

Genesee Valley Hiking Club Newsletter

Message from the President:

Larry O'Heron

Welcome to summer! As I recall, we have still not broken the 90 degree temperature mark.

I am glad to be back from hiking 280 miles in Spain. My partner and I started in Barcelona and thru-hiked Montserrat and the Los Monegros desert to reach the historic city of Zaragoza. From there, we caught a train to Santiago to hike along the lush green coastline of Galicia. It was a memorable experience.

We had not even left Spain to return to the United States and were already planning our 2024 hike along the northern coast of Spain. We are imagining Bilbao, among other beautiful spots in our hiking future.

The club has two social events coming up, thanks to the hard work of Iris R and Ruth T, our social committee.

On August 27th, we will have a get-together in Mendon Ponds Park, in which the club will provide hamburgers and veggie burgers. It will also be a potluck event. Keep an eye out for the event listing.

In October the club will have the annual meeting, also at Mendon Ponds Park. This is an important annual event as we will be electing officers for the positions of President, Vice-President and Treasurer.

As with any other social group, the success of the group depends on the involvement

and commitment of both the members and those who have stepped forward to provide guidance.

I look back on my first hikes with the club. If not for the effort and work of Ron and Barb Navik, Derek Price, Cynthia Howk, Ann Bayley, Dick Rappennecker and many others that I did not ever meet, I might still be poking around on a Saturday or Sunday morning, wondering what to do with myself.

Patty M, our secretary (and past Vice-President) is organizing an incredibly challenging task. The club's 100th anniversary is coming up in only five years.

Yes, 95 years ago, in 1928, the Genesee Valley Hiking Club sponsored the first of what would be a century of hiking. I am sure that it would have seemed unbelievable to those incredible folks back then ... or maybe not.

Just maybe they had a vision of getting people off their duffs and into the great outdoors.

Just maybe their goal was to show people that there is more to life than work and responsibilities.

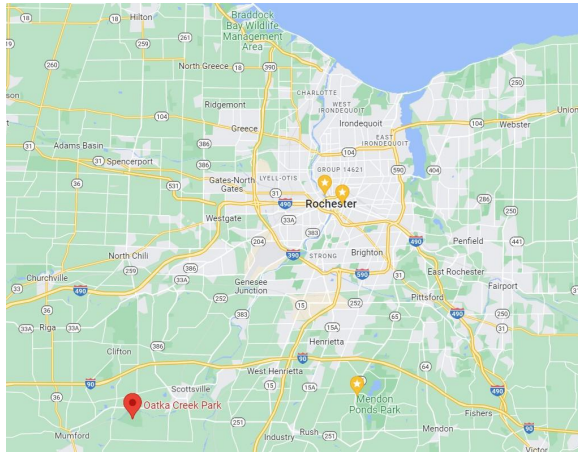
That just maybe a person could for a few hours, be one with nature ... find themselves mentally at peace in their surroundings ... and have their soul lifted by the spectacular wonder that is here in Monroe County.

I hope to see you on the trails.

Larry O'Heron

Oatka Creek Park

*** Chat-GPT assisted



This 400 acre park encompasses a quiet, rustic corner of Monroe County in the town of Wheatland.

This mostly undeveloped parkland is home to wildlife and fishing enthusiasts. Approximately one mile of this creek (both banks) runs through the 461-acre Oatka Creek Park.

I had difficulty finding information about the park, but here are some interesting facts about the area where the park is located and the region.

Native American Heritage

Prior to European settlement, the area surrounding Oatka Creek Park was inhabited by the Seneca people, one of the six nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. The Seneca had a rich cultural and historical presence in the region, and their influence can still be felt today.

Early Settlement

European settlers began arriving in the area in the late 18th century. Wheatland, the town where Oatka Creek Park is located, was officially established in 1821. Agriculture, particularly wheat farming, played a significant role in the early development of the area.

Industrialization and Changing Land Use

Like many areas in upstate New York, the region experienced industrialization during the 19th century. The presence of waterways, including Oatka Creek, facilitated the establishment of mills and factories. These industries utilized the creek's water power to drive machinery and played a vital role in the local economy.

Creation of Oatka Creek Park

Unfortunately I could not find out when the park was created. I searched the Monroe County Parks website and then a more generic web search.

Common Recreation Activities at Oatka Creek Park

The park encompasses diverse landscapes, including woodlands, wetlands, and open

fields, making it an ideal location for outdoor activities such as hiking, picnicking, birdwatching, and fishing.

Walking along the creek itself provides opportunities for scenic views.

Some of the many activities possible here include:

- Birdwatching
- Cross-Country Skiing (non-groomed)
- Fishing- Fishing is allowed in Oatka Creek Park. Follow NYS Department of Environmental Conservation guidelines and rules and licensing.
- Geo-caching (approx 13 caches)
- Hiking/Running
- Horseback Riding
- Kayaking/Canoeing
- Snowshoeing
- Soccer

Some History

(Source:

<https://www.townofwheatland.org/single-post/gypsum-mining-in-garbutt>)

Soon after settlement of the area, vast deposits of gypsum were discovered beneath the ground. The Garbutt family and others conducted thriving businesses of mining, grinding and selling gypsum.

