



The Trail Builder

Newsletter of the Ozark Trail Association Late Fall 2009

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

Fire: friend of the Ozarks

As dry leaves rain down from the high woodland canopy of the Ozark Highlands, land managers and private landowners alike feel the crisp air that ushers in...fire season. For thousands of years, fire maintained Ozark landscapes, keeping fire-intolerant maples and cedars at bay while helping to maintain the oak-hickory woodlands, sedge-dominated fens and grassy glades.

Woodland birds such as scarlet tanagers, blue-gray gnatcatchers, and indigo buntings thrive in woodlands managed with fire. The healthy woodland understory, one filled with prairie grasses and native wildflowers, attracts a healthy suite of invertebrates upon which birds and small mammals alike can feed. Without the thriving insect community associated with the plant community, populations of the larger animals diminish.

Native Americans assisted natural fire events by broadcasting fire throughout the land to invigorate native plant populations and to encourage movement of large game. For roughly 8,000 years, fires swept across the far western prairies of the Osage Plains,

By Allison Vaughn



Prescribed fire in a glade in the St. Francois Mountains: recently Ozarks land managers have experimented with burns during growing season

Historically, Ozark woodlands were open, light-filled places full of wildflowers and prairie grasses, a landscape rich with animal life.

—Allison Vaughn

and continued traveling throughout the Ozark Plateau—through the post oak savannas of the western Ozarks, into the glades of the St. Francois Mountains, only extinguishing when they met patches of cool, moist forests in the coves of the Current River.

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

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Fragile frost flowers can be found in early morning after a hard freeze along the OT. They're formed from water in a plant's frozen, fractured stem, pumped out by capillary action to create delicate, crystalline layers



This newsletter is printed on paper containing 30% recycled fiber content

President's Report

The walk out; I always love the walk out after building trail. The walk in can be rough and uneven, but the walk out is on freshly-constructed trail. You get to immediately see and experience the fruits of your own labor! It's very rewarding (even if all of your muscles ache!)

We're about ready to walk out on 2009. It's been an eventful year to say the least. But I'd like to reflect back on some rewarding work that the OTA accomplished this year:

- 1) The Johnson's Shut-Ins Scour Loop Trail and Taum Sauk reroute. We almost got this done in May and then the derecho hit. However, OTA crews still managed to re-open the scour loop trail very quickly, and most of the Taum Sauk reroute has also been cleared. We had two very successful mega-events at JSI earlier this year and we've established a wonderful partnership with the Park Superintendent, Jeff Ayers.
- 2) The Courtois gap is nearly closed. We have one more MegaEvent planned for the Courtois in April 2010. But in 2009, OTA volunteers managed to brave thunderstorms and the wettest October on record and built enough trail to get us to the point of completing the gap next spring.
- 3) Clean up of downed trees: lots of them. OTA sawyers have been busy this year. Parts of the Ozarks look like a blanket of matchsticks has been blown across the ground. The May 8th storm resulted in damage to about 100 miles of trail and it hit just when the weather was warming up. Our sawyers fought through it though; sweating it out in hardhats and chaps in 90-degree heat to clear the trail.
- 4) Grants. The OTA has recently received some big grant awards. We were notified that we were the recipients of a \$25,000 grant from the Lattner Foundation that will be applied to developing communications materials including an upgrade of our website. We also received an \$18,000 Recreational Trails Program Grant to develop training materials and methods. Lastly, we received through the US Forest Service a \$100,000 grant through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). This is "stimulus" money and will be used to hire a crews to assist with trail construction and maintenance on the Ozark Trail within the Mark Twain National Forest. Kris Swanson of the Forest Service has been a wonderful advocate for the OTA and was instrumental in getting us this funding.

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The Ozark Trail represented in metal and stone on the plaza of the new Black River Center for visitors at Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park

President's Report

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It promises to be an exciting 2010. One project that makes it so is the construction of the Current River Trail through the Roger Pryor Backcountry (Pioneer Forest). Recently, I have had conversations with representatives of the LAD Foundation and Missouri DNR to discuss moving this project forward. If all goes as I hope, it's possible that we could start building this trail in the fall of 2010. You may recall that John Roth was instrumental in developing the plans for this trail about two years ago. I'm excited to think that John's vision looks closer to becoming a reality.

I hope you have a happy and safe holiday season. Happy trails!

