



MAY 2024 NEWSLETTER

OZARK HIGHLANDS TRAIL ASSOCIATION

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

– **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 Jandrsevick (Maintenance Director-West Section)
Tiffany Mallard (Social Media and Promotions Coordinator)
Peter Cooper (Interim Member)

– **Looking Ahead on the Trail** –

Hare Mountain Hike-In

Can you believe it?! Yes, we're just over six months out from the 2024 Hare Mountain Hike-In which is held on the first weekend of every November. In keeping with tradition, Saturday and Sunday, November 2nd and 3rd will be the dates of this year's Hike-In, a celebration of the birth of the OHTA. And we have confirmation from none other than Tim Ernst that in September 1981, a meeting was held by a small gathering of folks interested in developing a trail from Lake Fort Smith to somewhere on the Arkansas/Missouri border along the eastern shore of Lake Norfolk. What came out of that meeting was the decision to form a club and to name it the Ozark Highlands Trail Association. An *Orders Approving Articles of Incorporation* document was signed on July 18, 1984, by the three subscribers/initial Board comprised of Tim Ernst, Scott Crook, and Donna Kisling. So as you can see, it could be said the OHTA has two dates of birth. Nonetheless, we are declaring it official that 2024's Hare Mountain Hike will be a celebration of the OHTA's 43rd birthday! Oh, how quickly this organization aged in only a year's time!

With all of that said, it's time to start gearing up and planning your favorite dish for this year's potluck. Last year's was, indeed, a feast, and we strongly suspect this year's will be nothing short of spectacular. And yes, there is water on top of the mountain—just bring some form of purifier.

There it is! We're hoping to see you all there!!

– **Looking Back on the Trail** –

2024 Rendezvous

The Rendezvous scheduled for Friday through Sunday, April 26-28, has come and gone. The weather forecast put a damper on attendance at this year's event, but good ol' Mother Nature proved to be quite accommodating. Concerns were voiced about Friday night's weather turning into a lightning fest, but the spirits of those who showed up at the group camp to stay overnight were undamped. If anything, they were lifted by the selection of tasty brews and the variety of palate-pleasing pizzas and other delectable delights found at Norfolk Brewing.

Those staying at group camp Friday night encountered strong winds and rounds of rain, and there was plenty of concern come Saturday morning that the scheduled hike would be a washout. To the contrary, the preceding night's moisture ignited the waterfalls all along the route, all sorts of flowers displayed their colors, and nature produced other unimagined surprises for all to see. It was a hike to be remembered, and we want to give a huge shout out to Dave Weiss for picking the route and leading us all on this journey of exploration and discovery!



Four Intrepid Hikers Braving the Spectacular Saturday Morning Hike

And then there was the meal extraordinaire for Saturday evening. About an hour before dinner was ready to be served, the wind blowing in off the lake was so intense it brought flashbacks of the cold and high winds that prevailed throughout 2023's Rendezvous meal . . . and annual meeting. Now, for reasons that cannot be explained, less than 30 minutes prior to the onset of the feast, the wind stopped, the sky cleared, the temperature stabilized and rose to a nice comfortable level, and it all stayed that way for the entire meal and meeting. It was unbelievably pleasant and nothing remotely similar to what was experienced in 2023. Yes, the food, the weather, the camaraderie, the atmosphere—all were as nice as anyone could have asked for and, altogether, made it an evening to remember!

Oh, yes, there are a couple more things to mention before signing off from this topic. First, OHTA wants to express its deepest appreciation to Elizabeth Granderson for the excellent job she did at putting together this year's dining experience! Undoubtedly, she pulled off, yet, another great one!! In addition, we want to let Kim and the crew at Whispering Woods know how very much we appreciate them for the superb job they do!

YOU ALL ARE TOP-NOTCH IN EVERY WAY!!

Post-meal Conversations



And let's not forget to mention that out of the blue two good-spirited and, as luck had it, hungry OHT thru-hikers from Florida arrived at the event saying they had heard rumors of the OHTA having some sort of celebration somewhere at Lake Norfolk. Soon after their arrival, it was



OHT's Florida Thru-Hikers Lovin' It All

learned that they believed they were just one day's hike away from finishing their quest of thru-hiking the entire Ozark Highlands Trail. Before long, though, the couple had the good fortune of getting to speak with several folks who were very knowledgeable about the trail. From those conversations, they quickly learned there was considerably more of the OKT/OHT in existence than their pre-trek research had revealed. With all the newly derived information in mind and being fully committed to staying true to their goal of hiking as much of the OHT as was humanly possible, it was clear modifications to their initial plan were in order. Consequently, they tacked a couple days onto their schedule so as to afford themselves the ability to put several more miles of the existing trail and some of the yet-to-be-constructed trail underfoot and behind them.

