JANUARY 2024 NEWSLETTER

OZARK HIGHLANDS TRAIL ASSOCIATION

OHTA's Mission is to Build, Maintain, Promote, and ENJOY the Ozark Highlands Trail.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

− Overseeing the Trail −

OHTA Board of Director for 2023-2024

Phil Brown (President/Eastern Chapter Rep)
Adam Higinbothom (Vice-president)
Brent Umphlett (Secretary/Website Coordinator)
Todd Wells (Treasurer)
Chris Adams (Maintenance Coordinator)
Wade Colwell (Interim Boston Mountain Chapter Rep)
Miles Jandrasevic (Maintenance Director-West Section)
Tiffany Mallard (Social Media and Promotions Coordinator)
Peter Cooper (Interim Member)

− In Remembrance of One of OHTA's Founders −

Ozark Highlands Trail Association received word just recently that on Wednesday, December, 27, 2023, John Fordyce passed away. Most of us never knew him, but the word is that he was one of the original members of this organization. Those who did know him have all expressed the utmost respect for him.

May his family know of the esteem in which he is held . . .

− On the Trail −

10 Best Snow-Free Thru-Hike Trails

Wondering what trails are best for hiking during the winter months? Well, wonder no more! The following link will take you to an article featuring what some believe are the 10 best snow-free thru-hike trails this country has to offer. Guess what! The Ozark Highlands Trail is on that list, and though the information in the write-up is a little outdated, the article paints a very nice picture of our wonderful trail! So here it is! Give it a read and then make a point of getting out to the trail and stepping on it! https://thetrek.co/10-awesome-snow-free-winter-thru-hikes/
Have fun!

Oh, yes . . . The OHTA would be remiss not to express appreciation for receiving notice of this article from one of our astute maintainers, Mel Zabecki! Thank you, Mel!!

OHT – Ozarks Keystone Trail and Beyond

As 2023 slowly fades from view, it seems like a good idea to ground ourselves by taking a quick look back, making note of where we are, and glancing down the trail to where we're headed.

First, as we all know, the OHT is growing. For years and years, completion of the 164-mile stretch of trail from Lake Fort Smith Trailhead to Woolum was considered the trail's thru-hike. That all changed in August 2022, for it was then that the official announcement was made that the miles of trail from Woolum to Dillards Ferry located alongside the Buffalo River on Highway 14 had been added. With that, a recognized thru-hike of the Ozark

Highlands Trail increased by a distance of nearly 42 miles. That means a thru-hike distance on the OHT is now set at approximately 206.3 miles!

Yes, we're growing!!

So where do we stand at the moment. Well, there is no precise number that can be used to provide an answer to that question because of the dynamics of growth. However, we do have some reasonable approximations of just how big this beast has become, and when you look below, you'll find a chart reflecting what can be measured and distances that will likely come to be as new sections are completed. Give it a look!

Snapshot of the OHT

miles	
164	Lake Fort Smith Trailhead to Buffalo River at Woolum (Ozark Highlands Trail)
42	Woolum to Dillards Ferry (Ozark Highlands Trail/Buffalo River Trail)
206	**continuous trail**
~20	gap—proposed GPS route through Lower Buffalo Wilderness (not approve by National Park Service)
32	OHT Sylamore Section from Lower Buffalo Wilderness boundary to Matney Knob Trailhead
8	gap—Matney Knob Trailhead to White River to Norfork Trail Trailhead at Norfork Lake Dam
13	Norfork Lake Dam Trailhead to CR1028 Trailhead (OHT/Norfork Trail)
20	gap—Norfork Trail CR1028 Trailhead to Panther Creek Trailhead (Ozarks Keystone Trail/OHT)
8	Panther Creek Trailhead to Robinson Point Trailhead (Ozarks Keystone Trail/OHT)
18	Robinson Point Trailhead to Red Bank Trailhead (Davids Trail/OHT)
8	gap—Red Bank Trailhead to Missouri border (Ozarks Keystone Trail/OHT)
333	**continuous trail once all gaps are complete**

From Matney Knob Trailhead east and north to the Missouri border there are three gaps in the trail of 8 miles, 20 miles, and 8 miles, respectively. The projected completion date for all three is mid-2025 (all fingers crossed). As for the 20-mile gap through the Lower Buffalo Wilderness, it appears likely that gap will remain a proposed GPS route for the foreseeable future.

