



New Manchester Times

Quarterly Newsletter from the Friends of Sweetwater Creek State Park, Inc.
1826 Mount Vernon Road

Lithia Springs, GA 30122



October, November, December 2006

Volunteer, Educational, Nonprofit

Vol. 13, Number 3

RIVERS ALIVE !
October 21, Saturday 9AM
Meet at the visitor center

Again this year, the Friends of Sweetwater Creek are proud to announce we are hosting a RIVERS ALIVE program.
Limited number of free t-shirts and patches available to the first sign-ups.
Groups will be lead by Friends volunteer hosts.



**THE SWEETWATER CREEK STATE PARK
VISITOR AND INTERPRETIVE CENTER
GRAND OPENING CEREMONY**

will be held on Wednesday, October 11, 2006 at 11AM. A short ceremony will take place, followed by light refreshments and tours. Aside from the DNR dignitaries and staff at the park, invited attendees expected are the designers and builders, Founder's Club members (donations of \$1,000 or more), members and sponsors of the Friends of Sweetwater Creek State Park, and several Douglas County and Georgia State representatives. After years of planning, pushing, and fund-raising and the great efforts of Bill Cahill of the Friends of Sweetwater Creek State Park, Inc., the new visitor center has become a reality. Expected to be a LEED certified platinum building, the new center is something for the Friends, DNR, and all of Georgia to be proud of. All interested parties are invited to join us in this momentous occasion.



**GOOD NEWS - THE BRIDGE IS OPEN
BAD NEWS - Boat and Canoe Rentals Still Suspended**

Due to the excessive rains last summer, the ground around the Mt. Vernon Road Bridge foundations was washed away. The bridge has been reopened and the lake drainage has been stopped, but the lake level is still way below normal. Because of this, the Bait Shop will not be renting boats or canoes until the lake level recovers. This will depend on the amount of rainfall.

However, individuals may continue to launch their private boats and canoes. They will not be able to drive on the sandy lake bottom, so their launch will have to be facilitated by hand-dragging their craft.

SOUND OF NATURE

Reprint of an article by Vicki Williams

Sound is an intrinsic part of being alive and enjoying the outdoors. However, we seldom take enough time to actually enjoy what we are hearing. We are so busy doing things, going places, breathing hard from our exertions, that we don't HEAR all the activity going on around us.

The other day I was taking a walk and stopped thinking long enough to just experience what was around me. It was a gorgeous day, not too warm, not too cool. The birds were calling, insects were buzzing, and the wind was gently blowing through the leaves of the trees. How much do you consciously hear when you are outside? When I realized all that I was hearing, I spent the rest of my walk just listening to all the sounds around me.

If you are a birder (bird watcher) you listen for the sounds of birds calling, scolding and living their lives; and on a subconscious level your brain catalogs; cardinal, Carolina chickadee, towhee. Only if something unusual occurs do you pay attention to what you are hearing and think, hmmm, that sounds odd, new, or different. We frequently hear bird noises and don't pay attention to what the sounds actually mean. At this time of year you hear birds scolding each other, singing to attract mates, and nestlings cheeping so the parents know where they are and how hungry they are.

Squirrels and chipmunks also are very vocal and if you listen for angry squirrels and chipmunks, then track down the source of their excitement, sometimes you can figure out what got them upset, usually a hawk, crow, or snake. More often than not, I can't find the culprit that caused all the agitated noise. Nature likes to keep her mysteries.

The whirring of wings is another neat sound. Hummingbirds have a familiar and easily identifiable whirr, as do mourning doves. I don't even have to see them to think, ahhh, hummingbird or mourning dove. Insects can also make whirring noises if they are large enough.

Speaking of insects, we mustn't forget one of the most common sounds of a southern summer-the buzz of cicadas and katydids. It wouldn't be summer if we didn't hear them. Of course, when you have a year in which many broods of cicadas hatched at one time, the noise can be almost deafening-and very annoying. In normal years, their music is a delight.

Lizards and snakes make sounds as they slither through the dry leaves. I always want to know what I am hearing, so I stop and try to identify where the sound is coming from and what interesting creature is making it. Usually there is a difference between the sound of a skittering lizard and a slithering snake, but sometimes they will fool you.

