

Knobs and Knolls

October 2015

Wildlife Weekend 2015

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Despite the less than ideal weather, this year's Wildlife Weekend was one of the best in recent years. For those that came to the Park to learn and have fun, the weather was not a damper!

On Friday evening, following the opening reception and an opportunity to view the many entries, the photography contest winners were announced. (For information about the winners [see page 2](#) of this newsletter.) The keynote talk, "Capturing Nature with Your Camera", was then presented by Chris Duncan. Chris, a local professional photographer specializing in nature and sports photography, provided many tips and techniques for improving and enhancing photographs taken in the wild – accompanied by many of his many stunning images.

Saturday morning began with the annual "early-bird" bird walk, led by Dave Worley of the Bristol Bird Club and Steele Creek Park naturalist Larry McDaniel. At the end of the walk, participants arrived at the Bird Banding Station to see the banders in action. (For details on the bird banding, see [Michele Sparks' report](#) elsewhere in this newsletter.)

Marty Silver, the always popular naturalist with Warriors' Path State Park, attracted a large group for his walk focused on animal tracking, as did Connie Deegan for her lively "Snake Talk and Walk". Gabriel Zeiger's "Mushroom Foray", and Jeremy Stout's geology program rounded out the day's nature walks.

Meanwhile, lots of kids took advantage of the opportunity to create a variety of nature crafts, while exhibitors from around the Tri-Cities were on hand to talk about their organizations and provide demonstrations. This year's exhibitors included Bay's Mountain Park, Hands on Regional Museum, the Bristol Bird Club, the Clyde Austin 4-H Center, Caldwell Community College, ETSU Geosciences, and the Steele Creek Park Herbarium.

Many thanks to all those who made this year's Wildlife Weekend a great success, including the presenters and naturalists, the exhibitors, the Nature Center and Parks and Recreation staff, and our many volunteers. Without all of them, the event would not have been the success that it was.

Wildlife Weekend Photo Contest and Show

This year's Wildlife Weekend Photography Contest and Show was another great success. Despite a small decline in the number of photos entered in the contest, the judges were impressed with the overall quality of those submitted. This was reflected in the fact that they selected a total of 12 photographs as honorable mentions in addition to the First, Second, and Third Place winners in each division (Adult and Youth).

All of the photographs submitted were displayed during Wildlife Weekend. The exhibition room was busy all weekend as attendees viewed the many entries and voted on their favorites in each division.

Winning photographers and their photos in each Division were as follows:

Adult Division

First Place – Jeffrey Levine for “Snow Goose”
Second Place – Jeffrey Levine for “Footbridge”
Third Place – Matthew Mills for “Daybreak”
People’s Choice – Jeffrey Levine for “Footbridge”

Honorable Mentions – Mitchell Gore for “Let’s Go Fishing”, Jennifer Knecht for “Humming Along with the Hummingbird Moth”, Jeffrey Levine for “Autumn Glory” and “Autumn in the Park”, Danielle Sproles for “The Emerging Cicada”, and Nancy Vernon for “Moss Balls”.

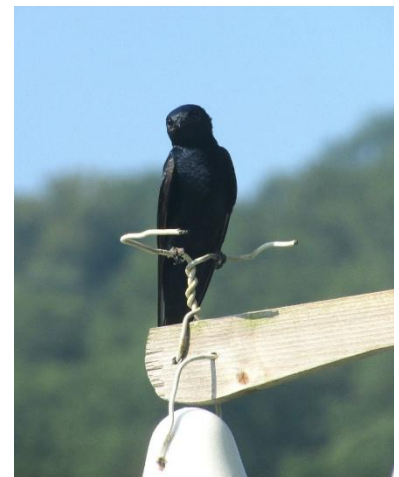


“Snow Goose” by Jeffrey Levine

Youth Division

First Place – Reanna Peters for “This is for the Birds”
Second Place – Abby Webb for “Surrounded by Green”
Third Place – Reanna Peters for “Just Hangin’ Around”
People’s Choice – Lilly Belcher for “Sunbathing”

Honorable Mentions – Lilly Belcher for “Leaf Me Alone”, Spencer Hopkins for “Birds of a Feather Flock Together”, Liz Keohane for “Slithering Around”, Braden Lay for “Mushroom Kingdom”, Brice Lay for “Sitting Duck”, and John Seabolt for “Hornwork Paradise”.



“This is for the Birds” by Reanna Peters

Copies of all of the winning photos are available for viewing on the Friends website at www.friendsofsteelecreek.org.

