



# The Trail Builder

Newsletter of the Ozark Trail Association Spring 2008

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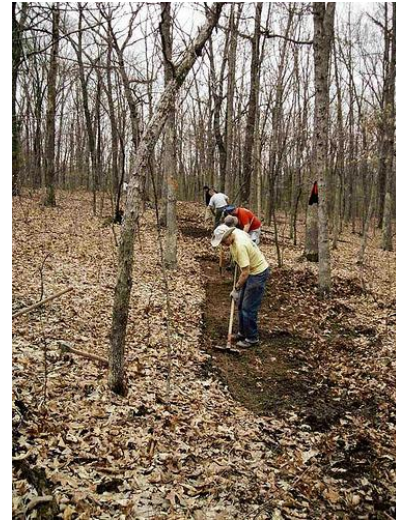
New trail maps

Why the Ozark  
Trail?

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

## Building a trail the very first time

McLeod, Hazel Hoe, Pulaski: names at a multi-cultural family reunion? Not for recent new volunteers for the Ozark Trail Association who used these trail-building tools to create and maintain stretches of the Ozark Trail. The process that transforms a beautiful stretch of woodland into a permanent, integrated pathway for generations was somewhat surprising and very rewarding for these first-timers.



Members of the 117-strong volunteer crew work on the emerging trail at the April 19 Mega Event

### Trail outings

In the last months, the OTA has organized several maintenance and trail building events including a Mega Event on April 19. At the Mega, near Steelville, MO, nearly 50% of the volunteers were building trail for the very first time. Many, like Linda Workman, found out about the Mega from a friend or co-worker: "I decided to volunteer because I love

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I came to appreciate the work and time others have donated which has benefitted me directly for years...now I know and now I go, whenever I can.

—Matt Graham

camping and hiking, and I had been looking for volunteer opportunities." Matt Graham, who has hiked the Ozark Trail for years, had noticed workers on the Berryman section during a hike with a friend several years ago: "Feeling kind of guilty, we tried to say 'thanks' to everyone we passed." Then when he signed up for an OTA Winona maintenance outing in February, he arrived not quite knowing what to expect.

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The Ozark Trail Association Newsletter is published four times each year and is mailed to all members. If you would prefer to receive this newsletter electronically, please contact [kathy.atnip@ozarktrail.com](mailto:kathy.atnip@ozarktrail.com).

Contributions are welcome and may be emailed to the editor at the above address or mailed to:

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Western chorus frog "peeping" a concert with friends in March 2008. For a taste of their deafening music, visit <http://ozarktrail.com/peepers.mp3>



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## President's Report

I hope you've had a chance to get out and enjoy this beautiful spring we're having. This has been one of the more colorful ones I can remember in quite some time. The abundant rain we've had has made for some brilliant nature viewing. Of course, the rain has also created some problems for trail users and for the trail itself as there have been some torrential storms to hit the region this year.

The OTA is well into the Courtois gap construction project. On April 19, we had a record turnout for a spring Mega Event as 117 volunteers braved the chilly morning rain to build over a mile of new trail. The event, sponsored by the Alpine Shop, was a huge success and yet another testament to the dedication and strength of OTA volunteers. As I drove home in the rain Friday from an out of town business trip, I was thinking, "Man, this is going to be one soggy weekend." At home, I unpacked one bag, packed another, and headed down to Bass' Resort, so exhausted that I slept in my van that night. I woke up the next morning to a slow drizzle of rain and a chill in the air.

At Bass' Resort, I was energized by the volunteers turning out to build trail. It was barely 50 degrees, wet and some would say, miserable. Yet, we had a record-breaking turnout for a spring Mega Event! Yes indeed, I was energized, in spite of my now soaking-wet feet thanks to having packed the wrong boots (the ones with the delaminated soles.) I "fixed" that problem by duct-taping my boots to close the holes and once I was out on the trail, I hardly noticed them at all; however, others with cameras *did* notice, and captured some shots of me in my boots for posterity (see below). By lunch time, it was quite pleasant and by that afternoon, the sun peeked out. The barbecue meal and bonfire were splendid. Extra special thanks to the Alpine Shop for sponsoring the event and for providing several items for a very successful raffle at dinner. I was very thankful for what the OTA is all about as I went to sleep that Saturday night.