Steve



Try an OT adoption

By Ryan Hanlon

In December of 2008, after a few outings, I began my Adopt-A-Trail adventure for the Ozark Trail Association. I spoke with the Adopt-A-Trail guru, Robert Smith, consulted the awesome OTA web site trip planner and then chose almost 4 miles of trail on the Karkaghne section near Lesterville, MO. This area was already familiar to me from my childhood summers on the Black River and I figured there had to be some beautiful trail there.

My adopted trail is near the West Fork of the Black and parallel to the Bee Fork River. I can remember how excited I was when I began planning my first trip to see "my" trail: half the fun of adopting trail is planning and finding access to your section. Luckily, I had printed maps from the OTA website, and I purchased some of the great Mark Twain National Forest maps, along with a *Missouri Atlas & Gazetteer*. I recommend each of these resources to any adventurer so you can cross reference any river, road or hill.

My big day had come and I was speeding south in the early hours of a beautiful winter morning. I began thinking how fun it would be to return for an overnight or weekend, not only to maintain trail but to invite friends and family for a campout. And hey, they can lop a few limbs too! But where would we stay? Was there somewhere to car-camp, swim or ride mountain bikes? I learned about the Sutton Bluff

Campground nearby and explored it after working on my adopted section. I am happy to say I returned the next summer with my nephew and father for a long weekend of hiking and camping. My dad had spent a summer in Yellowstone Park and had no idea how well the Ozarks would compare. My nephew Anthony took his first hike on my adopted section. I've biked and hiked there and discovered not only a river crossing at the Bee Fork, but also the ruins of a church which hints at the history of the area. Experiences like this have made the Ozark Trail special to me and have led me to discover many more places than I imagined. When I moved back to the Midwest after living in California, I was nervous about the outdoor experience, focusing on the hot summers and tough winters I knew in Missouri. The Ozark Trail has changed my mind about being outdoors and I am constantly surprised by what I see and find on and off the trail.

I find that my friends and family are intrigued by the idea of adopting a trail and I feel so proud to have my "own" section. A feeling of ownership and responsibility makes me feel connected to that little valley. We are very lucky to have the Ozark wilderness here in our home state and the Ozark Trail is your guide to some remarkable surprises along the way. Pick up a map, hiking staff or Pulaski, and get out to find the hidden gems that await *you* on the OT. 📍

Fire

Continued from page 1

Following European settlement, natural fires and those caused by humans were regularly squelched, directly impacting the character of Ozark woodlands and glades. Thick layers of leaf litter and densely packed trees blocked light from the woodland floor, suppressing native grasses and wildflowers and encouraging fire-intolerant trees to thrive. No other natural or manmade process can mimic the effects of fire on the land; the biophysical and chemical reactions of fire so integral to the biodiversity and longevity of the Ozarks cannot be recreated through thinning, mowing, or timber harvest. Fire remains the most important tool land managers can implement to restore and maintain the character of our rich native landscapes.

While many private landowners in the western Ozarks never stopped burning their woodlands, prescribed fire as a management tool returned to the Ozark landscape in the mid-1980s when Paul Nelson, the author of *The Terrestrial Natural Communities of Missouri*, implemented prescribed fire on the woodlands at Ha Ha Tonka State Park. Land management agencies decried his actions, accusing Nelson of inciting arsonists throughout the Ozarks. Nelson and the Missouri State Park Natural History Program remained dedicated to reintroducing this vital natural process to the state park landscape. Today, state and federal land managers throughout Missouri use fire as the single most effective tool to restore woodlands and glades to their historic condition.

The Ozark Trail traverses land owned by several management agencies, all of whom conduct prescribed fires. The Mark Twain National Forest possesses large, contiguous tracts of woodlands which is burned in 1,000+ acre units. This year, MDC and DNR will partner to burn 4,000 acres of Taum Sauk Mountain in an effort to better manage this significant landscape. Many land management agencies in Missouri burn Ozark woodlands in spring months. Traditionally, fire season begins shortly after leaf off in the fall, and continues through mid-December; by mid-December, the days grow shorter and it is often difficult to burn until day length increases by mid-January. Spring fire season begins in late February and continues through mid-



After treatment with fire: less leaf litter, then woody shrubs like aromatic sumac. Following 3 burns over ten years, wildflowers and grasses reappear

April when leaves appear on trees. In recent years, managers have implemented fire on glades during the growing season, though Ozark woodlands typically only burn during the growing season when drought conditions have dried grasses and other fuel.

