINATORS – SATURDAY, JULY 21

Over the last 7 years the staff at Lake James State Park has been diligent in landscaping with native plants that are attractive to insect pollinators. Those efforts have paid off and the pollinator gardens around the day-use portion of the Paddy's Creek Area are a showplace for butterflies, bees and a host of other insects that are critical to the health of our flowering and fruiting plant communities. Park Ranger Jamie Cameron will lead this tour of the gardens – discussing the different plants and how they are utilized by the insect community. Meet at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway at 10 a.m.

FISHING 101 – SUNDAY, JULY 22

One of the main attractions to Lake James State Park is the quality fishing opportunities that can be found in the lake. Have you ever wanted to fish, but didn't know where to start? Here is a great opportunity. Meet Park Ranger Jamie Cameron at the Paddy's Creek Area Office at 9 a.m. and be prepared to wet a line! All of the fishing gear will be supplied so all you need to do is show up. Since gear will be provided, participation is limited to 8. Please call 828-584-7728 to sign-up for this program.

Continued Next Page

SUMMERTIME BOAT TOUR – FRIDAY, JULY 27

The waters and shoreline of Lake James is bursting with life and there's no better way to explore than by boat. Park Ranger Clay Veasey will be your captain and guide aboard the park patrol boat as we search for ospreys, otters, eagles and scenic vistas. The weather could be hot and muggy, so be sure to watch the forecast and dress appropriately for the day (remember it's always cooler out on the water) if you are one of the eight lucky participants. Registration is required and available on a first-come, first-served basis. Call the park office at 828-584-7728 to reserve your spot. Meet at the Paddy's Creek Area East Picnic Shelter at 9:45 a.m. for a briefing and prompt 10 a.m. departure.

SUMMERTIME BOAT TOUR – SATURDAY, AUGUST 4

The waters and shoreline of Lake James is bursting with life and there's no better way to explore than by boat. Park Ranger Earl Weaver will be your captain and guide aboard the park patrol boat as we search for ospreys, otters, eagles and scenic vistas. The weather could be hot and muggy, so be sure to watch the forecast and dress appropriately for the day (remember it's always cooler out on the water) if you are one of the eight lucky participants. Registration is required and available on a first-come, first-served basis. Call the park office at 828-584-7728 to reserve your spot. Meet at the Paddy's Creek Area East Picnic Shelter at 9:45 a.m. for a briefing and prompt 10 a.m. departure.

FISHING 101 – MONDAY, AUGUST 6

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ASTRONOMY FOR EVERYONE – SATURDAY, AUGUST 11

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Continued Next Page

SUMMERTIME BOAT TOUR – SUNDAY, AUGUST 12

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CANOE EXCURSION – MONDAY, AUGUST 13

The tranquility of paddling a canoe on a quiet morning is one of life's simple pleasures. Discover the beauty of Lake James State Park from the water with Park Ranger Kevin Bischof. Whether you're an expert paddler or you don't know the difference between starboard and port, we'll provide the equipment and instruction to make it a memorable morning. Six park canoes are set aside for this free program and each is capable of carrying two adults and one child (must be 7 years of age or older). The program starts at 9 a.m. and meets at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway. You must pre-register and be prepared to share your journey with a new friend if you are a single and space dictates. Call 828-584-7728 and sign-up today.



TOADSTOOL TREK/MUSHROOMS 101 – FRIDAY, AUGUST 17

Have you ever wanted to know more about mushrooms? There are hundreds of varieties of fungus growing around Lake James with all sorts of fabulous fun facts associated with them. Human beings have a complicated relationship with wild mushrooms – some have medicinal uses, some are prized edibles and some are deadly. Join Karen Johnson, Lake James State Park's resident mushroom enthusiast for a leisurely stroll along the Fox Den Loop to discuss what constitutes a fungus and identification techniques. Karen is a member of the Asheville Mushroom Club and the park's office administrator. Meet her at the Catawba River Area breezeway at 10 a.m.

BEEES, BUTTERFLIES AND OTHER POLLINATORS – SUNDAY, AUGUST 19

Over the last 7 years the staff at Lake James State Park has been diligent in landscaping with native plants that are attractive to insect pollinators. Those efforts have paid off and the pollinator gardens around the day-use portion of the Paddy's Creek Area are a showplace for butterflies, bees and a host of other insects that are critical to the health of our flowering and fruiting plant communities. Park Ranger Jamie Cameron will lead this tour of the gardens – discussing the different plants and how they are utilized by the insect community. Meet at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway at 2 p.m.