One of the people at that Mega Event weekend was our new Executive Director, Anna Kopp. She got involved with OTA a couple of years ago at a trail building weekend down on the North Fork and she kept in touch. In June, Anna will take the reins as Executive Director, and will be based out of our Potosi office. I am very excited to have Anna on board; she brings a lot of enthusiasm and energy to the position. I hope you have the opportunity to welcome Anna to the OTA.

We're winding down our construction season and we'll conclude it with a celebration of National Trails Day at Noblett Lake near Willow Springs, the weekend of June 7. It's shaping up to be a fun weekend; hope you can make it.

Have a safe and happy summer,

**Steve**



# Second spring

By John Roth

The rosy-pink redbuds have lost their color while the emerging leafy hardwoods obscure the remaining dogwood blooms. Early spring flowers have withered: white bloodroot, toothwort and Dutchman's breeches giving way to the purple and yellow blooms of wood sorrel, phlox and yellow rocket. The chorus frogs have peeped their last, now replaced by whippoorwills for the night's serenade. Female deer wander furtively in the dusky fields, laden with unborn fawn. The barn swallows have started to nest.



Purple wood sorrel blooms along the Courtois Creek

It's the second season of spring, a time of great change and quick growth.

I thought of this as I sat on my back porch this evening. I thought of how the early season of spring marches slowly but patiently forward, suddenly giving way to an explosion of growth. The grasses will soon be thick, the forest full and lush, the newly born animals will start another generation of growth.

It reminded me of the Ozark Trail Association.

We started this quest five years ago in the dead of winter. We've since blossomed into a beautiful organization. We're now approaching our second spring, our time of great change and quick growth.

The OTA has been elected as the new chair for the Ozark Trail Council and tasked with creating and implementing a new Master Plan for the trail. We've implemented a score of new initiatives including trail tourism, shuttle service, new maps, volunteer incentives, additional trail construction and expanded committees. We've received new funding with the potential for much more.

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# Let me introduce myself

By Anna Kopp

In the last newsletter, Steve mentioned that the Ozark Trail Association would begin looking for a new Executive Director. Well, they've pulled me off the trail and put me in the office. My name is Anna Kopp and on June 1, I will be the new Executive Director.

As of May 17 I will have my Bachelor's in Parks and Recreation from the University of Missouri-Columbia. My emphasis is Natural Resource Recreation Management. To put it bluntly, I have spent the past four years preparing for this exact opportunity.

While I had spent my high school days enjoying the trail, it wasn't until my sophomore year in college that I learned about the OTA. I immediately decided I would volunteer the next chance I got. That chance came the next day when my Programming professor announced that our semester project was to plan an event and see it through. I contacted John and Steve and together we planned a Mizzou student trail building weekend. I've been hooked on the Ozark Trail ever since.

The best thing about volunteering is that you volunteer to do something you enjoy, which is why I have continued to hit the trail with the OTA. However, the problem with volunteering is that you only get to do it in your free time. I consider myself incredibly lucky that now I can turn my full attention toward helping the Association in its mission. Most of my job will be raising funds through grants, donations and membership programs. However, I will also help to plan outings, establish a stronger student volunteer base, work with land stewards and generally help to keep the business side of things up and running.

For those of you I have not yet met, I look forward to meeting you on the trail. To those of you I have met, I can't wait to see you again. And to all of you, thank you for everything you do. The OTA is only as great as its volunteers and I've heard nothing but rave reviews.



**Anna**

# Building a trail the very first time

*Continued from page 1*

## On the trail

Trail-building events and maintenance outings begin the same way, no matter what the location or who is attending. Volunteers gather, sign in and hear a little bit about the work ahead from OTA members. Julie Sharp said, “The volunteers of the OTA and the staff made us immediately feel welcome and appreciated.” After teams are assigned, the volunteers meet in groups with their crew leaders for a talk about trail-building. Linda recalls, “After an introduction to trail building tools and safety, I felt comfortable enough to dig in!” And she adds: “I got the point that it really is about safety, fun and building trail in that order.”

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I figured that enough people walked the same route enough times to wear down a path. Oh how wrong I was!