The mine entrances were on the south side of the creek on the side of the hill. The mines were located on the north side of Oatka Creek.

There were two types of jobs in the mines: shooters (or drillers) and shovelers. The shooters calculated the amount of dynamite to use and placed it. The dynamite was set off as they left the mine each day.

The next morning, men were sent in to check the overhangs to see if they were safe and replace any props that had been blown down.

Then shovelers went to work loading the gypsum into cars that ran on a wooden track.

None of the gypsum companies in Garbutt survived the depression. The hamlet of Garbutt became a ghost of the former vital community it had been.

Today, foundations of former buildings and bridge abutments are overgrown with vegetation. These reminders of the early days are gone forever.

Park Amenities

Oatka Creek Park offers amenities, including: picnic shelters, playgrounds, sports fields, and a network of trails that wind through the park's various ecosystems.

Historical details on the creation of Oatka Creek Park require contacting the local authorities/historical societies in the region.

Location and Directions

Oatka Creek Park is located in the southern portion of the county in the Town of Wheatland, at 9797 Union Street, Scottsville, New York 14546. Enter the park from Union Street and Stewart Road.

Rules and Regulations

The park has a Carry-in Carry-out rule.

Beautiful Day for a GVHC Hike



Photo by John T.
Location: Mendon Ponds Park
Date: June 25, 2023



Photo by John T
Location: Durand Eastman
Date: June 24, 2023



Photo by John T
Location: Shadow Pines
Date: June 11, 2023



Photo by John T
Location: Four Mile Creek Preserve
Date: May 27, 2023



Photo by John T. Location: Seneca Park
Date April 16, 2023

A Camino of Cities, Mountains and Desert

Contrasts are found on each of the caminos. Contrasts stimulate thought and reflection. In May of 2023, my partner, Deb, and I started in Barcelona, Spain on the Caminos Barcelona - Catalan. We wondered what contrasts we would experience over the next month.

After two days in Barcelona, resting and avoiding rain, we left this cosmopolitan city behind by following the Río Llobregat inland.

On day 3, we followed the advice of a local. Instead of trudging up the road, we climbed just under 2000 feet up the backside of Montserrat. The gorgeous views in a serene environment sans traffic were the reward for hiking on mountain trails, over big rocks, and along steep cliffs.

At the Albergue Sant Jaume in Jorba, one of the few on the Camino Catalan - the parish priest and hospitalero, was astonished at our goal of Zaragoza.

He described the Los Monegros desert, the most sparsely populated area of Spain, as long stages with very few services, towns and/or people.

Deb and I “huddled” immediately, preparing for the next five days thru-hiking the desert. Two of the stages exceeded 22 miles / day with “nothing” in between. Taxis

would divide each super long stage into something doable.

Truck stops would be lodging, and gas stations would be supermarkets.

Under constant sun, we prayed for lots of cloud cover. The low 80's required lots of hydration. The shopping list made our backpacks a lot heavier: salami & cheese, protein bars, peaches, bananas, fiber wafers, flan, chocolate and six bottles of Aquarius mixed with water.

While the Meseta has pilgrims and support structures, Deb and I had only each other mile after mile. When gas stations on the national highway are your support system, it changes the camino.

Yet in many places the desert was achingly beautiful. We found life everywhere: plants and shrubs, lizards and rabbits - all scratching out an existence in the arid land. Between the highways and heavily irrigated farms, it was a different world.

Reaching Zaragoza we had a well-deserved rest.

Then we headed for Galicia's lushness. Walking the path to Finisterre and Muxia through the forests and along the Atlantic Ocean was breath-taking.

In three weeks we had cities, desert, forests and ocean. We had such contrasts, such time for thinking, such time for leaving the world behind.

Photos by Larry O'Heron



Palau d' Anglesola, Cataluna (June 3rd, 2023): Entering the Los Monegros desert



Fraga, Aragon (June 5th, 2023): The city lies in the Río Cinca Valley



Bujaraloz, Aragon (June 8th, 2023): Full-on in the Los Monegros Desert



Fall Weekend Festival on the Finger Lakes Trail

Ryan B leads up the GVHC Trail Maintenance effort. We have responsibility for maintaining part of the Finger Lakes Trail. In line with Ryan's leadership on the FLT maintenance, I've included the following info on an upcoming Finger Lakes Trail event.

The dates are September 15, 16, and 17 in Watkins Glen.
Go to the Finger Lakes Trail Conference web site
(<https://fingerlakestrail.org/whats-happening/special-events/>)
to get a list of accommodations.

There will be 5 - 6 hikes in the area each day of differing lengths and difficulties. There are wineries, breweries and shopping in addition to the breathtaking Glen itself.