In recent months, fears of widespread and violent wildfires along the Ozark Trail have been promulgated by those unfamiliar with prescribed fire in the Ozarks. The enormous fuel load caused by the May 8th wind event will not cause outbreaks of horrendous Western landscape-style wildfires. Fire in the Ozarks depends on fine fuels such as grasses, wildflowers and leaf litter to carry. The larger fuels, the thousands of oaks and hickories brought down by the wind event, will not carry fire in the Ozark landscape as they can in Western environments. The relative humidity common in Missouri and the fuel moistures that persist year round here will not support large fires such as those in Wyoming, Idaho, or Colorado. In fact, for the health and sustainability of Ozark woodlands impacted by the wind event, prescribed fire should be implemented every three to five years to stimulate the herbaceous understory and to gradually remove the larger branches to allow light to reach the woodland floor.

During fire season, trail users should remain outside the perimeter of a burn unit until the managers reopen the trail. While the fire may have occurred days earlier, the threat of smoldering snags falling from dead trees can be great. 🌿

Allison Vaughn is the Ozark District Natural Resource Steward for the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Division of State Parks

Inaugural Ozark Trail 100

By Paul Schoenlaub

Three years ago, on Thanksgiving weekend, I set out to explore a few miles of the Ozark Trail in the Mark Twain National Forest in south-central Missouri. I ran about 12 miles of the trail on Friday and another 42 miles of the trail on Saturday. That weekend I fell in love with the Ozark Trail and decided a race should be run on this rugged trail to showcase the beautiful forest to ultra runners across the country. My dream was for a 100 mile point-to-point footrace on this single track trail in November, when the views through the predominately oak forest reveal the stark contrasts of the ruggedness of the terrain and the structure of the majestic trees is simply striking.

At 6:00 a.m. Saturday, November 7, 126 runners from 28 states, Canada, and Singapore gathered at the southern end of the Karkaghne section of the Ozark Trail. They took off under the starlit early morning sky for a race that would take nearly a full day to finish, heading Bass' River Resort, 101.5 miles away. The participants would run the entire Karkaghne Section, the entire Middle Fork Section, the northern half of the Trace Creek Section, and well over half of the Courtois Section of the Ozark Trail. It would take from 18 to 32 hours for more than 50 runners to complete the entire distance.

Jeff Browning from Oregon won the race in 18:38:59, setting the course record for the Ozark Trail 100 Mile Endurance Run and finishing 4 hours ahead of the next competitor. Rachel Furman from Illinois was the first



Jeff Browning from Oregon, winner of the Ozark Trail 100, finished in just over 18 and a half hours: an average speed of **11 minutes per mile**.

women's finisher setting the record at 25:28:21 and giving her seventh place overall.

Many thanks to all the participants, volunteers, sponsors, the Ozark Trail Association, and the National Forest Service for their parts in helping to make this race a reality and achieving my primary goal of showcasing Missouri's Ozark Trail in the Mark Twain National Forest to the ultra running community. 📍

Paul Schoenlaub of St. Louis Ultra Runners Group was a race director for the OT 100. For more information about SLUG, see <http://www.stlouisultrarunnersgroup.net>

Upcoming Events

Below are selected upcoming events on the OTA calendar. For more details and to see all events, visit www.ozarktrail.com/workparties.php

NEW YEAR ON THE COURTOIS

1/02/10, 8:30 A.M.

BASS' RIVER RESORT

2010 will be the year that we fill in the gap: a full day of trail construction along the Courtois Creek.

SAWING ON THE TAUM SAUK

2/06/10, 8:30 A.M.

JOHNSON'S SHUT-INS

Clear damage from the May 2009 storm. Experienced sawyers and swamper needed

ST. PADDY'S DAY HIKE

3/17/10, 8:30 A.M.

LOCATION TBA

Wear your OTA green and come join us for an "Erin go braugh" winter hike. Don't forget your corned beef sandwich for lunch.

APRIL MEGAEVENT ON THE COURTOIS

4/10/10, 8:30 A.M.

BASS' RIVER RESORT

Will we complete the gap today? Trail construction, free camping Friday and Saturday nights, complimentary lunch and evening BBQ, live bluegrass music, raffle and more.