—Linda Workman

Once the crews began working, the focus is on digging the tread or trail surface with a slight outslope on the tread for water drainage, as well as cutting a backslope above the trail. Starting from the rough trail bed cut by chainsaw crews and a mini bulldozer, the trail is waiting to take shape when the volunteers arrive.

At the April Mega, the soil was wet from a heavy rain the previous day, and very rocky. “You could hear our equipment hitting rocks,” said Margie Hock, who worked alongside her fifteen year-old daughter. Linda also remembers her impression of the area after beginning to work: “I was convinced my section had the most rocks and roots of the entire Ozark Trail...” On his trail maintenance outing, Matt started by using loppers to remove smaller branches and saplings on or near the trail. Later, he took the job of “swamper,” removing sticks and logs from the trail after they’ve been cut.

## Mission accomplished

Despite the rocky area and the drizzle that started the day, the Mega volunteers worked steadily with their crews, breaking briefly for lunch and then for the day around 3:00 p.m. According to Julie Sharp, “it was amazing to walk back through and see all we had accomplished.” Mega Events usually wind up with a barbeque, bonfire and general relaxation. The April Mega featured live bluegrass music, an auction and raffle, and in true fairy tale fashion, “the day finished with a beautiful sun shining,” said Margie. She added, “I was sore and I knew I would be



Matt Graham takes a break at the April Mega trail building Event with Pecan and potato chips

hurting big time in the morning. It is one of those hurts that feel good. You know you have accomplished something good.” Linda added, “I was so proud of what we accomplished. Knowing that these trails will eventually link the entire state of Missouri filled me with awe.” Of his trail maintenance and subsequent trail building at other events, Matt said “I feel as if my work will help someone else enjoy that small section of trail a little more.”

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What made it special was that we were building something for our future generation of children.

—Margie Hock

## The best time

Add enthusiastic volunteers, oddly-named tools, experienced and friendly crew leaders with a day of fun and work with new friends outdoors, and you get a mile of new trail, the amount completed on April 19. And there is something extra, summed up by Linda: “Being part of something that will allow others a lasting way to enjoy the outdoors is a great way to say thanks to other trail builders for all the trails...” Julie agreed: “We’ll be with the OTA building more trail, and making more memories.” It’s an old saying that the first time is the best of all. When building and maintaining the Ozark Trail, first-time OTA volunteers would agree that’s true: until the next time, that is. 🍷

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I proudly display my “Trail Builder” sticker at my desk at work and am proud to tell anyone who asks how I got it. —Julie Sharp

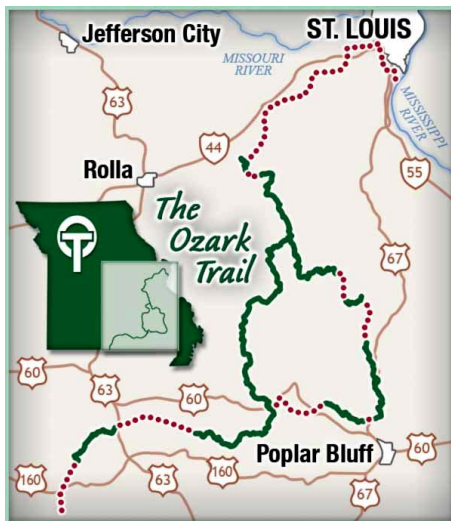
*Thanks to Matt Graham, Margie Hock, Julie Sharp and Linda Workman for sharing their stories!*

# Slow and steady builds a trail

By John Roth

The growth of the Ozark Trail from its initial concept in 1977 to its current form has been a slow but steady process. The trail started with dozens of miles of non-connected trails scattered throughout the eastern Ozarks. Trails were added to the total, growing by about 100 miles per decade. By 2000, the completed trail inventory was over 300 miles, but much of it was dispersed and only 140 miles of through-trail were available for the long-distance trail user.

When the OTA was created in late 2002, our first priority was to expand the trail by constructing the Middle Fork section. It took almost three years, but in 2005 we opened this section which created a 200-mile through-trail, running from near the Eleven Point River to the south, through the Berryman Trail to the north.



However, the northern trail terminus ended on a virtually unnamed gravel road. There was no trailhead: just an “OT” marker on a lonely wooden post. Several miles to the northwest you could find an additional seven miles of completed trail in the Huzzah Conservation Area, but only eight miles of gravel road connected the two.