The sound of the wind blowing through trees and shrubs changes constantly depending on how many leaves are on the trees, whether the leaves are soft green or hard, dry fall leaves. Wind also produces moody sounds-a gentle quiet summer breeze, the wind preceding a storm, or a cold harsh wind in winter.

Rain makes noises also...the gentle pitter-patter of a spring rain, or the crashing sounds of a torrential downpour (which we've had quite a few of this year!) When the rain ceases we hear the drip, drip, drip of thousands of raindrops slowly splashing from the tree leaves. Then, of course, when you go outside the round make sits own noise-squish, squish, squash, beneath your feet.

There are all kinds of noises you make simply by walking...the crunch of grass underfoot varies depending on how dry the grass and weeds are. Leaves crunch deliciously in the fall (one of my chief pleasures in life is to walk through crunchy leaves) and become muffled as they get older and break down.

We hear many sounds subconsciously, so it is amazing what you can hear when you stop and "just be". Make a point of enjoying and experiencing nature next time you go out. It is very restful and refreshing to abandon all cares while "just being."

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Please note: There is usually a charge for the DNR sponsored hikes. All events are subject to change and weather permitting. Please check our website for updates, www.friendsofsweetwatercreek.org, or call the park office at 770-732-5871.

"Friends" Monthly Membership Meeting at the Volunteer office, 1826 Mt. Vernon Rd. Contact Beverly Nelson, Secretary, howbev1@bellsouth.net or 770-459-1946. Saturdays, October 21 at 8:30AM at the new Visitor Center classroom. Nominations will be taken for our November elections. (Rivers Alive to follow at 9:00AM.) November 18 at 9:00AM for our elections for 2007 in the volunteer office
THERE WILL BE NO MEETING IN DECEMBER.

October 1, Sunday, 7AM – 10AM, The Friends' first sponsored Biathlon at Shelter 7. Contact Beverly Nelson.

October 6, Friday, 8PM – 10PM, "Ruins and Rapids" Full Moon Hike with Don Scarbrough. This will be a 2 hour, 2 mile guided hike rated "moderate" for difficulty. We will be hiking alongside the lovely rapids of Sweetwater Creek (up to class IV) and into the ruins of the Civil War era textile mill of New Manchester under the light of the full moon (hopefully). The hikes will continue if it is overcast but will be cancelled if it is raining. Please bring a flashlight and sturdy shoes. Unfortunately, children under 6 and dogs will not be permitted. \$2 adults \$1 children (under 12). For more info, call 770-732-5871. **The Full Moon Hike will also be held on Sunday, November 5, 7PM to 9PM and Monday, December 4, 7PM – 9PM.**

October 9, Monday, 7 PM. Board of Directors Meeting. Volunteer Office. Contact Beverly Nelson.

NEW INTERPRETIVE CENTER DEDICATION CEREMONY

October 11, Wednesday, 11AM will be the DNR's dedication ceremony for the new Sweetwater Creek State Park Visitor and Interpretive Center. Please plan to attend this event which the Friends have worked so hard for.

October 14, Saturday 10AM – 3PM "A Walk Through Time" with Dan Emsweller: Sweetwater Valley 75 Years Ago. Celebrate the 75th anniversary of Georgia's state park system as we learn about life in Sweetwater Valley 75 years ago. Highlights of the tour will be the site of the electrical power plant at Ferguson's mill, the dance hall/speakeasy site at Sweetwater Creek, the farming community in the Jack's Hill area, and Alexander's Mill. This will be a 5-mile hike of moderate-strenuous difficulty. \$2 adults \$1 children (under 12).

October 21, Saturday, 9AM, Rivers Alive creek and park cleanup. Meet at the Visitor Center to join us for this worthwhile and needed event.

November 4, Saturday, 1PM – 3PM Fall Leaf Walk with Don Scarbrough. \$2 adults \$1 children (under 12). For more info, call 770-732-5871.

November 7, Tuesday – Don't forget to VOTE!

