



FRIENDS OF GWYNNS FALLS/LEAKIN PARK

1920 EAGLE DRIVE

BALTIMORE, MD 21207

www.friendsofgwynnsfallsleakinpark.org

Winter 2018

WINTER WALKS

June Cole

I hike in Leakin Park on Thursday's Gentle Walk from 9 to 10am with Heide Grundmann, the Friends' volunteer guide for these weekly hikes. We enjoy the distinct seasons in the park. Winter, with a limited palette of browns, grays and the occasional fluorescent green of moss, has its own stark beauty. Without the leaves and understory plants, one can better decipher the topography. Enormous outcroppings of rock and boulders anchor the hill-sides and dot the stream valleys. Springs trickle downhill, and broken headstones in forgotten cemeteries puzzle us.

Recently we set out uphill from Winans Meadow along the Ravine Trail. Without the foliage, the sounds around us are more acute: the running water of Dead Run Stream, the scuffling of unseen creatures scurrying for cover and birds calling each other. The massive tree trunks are elegant in their nakedness, and their roots, exposed by erosion, clinging tenaciously to the hillside. The Osage Orange "allee" beckons as we stroll through it, cocooned by the inter-locking branches overhead. Crossing Eagle Drive we steer towards the red-blazed trail behind the trail house and then across the hidden meadow now adorned with the Outward Bound climbing structures. As we are about to re-enter the forest, I hear, then see, slight movement in the downhill shrubs, then quiet. We halt, search with our eyes and suddenly, a huge deer with enormous antlers bounds through the shrubs. We try to track it. Then we are stunned when two more large deer with equally large racks rapidly follow the first one. Flashing their bushy white tails, they disappear before we can reach for our cameras.

In awe, we follow the Franklinton Loop. Crossing over a brook, we wind our way toward the mysterious fieldstone



Left to Right: Annette Argal, Heide Grundman, Gisela Brown, June Cole and Mary Madison

wall, one of my favorite places in the park. As we approach the tall hollow tree, we are startled by a small group of deer in the brush to our right. These are smaller deer without antlers. I am captivated by the stream of undulating bodies as they quickly run away. Heide counts nine. Only a bit farther along the trail, right below us, again we hear rustling underbrush—yet another group of smaller deer are fleeing in leaps, hearing our approach. Two of them halt as we do. We stare curiously at each other from a distance. They turn and disappear.

Descending on the Old Fort Trail towards Winans Meadow past the historic structures we return to our cars. Already I miss the serenity and surprises of the forest, but there is always next Thursday!

*This is a re-print from a 2011 newsletter that we thought was worth sharing again and isn't it good to know that June Cole is still hiking.

Gwynns Falls Trail Advocates (GFTA)

The GFTA continue to meet on the 4th Monday every other month at the Parks and People campus. The group consists of people who are frequent users of the Gwynns Falls Trail and share an interest in improving and maintaining the trail so that it continues to serve as a viable option for bicycle commuters, runners, walkers, various recreational users, bird watchers, and explorers. Please check out our website at www.gwynnsfallstrail.org for more information. The GFTA would like to welcome Joel Conde as Trail Keeper Program Coordinator with the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks. He will be recruiting volunteers to assist with trail maintenance, managing the 4th Saturday trail clean ups along the Gwynns Falls Trail, and promoting what is happening along the trails. WELCOME JOEL!

Parkrun continues to take place every Saturday morning at 9:00am in Winans Meadow. For those who don't know about parkrun, it is a weekly 5k timed run/walk along the Gwynns Falls Trail in the Winans Meadow area of the park, 4500 Franklinton Rd. For more information, go to parkrun.us/leakinpark.



**IT'S FREE...RUNNERS & WALKERS,
DOGS ON A LEASH, CHILDREN IN
STROLLERS, CHILDREN UP TO AGE 11
ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT - ALL
ARE WELCOME
COME JOIN IN THE FUN AND FEL-
LOWSHIP!!!**



Baltimore Gas and Electric Pipeline

Jo Orser

Baltimore Gas and Electric (BGE) and the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks (BCRP) held a joint public Open House on January 24th to explain the route and construction schedule of a new gas pipeline that will replace the present one, also located in the park. The first one became operational in 1949 just a few years after the park was created. Those attending had the opportunity to meet with representatives from both BGE and BCRP who were stationed at various sites in the gymnasium to answer questions and respond to comments. Copies of maps and other informational materials were available as handouts.

The decision on a final route came after four years of dialogue between BGE, BCRP and the Friends of Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park to find a route that kept the physical and environmental damage to the park to a minimum. Walks together in the park were frequent and probing discussions even more so. The principal set of considerations included protection of the park's natural habitat—the preservation of its magnificent old growth trees as well as sprouting young ones, and concern for diversity of forest plant life and wildlife

inhabitants (including migratory fowl). Equally important in the consideration was minimizing the number of residents impacted by proximity to the pipeline, both in the construction phase and subsequently by living adjacent to the permanent 50 feet clear-cut.