After completing the Middle Fork we immediately began work to bridge this gap. In 2006 we flagged a new route and in early 2007 we obtained U.S. Forest Service clearance to begin construction. In September

## Upcoming Events

Below are upcoming events on the current OTA calendar. To receive event updates via Email, visit the calendar online at the OTA web site: [www.ozarktrail.com/workparties.php](http://www.ozarktrail.com/workparties.php)

### NATIONAL TRAILS DAY

6/07/08, 9:00 A.M.

NOBLETT LAKE

Celebrate National Trails Day with a weekend of fun, ceremony and optional maintenance with complimentary BBQ. Contact Jeff Goetter, [OTA.Volunteer@gmail.com](mailto:OTA.Volunteer@gmail.com), for more information.

### JUNE STAFF MEETING

6/10/08, 7:00 P.M.

POWDER VALLEY

This is the monthly OTA staff meeting. Contact Anna Kopp, [anna.kopp@ozarktrail.com](mailto:anna.kopp@ozarktrail.com), for more information.

2007 we started construction with a huge Mega Event. Since that time we’ve built over five miles of new trail!

Later this year we hope to close the “Courtois gap” to create a 240-mile through-trail from Onondaga Cave to the Eleven Point River. The newest ten miles of trail is quite beautiful, traveling to scenic bluffs near mossy waterfalls and through great stands of oak and pine. The new northern trailhead will be a great improvement over the old gravel road access. We have an Eagle Scout building a new kiosk and trailhead at the Narrows and the new trail will feature a stop at Bass’ River Resort which will offer the option of a 12-mile hike and 10-mile canoe trip loop!

You can join the construction effort by volunteering. Visit [ozarktrail.com/workparties.php](http://ozarktrail.com/workparties.php) for a list of outings or register to receive our weekly email update by sending a message to [OTA.Volunteer@gmail.com](mailto:OTA.Volunteer@gmail.com).

# Planning an Ozark Trail trip is easier than ever!

By John Roth

For decades, the Ozark Trail was represented by a map, a brochure, an occasional news article and maybe vague advice from a friend. It was an insider's story, shared by a select group of adventurers and a few wandering souls who stumbled upon the trail. Perhaps you learned about the trail at a kiosk while visiting a state park. Maybe you bought a book on the "99 Best Trails in Missouri." Possibly someone you know saw a rare newspaper article, hit the trail, and encouraged you to do the same. For over two decades, this is how people learned of the Ozark Trail.

With a minor blip in the universal fabric of information, that changed slightly in December 2002. The Ozark Trail Association was created, and with it came a fairly informative web site. In the OTA's early years, we concentrated on recruiting volunteers to build and maintain trail. But due to the existence of the web site with lots of great information, requests started trickling in via email.

Our early volunteers were pretty familiar with the trail, so we helped as we could. We returned the few email messages and answered the occasional phone call. We mailed out brochures and sometimes customized maps. We were delighted to become a new source of information for the trail.

Sixteen months ago we realized we were becoming the de-facto source of Ozark Trail information. The emails and phone calls were beginning to grow in number. State and federal agencies were starting to refer people to us for OT information. Our web site was drawing tremendous traffic and our electronic map downloads far exceeded the requests for paper maps. We were planning trips for folks from states across the Midwest that included water sources, camping sites and nearby shuttle providers. A light bulb went on; we should have this type of information online! We should encourage more trail shuttles!

We applied and received a grant from AmerenUE and in September 2007, we launched the inaugural OTA Trip Planner & Shuttle Service. Service is currently limited to a 20-mile radius of the Taum Sauk reservoir, but that includes over 120 miles of excellent trail. Want to know the best 2-day hike on this portion of trail? Want to know a good 10-mile horse ride? Need the best 20-mile bike ride with shuttle? Visit the trip planner for answers to these questions and more.

The planner includes a search function that creates trip options based upon your requested trail activity and trip length. It ranks trips by popularity and provides turn-by-turn directions with annotated downloadable maps. And you can book a shuttle between trailheads! For the Internet savvy, you can even view your trip with a 3D fly-by in GoogleEarth!