Daisy Girl Scouts are Trail Angels


By Tony Lounsbery

On October 24, a Girl Scout Daisy troop from St. Charles, Missouri and their moms spent a gorgeous afternoon maintaining the Courtois section of the Ozark Trail. For girls in kindergarten through first grade, Daisies represent the first level of scouting and an introduction to crafts, camping, hiking and public service.

The day began with a beautiful drive from Saint Louis as the girls observed the colorful leaves transitioning to autumn. The adventure began by parking at the Berryman Trail campground and the group started hiking south while trimming back brush and removing deadfall along the way. With all the rain this fall, the girls got to experience the joy of multiple creek crossings. The day ended with hot dogs and S'mores over an open fire at the campground. Just as the Daisies were piling into the vehicles to head home, they were greeted by some trail users on their horses. All and all, it was another great day on the Ozark Trail.



The Daisies of Troop 3084: while working on the OT, each earned a Spring Green Daisy Petal, awarded for being "considerate and caring for Earth"

The Daisies were taking part in the Trail Angel program (TAP) which was developed to manage day-long maintenance trips on the Ozark Trail as part of the Adopt-A-Trail program. Trail Angels are generous individuals or groups that provide acts of kindness to all who use the trail, and help keep the OT an earthly paradise. Coordinated by Gwen Fuehring, TAP can use more good angels; for additional information, please contact Gwen at tap@ozarktrail.com. 

'Tis the season for giving

It's the season for year-end reflection, and for looking ahead to the year to come. Think what the Ozark Trail and the Ozark Trail Association have done for *you* this year. And the fun you'll have in 2010—beginning with our first outing on January 2!

Think about the adventures you've had. The fresh air you've breathed. The hiking you've done. The sights you've seen. The things you learned. The satisfaction you felt after a day working on the trail. The open-air cookouts. The many raffle prizes you won (or didn't). The bluegrass music you heard. And the laughs you've shared.


What about the people you met as a result of being involved with the OTA? They're people you wouldn't have met staying home. Reflect on the lifelong friendships you've made. In some cases (we've almost lost count), a number of couples met while volunteering on the trail and later got married! "Priceless." Don't you agree?

Now, think what **YOU** can do for the trail. It's that time of year when it's better to give than to receive—especially if it's tax deductible!

While grants provide some income to the OTA, donations from members are absolutely vital too. Donations can come as money, materials, services or even food for work outings.

So think what you have to give. Perhaps a memorial contribution to our well-loved leader and founder of the OTA, John Roth, who passed away all too suddenly this past July. Or consider a memorial to Dave Fuehring, one of our most faithful volunteers, who passed away in January of this year.

Is there someone special you'd like to honor? We recently received a donation to honor one of those couples who married as a result of meeting at an OTA event: Keri and James Lammering.

Secure credit or debit card donations made through the "Donations" link on our home page before December 31 are fully tax deductible for this year—as are checks made payable to the Ozark Trail Association and mailed to 406 W. High St., Potosi, MO 63664. 



Your Ozark Trail Association Membership

Support the **OTA's mission to develop, maintain, preserve, promote and protect the rugged natural beauty of the Ozark Trail.** New members receive an OTA patch and membership card, weekly updates via Email, and a subscription to the OTA newsletter, *The Trail Builder*. Plus, you get the satisfaction of helping out a great cause.

All funds go toward trail construction and maintenance, maps and brochures, web site maintenance and other administrative costs. The OTA is a volunteer-run organization!

You may **use the form below** to begin or renew an OTA membership **or pay via PayPal**. If using the form, please check the membership option below and fill in the blanks.

- Individual (\$20/year)
- Family (\$35/year)
- Lifetime (\$250 one-time)
- Student (\$15/year)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

(Please use the checkboxes below to indicate your preferred means of contact)

- Daytime Phone _____
- Evening Phone _____
- Alternate Phone _____
- Email _____

Other Information--include any special skills, experience, or resources you can share with the OTA and include all family member names here to receive individual membership cards:

Check here to receive your OTA Newsletter via Email and save some trees!

Mail completed form with payment to: Ozark Trail Association
 406 W. High Street
 Potosi MO 63644

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

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 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!



Ozark Trail Association
406 W. High Street
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