Continued Next Page

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SUMMERTIME BOAT TOUR – THURSDAY, AUGUST 23

The waters and shoreline of Lake James is bursting with life and there's no better way to explore than by boat. Park Ranger Earl Weaver will be your captain and guide aboard the park patrol boat as we search for ospreys, otters, eagles and scenic vistas. The weather could be hot and muggy, so be sure to watch the forecast and dress appropriately for the day (remember it's always cooler out on the water) if you are one of the eight lucky participants. Registration is required and available on a first-come, first-served basis. Call the park office at 828-584-7728 to reserve your spot. Meet at the Paddy's Creek Area East Picnic Shelter at 9:45 a.m. for a briefing and prompt 10 a.m. departure.

NEVER TOO EARLY FALL MIGRATION BIRD HIKE – SATURDAY, AUGUST 25

Too early to be thinking about fall migration? Think again. Many species have already started their southward journey and others are starting to flock up to begin theirs. The Paddy's Creek Area is a great place to look for birds and Ranger Jamie Cameron knows just where to find them. We'll get an early start to beat the heat and take advantage of the peak hours of bird activity. Bring binoculars if you have them and wear comfortable walking shoes. Meet at the Paddy's Creek Area bathhouse breezeway at 8 a.m.



NATURE NOTES

The kids are out of school and the joyful sounds of laughter and playing echo across the lake. Human children aren't the only youngsters enjoying these bountiful days of summer. It's baby season for everything that walks, crawls, climbs, flies and swims around Lake James State Park and all it takes is a watchful eye and a dose of curiosity to enjoy the show.

Number 1 on everyone's mind are the whitetail deer fawns that are recently born. While most whitetail moms keep their offspring well-hidden deep in the woods during the first



couple of weeks, it won't be long before the spotted fawns gain confidence and curiosity in the world around them. Motorists on park roads need to be cautious of these wobbly-legged, rambunctious youngsters as they wise up to the hazards of modern traffic.

Turtles of several varieties are also on the move as the females search for suitable egg-laying sites. Even aquatic species like yellow-bellied sliders and eastern painted turtles make long treks across dry land to find sandy, loamy soil to dig a deep hole and deposit their leathery-shelled eggs.

It will be interesting to see how the area's nesting songbirds fared through record-setting rainfall during the month of May. Heavy spring rains typically result in low productivity for breeding birds so it's likely we will see fewer fledglings this summer.

Weather that's unfavorable for one group can be favorable for another. It's hard to remember a time when the park was greener than it is today. Trees and plants of every type appear to be thriving with the surplus of water followed by the summer sunshine. Healthy vegetation now will translate into lots of forage for herbivores heading into fall. Deer, bears, mice and insects should have lots to eat as they prepare for winter.

Winter – it seems crazy to even mention it now, but every action has a reaction in nature and what happens in the environment during the heat of summer will have a direct effect on the health of critters as they head into the toughest season of the year.

Hope to see you out on the trail!

WHO WE ARE

A group formed in 2010, made up of dedicated people work together to help Lake James State Park meet its mission of providing opportunities for public enjoyment and education while still protecting the natural beauty and historic integrity of the State Park.

BOARD MEMBERS

Eric Jenkins - President

Robert Hunter - Vice President

Mike Sewell - Secretary

Annette Bryant - Membership Coordinator

Randall Conley - Member at Large

George Milner - Member at Large

Greg Norell - Member at Large

Molly Sandfoss - Member at Large

Jeff Stark - Member at Large

Jim Williams - Member at Large

To contact the Friends of Lake James State Park Group please email info@lakejamesstatepark.org

LAKE RECEIVES RECORD RAINFALL

Area residents will have little trouble remembering the torrential rains of May, thanks in part to the remnants of Tropical Storm Alberto. During an epic two-week period, parts of McDowell County received more than 20 inches, almost seven times the normal precipitation for the month. As area creeks and rivers rose, so too did Lake James, sometimes in dramatic fashion. Duke Energy typically manages lake level at 98.0 feet, with a maximum of 100.0 feet, but for several days Lake James rose to more than that, cresting at 103.4 feet on May 31. The result was a temporary closure of some of the park's waterfront amenities, including campsites on Long Arm Peninsula and the Paddy's Creek Area swim beach for seven days.



FRIENDS OF LAKE JAMES STATE PARK

FAMILIAR FACE: KAREN JOHNSON

The park rangers and maintenance mechanics may be the most-visible, uniformed staff at Lake James, but there's little doubt of which job is critical to the whole, multi-million dollar operation – the office administrator.