Saturday night introduced those left in Group Area I campground to very strong winds, and Sunday morning peppered everyone with rain. As a result, taking on the hike scheduled to run from the Barren Creek trail access parking area (incorrectly referred to as Niles Landing Trailhead in previous communications to OHTA members)

to the Arkansas/Missouri border appeared likely to be met with inclement weather, and several folks bowed out. However, our two thru-hikers from Florida were determined to continue their quest of conquering as much of the OHT as was humanly possible and had already made arrangements with Roy Stovall of the OKT/OHTA for a shuttle to Barren Creek. Knowing that hiking is largely a mind over matter thing, three other OHTA members made the decision to take on the trail, and the day's trip was on!

Now, it seems unlikely that anyone on that hike had a direct connection to Mom Nature, so, perhaps, what happened with the Sunday hike occurred only by chance. What are we talking about? Well, the good-weather fortunes bestowed on the OHTA for the Saturday morning hike and the Saturday evening meal and annual meeting were granted, as well, to the Sunday morning hikers. As it was, the only time water of any significance fell from above was during the short break taken at the northern terminus of the trail. The small cloud cell's light sprinkles were short-lived and a brief respite from the heat of the day. The section of trail, though only recently constructed, resonated with greenery and dots of flowery color from from one end to the other. It's too bad the day had to come to an end, for it could not have been a more perfect day for a hike!

So what became of the two thru-hikers once the yo-yo from Barren Creek to the border was complete? Did they call it a day and declare an end to their pursuit of the trail? Well, of course not. They stopped at the parking area, got a bite to eat, and off they headed to their next destination, Bean Bluff. They made it clear, however, that the Bean was not the end of their journey. Their jaunt the following day would find them starting at Robinson Point Trailhead and traveling south to and past Panther Creek Trailhead. Perhaps they deemed that as being a sufficient thru-hike, but, perhaps, not. Thank you, Roy Stovall and Tim Ernst, for all you each did to make their time on the OHT rewarding!



A Brief Pose Before the Start of Sunday's Trek

OHTA's newfound Florida friends have our very best wishes for success on all of their journeys! Who knows . . . if good fortune is on our side, we may hear back from them in the not-too-distant future.



Bring on Rendezvous 2025!!

2024's Election Results

Number of Candidates: **4**

- Brent Umphlett
- Wade Colwell
- Randy Soeung
- Reggie Garrett

Total Mail-in and Email Ballots Cast: **7**

Total Online/Election Runner Ballots Cast: **202**

Percentage of Votes Cast for Each Candidate:

- Brent Umphlett—**32%**
- Wade Colwell—**30%**
- Randy Soeung—**24%**
- Reggie Garrett—**14%**

Date the 3-Year Term for the Leading Vote-Getters Begins: **July 1, 2024**

OHTA sends out a huge **THANKS** to each of the four candidates who ran in this year's election! People like you are what keep this organization's blood pumping! See you at the Board meeting in late June!

Pack Rat's Brewha Bushwhack 2024

The Brewha Bushwhack for 2024 is history! Once again, the OHTA was well represented by a great team of volunteers led by our very own Steven Parker. Who were they? Well, none other than Tiffany Mallard and her husband and young daughter and Peter Cooper—a superb bunch, and to you all we say, THANK YOU!! The report was that the competitive events were nothing less than very challenging and extremely interesting, but this year's attendance may have been down from that of 2023 for reasons unknown. If that is true, we extend our best wishes to Pack Rat for a more robust turnout at 2025's Brewha Bushwhack!

– TLC Along the Trail –

OHTA's Adopt-A-Highway for 2024

In keeping true to our efforts, OHTA is launching another Adopt-A-Highway cleanup of the organization's adopted section of Highway 23. If you would like to get out and engage in an activity that benefits your great state (provided you live in Arkansas) and the OHTA, then join us as we beautify our one mile of highway south of Cherry Bend Trailhead on the OHT. Here are the details:

Day and Time: Saturday, May 25, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.

Meeting Place: Cherry Bend Trailhead at the Ozark Highlands Trail on Highway 23

Gear to Bring: water—equipment will be supplied

Total Time Commitment: approximately 3 hours

Contact Info: Randy Soeung—randyly80@gmail.com

NOTE: If you have any questions about this very worthwhile event and/or want to let OHTA's Adopt-A-Highway coordinator know you plan to volunteer for this month's cleanup crew, please use the email address above to contact Randy Soeung. We hope to see you there!

– Interesting Trailside Read –

A Street Cat Named Bob: And How He Saved My Life – James Bowen

If I Live Until Morning: A True Story of Adventure, Tragedy, and Transformation – Jean Muenchrath

So which direction will you head on the trail? The best bet is to give each a shot—up and back.
That way you miss nothing!



Great American Eclipse - April 8, 2024
White River, Arkansas

Van Brown

photo contributed for use in this newsletter by Bill Dark: www.williamdark.com

Quotes for the month

"The adventure of life is to learn. The purpose of life is to grow. The nature of life is to change. The challenge of life is to overcome. The essence of life is to care. The opportunity of life is to serve. The secret of life is to dare. The spice of life is to befriend. The beauty of life is to give."

William Arthur Ward

"Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside in a cloud of smoke, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming "Wow! What a Ride!"

Hunger S. Thompson, *The Proud Highway: Saga of a Desperate Southern Gentleman, 1955-1967*

Till 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!!