So, where do we stand on the OHT in terms of trail miles completed. Well, the answer is approximately 277 miles. Yes, about 83 percent of our trail is complete, and before the end of 2025, we're shooting to have 94 percent of it finished.

If you click on the link below, it will take you to a map of what the Norfork Trail, Ozarks Keystone Trail, and David's Trail section of the OHT will look like once they all is fully constructed:

https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1eBqZe3_qOy0sAmeKdFGzTFk57oesWCs&usp=sharing

We will be detailing progress as it occurs in upcoming editions of the OHTA Newsletter, so pleased stay tuned!

We'd like to express our appreciation to Roy Stovall for making the chart above possible! Thank you, Roy!!

− Looking Ahead on the Trail −

Frost Fest 2024

Frost Fest 2024 is just over one month away. Yes, it is scheduled for Saturday, February 3, 2024, at the Washington County Fairgrounds in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Again, this year's event will host over 2000 attendees, well over 50 breweries from across the region, food trucks, bands and vendors for what will be a true celebration of craft beer, art, and community. What's more, Frost Fest will take place regardless of the weather! In other words, it will not be canceled due to rain, snow, ice, cold, or shine. Tickets are already on sale, so get yours while the gettin' is good by clicking here: https://stubs.net/event/5664/frost-fest-2024-outdoor-beer-festival. Note: Early Entry tickets are in danger of selling out, so get 'em while you can!

Why is OHTA making such a big deal out of Frost Fest? The answer is that it is an event which, since 2016, has been presented by Fossil Cove Brewing Company of Fayetteville. Fossil Cove views Frost Fest not just as a one-day outdoor beer festival but as a way of supporting organizations they believe make our region a better place to live. And we're beyond pleased that for the second year straight, OHTA has been chosen as one of those organizations! Yes, that means each of you who has made this organization a part of your life is playing a key role in the OHTA becoming an organization deserving recognition!

So, once again, a big THANKS goes out to all of our members! And, if you will, please step out of your door and with all of your might loudly express added appreciation by shouting:

THANK YOU FOSSIL COVE!!!

We hope to see you all there!

− Looking Back on the Trail −

Spirit of Syllamo 2023

OHTA Booth at the Spirit of Syllamo 2023

As is becoming clearer to us all, the Ozark Highlands Trail is steadily gaining a name for itself as one of the premier thru-hike trails in the nation. But did you know the our trail is developing a fine reputation as an "ultramarathon" destination. Yes, thanks to the hard work and determination of our very own Jake Anderson—OHTA's North Maintenance Director and owner/operator of Norfork Adventure Supply—OHT is one of three trail systems in the area being utilized for staging ultra distance race events.

Central to the growing awareness of the OHT among ultramarathoners is the Spirit of Syllamo, a journey for only advanced trail runners through the picturesque and challenging terrain of the Syllamo Bike Trails, North Sylamore Creek Trail, and parts of the Ozark Highlands Trail-Sylamore Section. The idea for having an ultramarathon event in the Ozarks developed in 2021 among a small group of friends interested in ultra-distance challenges. Out of that challenge came the first official Syllamo event in 2022.

An ultramarathon is a long-distance running race that is longer than a marathon which is 26 miles, 385 yards/42.195 km. With two distances offered to the participant adventurers of 35 miles and 100 miles, Spirit of Syllamo securely fits the definition of 'ultramarathon.' This year's 35-mile loop provided 9,200 feet of elevation change while the 100-mile course challenged runners with 33,000 feet of elevation change. Race organizers set a cutoff time for each distance with 10 hours set for the 35-mile race and 34 hours serving as the maximum allotted time for the 100-mile participants.

Runners from as far away as Quebec, Canada, signed up for this year's challenge. Among the registrants, 33 participated in the 35-mile race, 31 of them completed the course, and, of those, 24 crossed the finish line in under 10 hours. Fifteen runners attempted the 100 mile race, eight managed to make it to the finish line, and

each of their times was under 34 hours. Winning times for the 35 and 100 miles races were 5:44:09 and 25:33:58, respectively.