Wildlife Weekend in Photos

Photos contributed by Sonie Schermer and Robin Feierabend



Wildlife Weekend Bird Banding

Story and photos contributed by Michele Sparks



Setting up the nets

Bird Banding involves attaching a light-weight band to the bird's leg. Each band has a unique serial number and stays on the bird for the rest of its life. It's a non-invasive long-term technique to study the migratory patterns of many different bird species. Millions of wild birds (including migratory songbirds, waterfowl, owls, shore birds, and others) are banded around the world annually. This activity contributes greatly to conservation, the study of birds' habits, and to a greater understanding of their needs. When a bird is caught, it is carefully handled to avoid stress or injury. The band is affixed to the proper leg and the serial number recorded.

The bird's wingspan is measured and recorded as well. The age and gender are also determined at the same time. All this information can be valuable for conservation studies. It's also a wonderful annual opportunity for Wildlife Weekend participants to see "citizen science" in action at Steele Creek Park.

Bird banders, Richard Lewis and Rack Cross of the Bristol Bird Club, set up their their nets at the Bird Banding Demonstration, with additional assistance from Friends Board member Michele Sparks. Although the activity started and ended with a steady drizzle, "What we didn't have in quantity, we definitely had in quality" exclaimed Sparks. Within the first half-hour, a Blue-headed Vireo and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet were caught in the nets. Participants from the early morning bird walk got a chance to see the birds up-close, banded and then released back into the wild.



Ruby-crowned Kinglet



Blue-headed Vireo



Affixing a leg band

Elements of Nature Photography

With this issue, we begin a series of articles on using your camera to capture nature, by Sonie Schermer. Sonie is a founding Board Member of Friends, and an accomplished amateur nature photographer. Additional articles will appear in subsequent issues of Knobs and Knolls.

There is something healing about nature - the peace and quiet along with feelings of growth and renewal. When taking photographs of nature, try to express these things in your images. Cameras don't take pictures, people do! A good photo is a "whole brain" experience.

The first element of photographing nature is the subject. It's the point of interest - what caught your eye in the first place. Avoid putting your subject in the center of the frame; compose your photo before you snap the picture.

The second element is the technical manipulation that records the image. This involves the left side of the brain - the camera and equipment. Read your camera's manual..... groan! Learn and know your camera, what it can do and what it can't do. Also, be knowledgeable about additional equipment that can enhance and improve your photos. (For more information about cameras and equipment, [see insert on the next page.](#))

The third element of nature photography is the aesthetics of exposure - using composition, depth of field, and lighting to capture the image. In subsequent newsletter articles we will highlight specific techniques to use in photographing nature and provide tips and visual examples to explore.

Left Brain Technical Photo Tips:

- Always carry extra batteries and memory cards.
- Use a tripod whenever you can; a remote release helps to eliminate vibration.
- If your camera has exposure bracketing, use it to shoot multiple versions with different exposures.
- For urban and travel shots use the "P" setting if your camera has this; it sets both the aperture and shutter speed automatically.
- Take lots of notes – location, time of day, conditions, subject, lens, aperture, shutter speed; some cameras do at least some of this, called metadata.
- And finally - practice, practice, practice. The beauty of digital cameras is that you can shoot to your heart's content without using expensive and time consuming film.



Elements of Nature Photography

(Continued)

LEFT SIDE OF BRAIN (THE TECH SIDE)

Cameras and Equipment

CAMERAS

- Digital Single Lens Reflex (DSLR)
 - Most complex to use, but highest quality and greatest flexibility
- Point and Shoot
 - Convenient, quick and easy to use, some with many extra features
- Phone or Tablet Cameras
 - Very convenient with rapidly increasing quality and features

For best results, your DSLR should have:

- Telephoto or zoom lens
- Polarizing filter
- Ability to shoot and store images in raw format
 - Allows more post processing than JPEG format
- Tripod and remote shutter release

LENSES

- Three Basic Types
 - Wide Angle – less than 50 mm
 - Standard – 50 mm
 - Telephoto – greater than 50mm
- Specialty Lenses
 - Macro
 - Fisheye
 - Zoom

SOFTWARE

Editing programs (such as Photoshop, iPhoto, and Lightroom) are needed for post shooting processing and capturing settings and metadata

Nature Center Expansion

Plans are beginning to take shape for the long awaited Nature Center Expansion. Friends Board members and other interested individuals are working closely with Terry Napier, Jeremy Stout and other Parks and Recreation staff to plan for new exhibits and special features to be included in the expanded facility.