Karen Johnson joined the Lake James State Park team in early 2018, but she's no stranger to North Carolina state parks. She already has more than 13 years under her belt in the offices at Crowders Mountain and Chimney Rock state parks.

A native of Colorado, Johnson has a deep love for the outdoors, as well as an academic background in the study



Karen Johnson

of international affairs. She got her first taste of working within the park many years ago when she served as a summer tour guide at Glacier National

Park in Montana. "I knew I wanted to be working outdoors in some way," she said of that experience.

Now, Johnson is in charge of much of the daily functions that keep Lake James State Park running; from payroll to purchases, answering visitors' questions to writing reports, she has her finger on the pulse.

"This is a multi-faceted operation and I'm still learning how everything comes together," Johnson said modestly. "I enjoy talking with visitors and helping them get the most out of their time at the park, be it finding the best campsite or the perfect trail to hike."

Free FISHING DAY

The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission will once again celebrate the nation's birthday with its annual Free Fishing Day. On Wednesday, July 4, fishing in all of the state's fresh and salt waters is allowed without prior purchase of a fishing license. From 12 a.m. until 11:59 p.m., fishing is to everyone. All NCWRC regulations, size and creel limits are still in effect.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 4TH



Photo courtesy NCWRC

YEAR OF THE FISH: CATFISH

The catfish is one of the most easily identifiable fish on the planet, and catfish in Lake James are no exception. Numerous barbels are located around the mouth which resemble the whiskers of a cat, giving the fish its name. The catfish is as desired by anglers because of their unique physical appearance, excellence as table fare and great sport, especially in catching larger specimens. So, what kind of catfish can you catch in Lake James?

There are various species of catfish that live in the lake. Able to attain sizes larger than 30 pounds, blue catfish thrill anglers in search of catching one of the biggest freshwater fish species in Lake James and all of North Carolina. Channel catfish are targeted for sport, but more commonly for their value as the angler's next meal. Additional catfish found in the lake include bullhead catfish and the white catfish. Like some species of fish in Lake James, not all catfish are native to the Catawba River drainage. While bullhead and white catfish are native, blue and channel catfish are native to the Mississippi River drainages and have been introduced to Lake James to support sport-fishing opportunities.

Its barbels are the most noticeable characteristic of a catfish. Having up to four pairs, catfish barbels are used to detect food items and are always present in pairs. Because of these aids



Catfish

Photo courtesy NCWRC

in feeding, catfish generally have small eyes. All four of the catfish species mentioned have mouths that are located on the bottom of their heads. The location of their mouths and barbels help catfish feed along the bottom of the rivers and lakes they inhabit. Examining the body of a catfish, you will notice they lack scales; another interesting characteristic of catfish. Some species are known to have plates or scutes used for protection, but the species in Lake James don't have either. Catfish have large, powerful tails for propulsion, but the dorsal and pectoral fins are of special concern for anglers. Located on the leading edge these fins are bony barbs used as defense. They can be locked outward into place and can inflict painful wounds if an angler or predator doesn't negotiate them properly.

Catfish of Lake James range in color from the light grey/blue coloration in the white and blue catfish to the

dark brown coloration of the bullhead catfish. The sizes of these catfish range as much as their coloration. Bullhead catfish reach a modest size of 18 inches, while the channel catfish can grow to 30 inches or larger. More impressively, the blue catfish can attain lengths of over 40 inches and weigh more than 30 pounds. In fact, the North Carolina state record blue catfish was caught in Lake Gaston and weighed an impressive 117 pounds and 8 ounces. Locally, the North

Carolina state record white catfish was caught in Lake James in 1990 and weighed 13 pounds.

So, how can you catch a catfish in Lake James? As with any fish, you must discover what they eat. Fortunately, catfish eat pretty much anything they can fit in their mouths. Smaller fish, crayfish, worms and insects make up most of their diet, and using these as bait can lead to success when fishing for catfish. Additionally, man-made baits such as "stink" baits, hot dogs and other processed food will also work. Catfish are bottom feeders, so baits should be presented accordingly. Catfish can be caught during the day, but the best time to catch them is late evening, through the night and into morning. So, the next time you are at Lake James, bring a fishing pole and some catfish bait. One state record has already been caught here. Will you catch the next?