Of course, a race occurring on the Ozark Highlands Trail would not be complete without an official OHTA aid station. As the picture on the preceding page shows, our organization was well represented this year by Tiffany Mallard, her husband, Evan, daughter, Madison, and Tiffany's Australian shepherd, Ozzie. As well, Randy Soeung and his daughter, Camille, pitched in to assure the runners were well served.

The OHTA owes each of you a heartfelt expression of gratitude, and we'll do so by saying THANK YOU ALL!!!

− 2024 for the Trail −

The past year brought with it some major challenges, and many, too many to count, OHTA members stepped up to the plate to meet those challenges head on. In so doing, each challenge was transformed into an opportunity for organizational growth and improvement. And did this organization ever grow and become stronger in 2023! Now, 2024 is upon us, and we are determined to continue the growth. Here is a list of just some of the steps we'll take in the year ahead to enhance the progress we've established:

- Continue OHTA's efforts to close the gaps and bring the OHT as near to completion by 2025 as is possible
- Establish stronger collaborative relationships with the United States Forest Service and the National Park Service
- Develop a tracking system that makes it possible to inform each member, in a timely manner, about the status of their membership
- Staff an OHTA booth for Frost Fest in February
- Elect board members in April to fill the positions of the three directors whose terms expire
- Rendezvous in April—date, day, and time to be determined
- Enhance the improvements that have been made in OHTA's social media presence
- Work toward making the OHTA website the face that best represents what this organization is about
- Establish once-yearly sawyer certification courses for volunteers seeking certification
- Broaden OHTA's base of qualified and dedicated trail maintainers
- Develop an annual First Aid Training Course for volunteers wanting to become sawyers that is free to all
- Expand participation in OHTA's Maintenance Base Camps
- Assure those volunteering to be maintainers and sawyers are properly equipped and outfitted
- Organize more group hikes and backpacking events
- Get the word out to everyone that the Hare Mountain Hike-In is scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, November 2 and 3, 2024
- Most importantly: Work to let each member of this organization know how much you are valued and appreciated. Each of you is a vital part of the heart of the OHTA!! THANK YOU!!!!

− Getting and Keeping Yourself on the Trail −

Are you longing to become part of something larger than yourself, say an organization, perhaps a trail organization? Well if you are, the OHTA may be just the one you're looking for? To learn whether this could be a good fit for you, simply click on: https://ozarkhighlandstrail.com/membership/, and explore—find what OHTA has to offer you! Doing so could put you just a step or two away from becoming a member of this fine organization! Go ahead; you have nothing to lose! It could very well prove to be the best step you've ever taken!

You say you're already a member but cannot remember whether your membership is current and don't have records of when you last paid membership dues? Well, we can and will help you figure this out. All that's necessary for you to do is click on: ohta@ozarkhighlandstrail.com, and ask us to figure it out for you. We'll get back to you promptly with the information necessary for to you know whether your dues are current or past due.

If you want to renew your membership, simply click on: https://ozarkhighlandstrail.com/membership/.
It's that easy! Go ahead; give it a shot. You won't regret renewing your membership!

− Relaxing Trailside with Interesting Breaktime Reads −

Only When I Step On It: One Man's Inspiring Journey to Hike The Appalachian Trail Alone – Peter E. Conti

Through Sand & Snow: a man, a bicycle, and a 43,000-mile journey to adulthood via the ends of the Earth – Charlie Walker

PLEASE NOTE: If you have a read or two you'd like to share with others who enjoy trail time, please send the title and author's name to ohta@ozarkhighlandstrail.com, and it will appear in the next edition of the OHTA Newsletter.

Here's to finding an abundance of growth-oriented opportunities in 2024 you will cherish and fondly remember in perpetuity!

Quotes for the month

"Joy in looking and comprehending is nature's most beautiful gift."
Albert Einstein

"I believe in God, only I spell it Nature."
Frank Lloyd Wright

Until the trails we travel alone become the trail that brings us together,
HIKE ONWARD!!

YOUR ASSOCIATION WITH THE OHT MAKES THIS THE ASSOCIATION IT IS!
THANK YOU ALL FOR BEING A PART OF THE OZARK HIGHLANDS TRAIL ASSOCIATION!!