The Trip Planner is the latest effort by the OTA to promote the Ozark Trail. Over the summer we'll be adding an additional 120 miles of trail information to the planner, covering the trail from Onondaga Cave to the Eleven Point River (the "Courtois gap") with many side-trips along the way. We're offering shuttle service for the middle portion of the trail and hope to add additional shuttle providers for the rest of the trail by fall.

Visit the Planner and create a customized Ozark Trail trip: [www.ozarktrail.com/planner](http://www.ozarktrail.com/planner) 

## New OT maps coming soon

Tired of those old one-color section brochures? Need maps for the new sections of trail but don't want to download and print them?

Starting in fall 2008, we've got you covered! The OTA will be printing full-color 25"x30" topographic fold-out maps of the trail from Onondaga to the Eleven Point River, covering over 300 miles of great Ozark Trail.

Five maps will be available, each covering two sections of trail; each section will be printed full-size on a page! The maps feature topographic coverage, shaded relief, water sources, trailheads and other points of interest. The maps will be printed on high-quality paper stock for \$8.99 each. Complete details and ordering information will be available later this year. 

# Why the Ozark Trail?

First in a series of perspectives on  
the OT by the people who use it

By Robert Capps (a.k.a. "Lightweight Bob")

## Second spring

*Continued from page 3*

Beginning in June, we will gain our first permanent full-time employee, Anna Kopp, who will become Executive Director of the OTA. She's tasked to procure additional funding for our "next season" and to assist our expanding foundation of volunteers in building, maintaining and promoting the Ozark Trail. With assistance from all of you, I hope to help guide and mentor Anna as she takes on many of the administrative and executive duties I've had over the past year.

Volunteers remain the major driving force of our success. I believe the next two years will be our second spring of change and growth. I'm delighted to welcome Anna aboard to assist us in making the Ozark Trail a true gem of the Missouri outdoor experience.

Thank you for the privilege of being your interim Executive Director. I eagerly await my next adventures with this great trail. 🌿



Giant cane, a type of native Missouri bamboo, along the Courtois Creek, near the Eleven Point River

I'm planning a through-hike of the contiguous Ozark Trail for over the summer and a friend of mine asked me: "Why the Ozarks?" He pointed out that the Appalachian Trail has taller Eastern mountains and is longer, the Pacific Crest Trail and Continental Divide Trails are more scenic (depending on your point of view). Not to say that any of those trails aren't deserving, and also keeping in mind that the Ozark/Ozark Highlands Trail system is still unfinished, it got me thinking of why I really do love the Ozarks and why the Ozark Trail is relevant with all the other long distance trails currently complete or in development elsewhere in the country.

For me, the Ozarks are all about the water, the glades, and everything that goes along with them. Crystal clear streams with rocky bottoms and gravel bars like the Black River, the Current, the Huzzah, the Eleven Point, and countless others; the gushing springs which seem to be everywhere I look and consistently beautiful; the turtles, fish, and herons. There's just something special and mysterious about such a pristine and elaborate system of streams that is not driven primarily by snowmelt. The rivers that carve deep into the hills, creating tall bluffs, are always awesome to me. As a kid, I used to chase collared lizards in glades, and I've always thought they were a beautiful feature of Ozarks forests, particularly when they are on the tops of mountains. In all the wetness from rain and fog and snow, glades are a perplexingly arid type of environment, with their igneous rocks showing through and gnarly cedars clinging to little veins of soil. The glades are like a counterpoint to the wet climate and winding streams going through the valleys.

One thing the Ozark Trail has over the Appalachian Trail, for me anyway is the comparatively unregulated camping. Instead of having designated camping spots and highly impacted shelters, people are simply asked to camp 100 feet from the trail in most places and practice "Leave No Trace" and common sense where they do make camp. Hopefully, as it gains popularity and length, it can stay like that, because I think one of the main reasons I love the Ozark Trail is because it's close to home, yet when hiking on it, it allows me to escape to somewhere very far away from all reminders of civilization.

Why do you love the Ozark Trail? 🌿

From the Ozark Trail Message Board: *Hiker Talk*  
Posted May 17, 2007

Go to [www.ozarktrail.com/forum/index.php](http://www.ozarktrail.com/forum/index.php) to join this and other discussions.

# 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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