FRIENDS OF LAKE JAMES STATE PARK

SAVE THE DATE

- The 15th annual Catawba RiverFest will be held Sept. 15. There'll be something for everyone at the Paddy's Creek Area, with dozens of interactive and information booths representing area conservation, outdoor recreation and historic organizations. Admission to RiverFest is free. For more information, check out the Friends of Lake James State Park page on Facebook, or call the park at 828-584-7728.
- The 3rd annual Lake James Dragon Boat Festival takes place Oct. 13. Don't miss the fantastic camaraderie and visual spectacle at the Paddy's Creek Area of Lake James State Park. Teams from across the Southeast will gather at the swim beach to compete in this ancient Chinese tradition. It's a wonderful day for spectators, but why not gather up 19 friends and participate yourself? If you form a team, the Healing Dragons of Lake James will take care of the rest; boats, paddles, training and someone to steer! Go to www.lakejamesdragonboat.com or call 813-426-3544 for more information.



LJSP TRAILS



CATAWBA RIVER AREA:

Fishing Pier Trail (0.3 mile, easy)
Fox Den Loop Trail (2.25 miles, moderate)
Lake Channel Overlook Trail (1.5 miles, moderate)
Sandy Cliff Overlook Trail (0.5 mile, easy)

PADDY'S CREEK AREA:

Holly Discovery Trail (0.75 mile, easy)
Mill's Creek Trail (3.6 miles, moderate)
Overmountain Victory Trail (2.0 mile, moderate)
Paddy's Creek Trail (2.0 miles, moderate)
Tindo beginners' mountain bike trail (4.0 miles)
Wimba intermediate mountain bike trail (11.25 miles)

PARK GENERAL INFO

- Gate hours for July and August are 7 a.m. until 10 p.m.
- The Paddy's Creek Area swim beach is open every day, from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. Daily fees are \$5 for adults, \$4 for children ages 3-12.
- The Paddy's Creek Area concessions stand and canoe and kayak rentals are open daily, from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. Boat rentals end at 4:30 p.m. and all rentals must be returned by 5:30 p.m. or face late fees.
- The Catawba River Area office and gift shop is open Monday-Friday, from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. The Paddy's Creek Area office and gift shop is open seven days a week, from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m.

FRIENDS OF LAKE JAMES STATE PARK

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Do you have an interest in Lake James State Park? Whether you enjoy hiking the trails, swimming at the beach or just picnicking with your family, there is some part of the park for everyone.

Join the Friends of Lake James State Park group and learn about all the opportunities to help make the park a better place for everyone to enjoy. The Friends of Lake James State Park focus on working together to help Lake James State Park meet its mission of providing opportunities for public enjoyment and education while still protecting the natural beauty and historic integrity of the State Park.

There are a variety of opportunities to get involved from trail work days, to volunteering at RiverFest and other festivals. Become a member of Friends of Lake James State Park, and know that you are helping to preserve the natural beauty and historic resources of Lake James for generations to come.

FRIENDS CONTRIBUTIONS

The Friends of Lake James State Park is proud to support the hardworking staff at Lake James State Park and contribute wherever we can to help improve park operations and offer new recreational opportunities to visitors. If you think these efforts are meaningful, please consider joining our group using the form at the bottom of this page.

- Boat Camping Project; partially funded, purchased equipment including rebar driver and auger
- Stand-up Paddleboards; purchased two for rental fleet and one for lifeguard use
- Funded instructor for Waterfront Safety training for lifeguards
- Linville Overlook picnic area
- Assisted with Overmountain Victory Trail 2 construction
- Holly Discovery Trail; partially funded and dedicated, annual funding for upkeep
- Park of the Year celebration
- Sponsored night rides on mountain bike trails
- RiverFest Sponsor

HOW TO JOIN THE FRIENDS OF LAKE JAMES STATE PARK GROUP

Become a member of Friends of Lake James State Park, and know that you are helping to preserve the natural beauty and historic resources of Lake James for generations to come.

For more information please visit www.lakejamesstatepark.org or email info@lakejamesstatepark.org.

FRIENDS OF LAKE JAMES STATE PARK - MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Be a Friend of Lake James State Park

Select class of annual membership:

___ Individual \$10
___ Family \$25
___ Corporate \$50
___ Patron/Industry \$100 - \$999 \$____
___ Lifetime \$1000 (or more) \$ ____

___ I would like to be contacted about volunteer opportunities with the Friends of Lake James State Park

Where did you hear about us? _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Return to:

Friends of Lake James State Park, Inc.

P.O. Box 1327

Nebo, NC 28761

Friends of Lake James State Park, Inc. is a registered 501(c)3 charitable organization. Receipt of membership will be supplied upon request.