

River-to River Trail Society Announces Fall Hiking Schedule

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The River-to-River Trail Society announces that this fall it will once again offer a schedule of guided hikes in and near the Shawnee National Forest. All hikes are free and open to the public. Although the hikes vary in level of difficulty, all are intended for people in good health who have done some hiking in the past. Hiking sticks and boots or sturdy shoes are strongly recommended. All hikers should bring their own water and a snack. No dogs, please.

In order to protect the health of leaders and hikers, a number of new procedures will be in effect during the coronavirus emergency and are mandatory. All groups will be limited to no more than fifteen hikers, except in certain wilderness areas where the Forest Service has limited groups to no more than ten. In order to achieve that goal, all hikes will require advance registration with the hike leader. Starting times and meeting places will be communicated to registrants over the telephone. All hikers must bring a face mask capable of covering nose, mouth, and chin. NO MASK, NO HIKE. While hikers need not wear face masks while hiking, they must wear them when standing near other hikers or when passing on the trail. Proper social distance must be maintained whenever possible. Because the route of all hikes will be either a loop or out-and-back, the Society will not provide any transportation. All hikers will be responsible for transporting themselves to the trailhead, and all will be expected to sign a waiver of liability. Any other conditions required by executive order of the Governor or recommendations of the CDC must be complied with.

The Society's first hike will be on Saturday, October 10, in Pyramid State Park, the largest state park in Illinois. This will be the Society's first-ever scheduled hike in Perry County. The leader will be Steve Ryder. To register, call Steve at (217) 344-2610.

On Saturday, October 17, Bob Mulcahy will lead a hike at Ferne Clyffe State Park in Johnson County. Bob is an experienced leader for both the Society and the Sierra Club. To register, call Bob at (708) 471-7500.

For the Society's third hike, on Saturday, October 24, Shawn Gossman will lead a hike on the Snake Road in Union County. Shawn is well-known through the online video series "Hiking With Shawn." The fall snake migration should still be going on during this hike, and there will be plenty more to see. To register, call Shawn at (618) 694-7034.

On Saturday, October 31, the Society will once again offer its popular Halloween night hike to the mysterious "Vortex" at Max Creek in Johnson County. This hike has not been offered in several years, but as before will be led by Brian DeNeal, editor and publisher of *Springhouse* magazine. To register, call Brian at (618) 499-2055.

The Society's fifth hike will be on Saturday, November 7, at Garden of the Gods Wilderness, in Saline County. In order to comply with rules of the Forest Service, hikers

will be divided into two groups of no more than ten each, led by Fred Scott and David Cooper respectively. To register, call Fred at (618) 841-4838.

On Saturday, November 14, Society President Bill Gilmour will lead a hike over a new route at One Horse Gap in Pope County. If leaves have fallen, there should be great views from Benham Ridge. To register, call Bill at (270) 331-1553.

The Society's seventh hike of the season, and its final scheduled hike of the year, will be in the Jackson Hole Area of Pope County, on Saturday, November 28. Join Cathy Jennings in a hike to walk off Thanksgiving calories and to bring a difficult year to an enjoyable close. To register, call Cathy at (618) 759-1924.

The River-to-River Trail is a hiking and equestrian trail which stretches 157 miles through Southern Illinois between Elizabethtown on the Ohio River and Grand Tower on the Mississippi. The River-to-River Trail Society is an Illinois not-for-profit corporation, founded by John O'Dell in 1993. All its work is done by unpaid volunteers. Besides its program of free public hikes, the Society engages in trail maintenance and advocacy, and publishes an online guidebook to the entire River-to-River Trail, which can be downloaded free of charge at the Society's website: rivertorivertrail.net. Patches for the Society can be purchased for \$5.00 during the Society's public hikes.