The total number of mature trees lost to this pipeline disturbance is significant, to say the least. It will take years for saplings, which BGE has agreed to pay for, to reach even 30 feet and that does not account for the remaining 50 foot wide space that will remain devoid of tree foliage in perpetuity.

From the point of view of the Friends, while the result of these deliberations may be the lesser of evils, the impact of a project of this magnitude comes with great heartache to all who treasure this largest woodland park reserve within an east coast city. Regrettably, the 1940s decision to run a pipeline through the green space of a new park may have come too early for sufficient public appreciation of its natural habitat, but this most recent episode nevertheless illustrates the imperative for sustained vigilance to champion protection of our green resources.

Vigilance is the key word for the future.

Activities, Events and Information

- FOGFLP website: friendsofgwynnsfallsleakinpark.org
- Follow us on Facebook - Friends of Gwynns Falls Leakin Park
- FOGFLP ANNUAL MEETING - APRIL 15 (more info to follow)
- SECOND SUNDAYS begin on April 8 and continue on the second Sunday of each month through November. We will notify you if changes occur as a result of the BGE Pipeline construction in the park
- BALTIMORE HERB FESTIVAL - MAY 26 baltimoreherbfestival.com
- National Trails Day - June 2 - americanhiking.org
- Carrie Murray Nature Center - carriemurraynaturecenter.org
- Baltimore Bird Club - batimorebirdclub.org
- Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks - bcrp.baltimorecity.gov
- Nature Art in the Park - NatureArtBaltimore - Facebook
- Tuesday Morning Trail Work - On hiatus during the cold months and will be starting up again in the Spring (contact George if you are interested in volunteering, garrant@yahoo.com)
- Thursday Morning Gentle Walks, 9:00 - 10am in Winans Meadow. Contact Heide at hgrundot@aol.com



Parks Made It Possible

Ed Orser

On January 14 of this year, Hunting Ridge resident John McCaul recorded his 365th consecutive 30-minute bicycle ride, with many of the trips starting off on the trails of Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park. The park sections afforded a wonderful sense of relaxation, free from worrying about traffic, but they also enabled access to other parts of the city, which he came to appreciate with a “bikers-eye” view. Of his estimated 3,220 miles for the year, he figures that at least half were in parkland.

The concept originated with a program he learned about from a Mt. Washington bike shop which sponsors 30 miles X 30 minute rides. After receiving T-shirts for completing a number of those challenges, he found that the 30-minute framework felt manageable and wondered: why stop? why not go for 100—or for 365? Admitting that the full year goal may have seemed “a little crazy,” the more he did it, the more he wanted the satisfaction of accomplishment.

While John is content to be a solo rider, he also relishes the times others join him. Last year, for his (spoiler alert) 50th birthday, fourteen friends joined him for a 50 X 50 ride, from Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park on the city’s west side and following a route through city neighborhoods as far as Herring Run Park on east. Due to mechanical problems, the 50 miles had to become 50 kilometers, though the experience was no less rewarding.

Asked about variable weather conditions, John acknowledged that the recent bitter cold had been a special challenge, especially the day the wind chill registered as three degrees! Rain, he said, was “the worst,” and ice could be “ridiculous.” Nevertheless, the good news has been how many days the experience is more than worth it.

The enjoyment of sharing rides with others, introducing them to the way he has experienced the parks and neighborhoods by bicycle, leads John to extend an invitation to join him. Look for his notices on upcoming FOGLP social media.



NEWSLETTER UPGRADE

FOGFLP is requesting your feedback as to how you would like to receive the newsletter. We are making plans to digitize the newsletter and deliver it via email. This will cut printing and postage costs and make things easier all around for everyone. It will also improve the quality of the images that are included in the newsletter. And remember, you can still print the newsletter yourself. Those who wish to continue receiving a printed copy will be accommodated. Please complete the stamped and addressed postcard that is attached to your newsletter and mail it asap so we are able to report on this at the annual meeting. Thank you for your cooperation.

Bridget McCusker
Editor

Send in
Postcard



Follow The Friends of Gwynns Falls Leakin Park
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on Instagram (FOGFLPMEDIA)



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MLK Day of Service

The Friends sponsored another MLK Day of Community Service on January 15th. It was a very cold day and 16 brave souls showed up to deliver some TLC to our beautiful park. Special recognition goes to the Joyce Family from Hunting Ridge. For the second year in a row, Allison and Charlie Joyce brought their three lovely daughters, Virginia, Julia, and Genevieve, along to provide them the opportunity to observe and experience what it means to be engaged in their community and environment. Our tasks for the day included invasive vine removal in the park and trash collection along the Gwynns Falls Trail and Franklintown Road. At least ten large garbage bags were filled with trash and the invasive vines, well,... they are less invasive. The trash and the invasive vines have a never ending presence in the park and thanks to the dedicated community volunteers who showed up under adverse weather conditions, we were able to spiff things up and show off our treasured refuge.



Annual Meeting

Mark your calendars ! FOGFLP'S Annual Meeting will be held on April 15. Our guest speaker this year will be Ned Tillman, Earth Scientist and author. You will be receiving more information closer to the date. Hope to see you there!