December 9, Saturday, 1PM – 4PM, Winter Walk with Don Scarbrough. \$2 adults \$1 children (under 12). For more info, call 770-732-5871.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED FOR:

- * THE "RUINS AND RAPIDS" FULL MOON HIKES EACH MONTH.**
- * THE VISITOR CENTER OFFICE AREA TO ASSIST VISITORS TO THE PARK WITH INFORMATION.**
- * WE HAVE MANY PHOTOGRAPHY, MEDIA, AND COMPUTER DATABASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THOSE WHO HAVE EXPRESSED AN INTEREST.**

CONTACT: BEVERLY NELSON 770-459-1946 OR

HOWBEV1@BELLSOUTH.NET

NEWS REVIEW

WHAT WERE WE UP TO THIS LAST QUARTER

Since the opening of the new visitor center, the volunteer office has become 100% for the Friends use. We still have a lot of cleaning up and rearranging to do. Our thanks go to Zack Fisher for the “face-lift” he has given the building lately. Our state-of-the-art computer system will be utilized more as we help develop interpretive topics relevant to the park area which will be presented to visitors. We are also having a storage building put on site to facilitate storage of the many signs, tents, chairs, etc. that we use for our programs and events. Many of you reading this have never experienced the Friend’s area of the park. We are well established here and proud of our accomplishments. If you have not visited us, please plan to attend a volunteer membership meeting.

Our July and August Regular Monthly Membership Meetings were held at the volunteer office. Our September meeting was held in (and filled up) the double classroom in the new visitor center. Our guest speaker was Sally Mason who is the Georgia Coordinator for Adopt A Stream. By next year, and with Sally’s help, we hope to build a Sweetwater Creek water shed water monitoring program utilizing teachers and children from our local educational systems. This is really a step in the right direction for future generations of Douglas County citizens and visitors to Sweetwater Creek State Park.

Don Scarbrough, the park naturalist, has been leading many hikes on the trails lately. The full moon hikes Don is hosting are a really big success with visitors. One of our premiere volunteers, Dan Emsweller, has had great success leading the 75th Anniversary Hike last month and there is another one coming up this quarter (see calendar).

Our New Manchester Days celebration on September 23 & 24 was a big hit. The living history encampment this year was expanded and there was even a mounted cavalry soldier. One of the historical tours led by Dan Emsweller appeared to have about 30 people participating. Many visitors to the park will go on the history hike every year to experience the reenactment performed at the mill by the living history encampment. Children and adults alike are drawn to the encampment for the firing of the muskets. Special thanks go to Cathy Kaemmerlen who portrayed the story of the New Manchester Girl Synthia Catherine Stewart, and to the special autoharp player Carol Betsill, and to Ken Panse, the Reptile Man, and to all the volunteers at the encampment. The Arts & Crafts Show was our fund-raising part of the event. Funds are always needed to fulfill our commitment to the park. The Friends set up a food tent for Saturday and Sunday and made a small profit while satisfying the hunger and thirst of many visitors.

Zack Fisher and Doug Merriman’s have been working very diligently on our completely redesigned web-site. If you have not been to our web-site lately, please take a look. www.friendsofsweetwatercreek.org Our thanks go out to Zack and Doug for all the hard work they’ve done.

We have many volunteers in our group working continually on some great projects:

- grants
- documentation of flora in the park
- water quality
- interpretive topics which will be used to educate visitors to the park
- web-site upkeep
- acquiring historical items to be included in the museum
- historical research
- acquiring and directing volunteers
- assisting visitors in the park’s new Visitor and Interpretive Center

Volunteers are continually needed to assist with these and other projects. If you are thinking of becoming more involved, now is the time. Attend a meeting or talk to an active volunteer about how you can become a part of these worthwhile endeavors. Or, contact volunteer coordinator, Beverly Nelson, 770-459-1946 or at howbev1@bellsouth.net.

SPOTLIGHT ON SPONSORS

Our Corporate Sponsors

These Corporate Sponsors have contributed a great deal to help the Volunteers support, maintain, and improve Sweetwater Creek State Park. Their selfless acts of generosity are major contributions to the quality of Sweetwater Creek and our community. Please keep them in mind when shopping, and tell them you appreciate their support for Sweetwater Creek State Park.

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www.friendsofsweetwatercreek.org