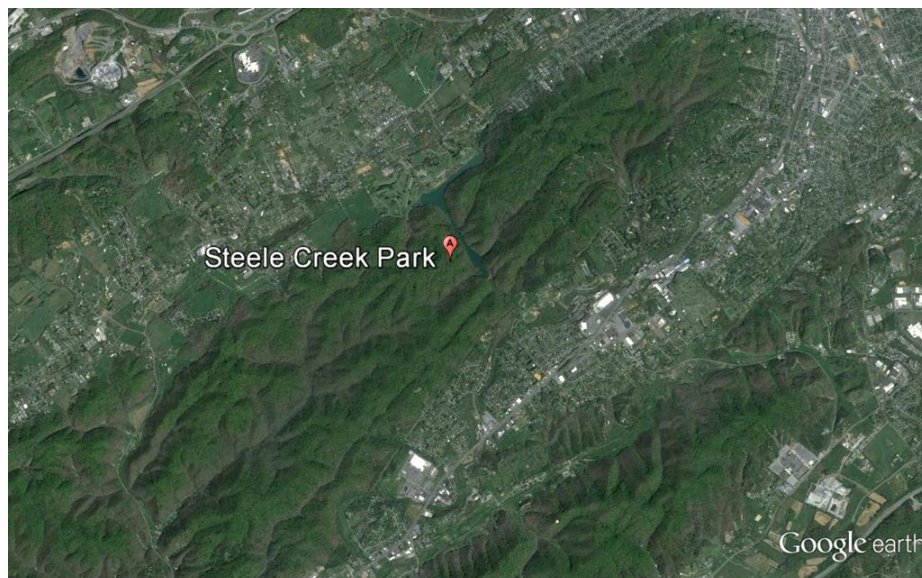
Do you have ideas that you'd like to see incorporated into the plans? If so, we want to hear from you! Contact us with your thoughts at mail@friendsofsteelecreek.org, or talk with Jeremy or the other naturalists when you visit the Nature Center.

Steele Creek Park Explorer

If you haven't seen our very own "Steele Creek Explorer" on YouTube, you need to check him out! Jeremy Stout, as the intrepid explorer, describes and explains many of the natural features of the Park. Covering such diverse topics such as geology, birds, trees, habitats and turtles, each episode runs 10 to 15 minutes and is filled with fascinating and useful information. The series is produced for broadcast on Bristol Tennessee's public access television station (BTES Channel 16), but all of the episodes are also available for viewing on YouTube. About a dozen episodes are now available and more are being produced all the time. Links to "Steele Creek Explorer" can be found on our web page at [Steele Creek Explorer](#).

Did You Know?

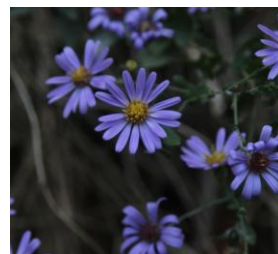
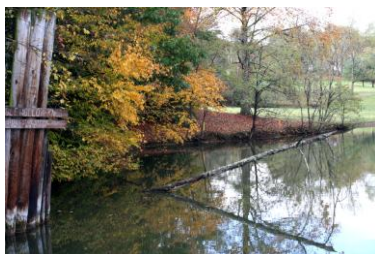
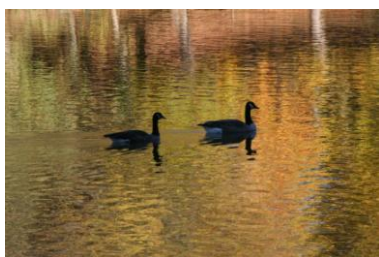
Steele Creek Park is the fourth largest municipal park in the State of Tennessee, and the 44th largest in the United States! With more than 2,200 acres, it is almost three times larger than Central Park in New York City. In Tennessee, only Shelby Farms Park (Memphis), Warner Parks (Nashville) and Bays Mountain Park (Kingsport) are larger.



Nature Center Activities

Don't miss Don Holt's Winter Greenery Hike on Friday, December 4th at 4:00 pm. Meet Don at the Nature Center for a Holiday-themed adventure! Enjoy a mild hike in search of winter wonders including Christmas ferns, mistletoe, and hollies. Also, help find and collect the 2015 Christmas tree for our Nature Center!

Sights of Autumn at Steele Creek Park



You can keep up with what's going on at the Park and with Friends by following our webpage at <http://www.friendsofsteelecreek.org>.

We appreciate feedback about our communication. Let us know if you find these newsletters interesting and/or useful. If you have suggestions for topics to be covered, or other formats that we could use, let us know by e-mail at mail@friendsofsteelecreek.org.

If you prefer to not receive these newsletters, simply let us know at mail@friendsofsteelecreek.org.