

OH BIKE MINI-NEWSLETTER – MAY 2022

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Message from the President



ohbike.org

Dear OHBTC Members:

Thank you for electing me to my 3rd term as president. I will do my best to carry on our traditions of love of bicycles, trails, bike rides, friendships, and food.

We had our monthly Zoom meeting Monday April 18th. The future meetings are on the 2nd Monday of the month @ 7:00pm. As most of you know, we have been using Zoom for our meetings because of Covid. It is a convenient way to bring our diverse membership together. Members have been hosting the meetings

using their own Zoom accounts, but the OHBTC will have our own zoom account soon.

Barb H. (road captain) has been busy lining up ride leaders and rides for the riding season now that the spring weather will be here soon. And the Friday morning IHRT, Tuesday, Thursday and occasional weekend rides have been continuing thru the winter, weather permitting.

We are still in need of a Vice-President and Secretary to fill out the slate of officers.

I hope to see you in person on the bike rides.

Randy Schoch,
President OHBTC

News from the Trails - by Ron Altemus, Trail Ride Coordinator

Mt Vernon Trail 50th Anniversary; IHRT Wildlife

April has been a busy month on two of the club's most popular local bike trails. Saturday, April 23 featured the 50th anniversary celebration of the opening of the Mt. Vernon Trail. In the early 1970s, two local activists, Ellen Pickering and Barbara Lynch, gathered 700 signatures to petition the National Park Service to construct a trail along the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The NPS was agreeable to the idea and offered to supply materials if volunteers would do the actual construction. Close to 400 volunteers ended up building the first 4.5-mile segment south of Alexandria. The original trail bed was gravel. Today, the trail is paved asphalt, 19 miles in length, stretching from George Washington's Mount Vernon mansion in the south, through Alexandria, and terminating in Rosslyn near the Key Bridge.

Local dignitaries attended the ceremony, including Charles Cuvelier, GWMP superintendent, and Congressman Don Beyer (D-VA). OHBTC was represented by Leslie Tierstein, Liz Willis, and your faithful correspondent. The latter two are volunteer members of the MVT trail patrol. Liz is pictured below discussing the fine points of eTrikes with an event attendee.



A third trail patrol member was also present, David Bourk: David does trail maintenance by attending to vegetation issues. He carries a number of garden tools on his bike to make his job easier. Full coverage of the event, including a picture of David's loaded bike, can be found online:

<http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2022/apr/20/mount-vernon-trail-turns-50/>

Our weekly Friday rides on the IHRT have been full of wildlife sightings. Eagles are a common sight. There is a nest just east of the Livingston Road parking lot that is active. Further east, past the Bumpy Oak pond, a sharp-eyed rider observed three eagles in trees. While taking the picture below, a fourth eagle flew overhead. The flying eagle and the one pictured here were adults, the other two immatures.



Over the past couple of Friday rides, we have been noticing yellow or tiger swallowtail butterflies. Comments have been that it seems early in the year for butterflies to be out, but research says the pupal can stay in its cocoon for up to a year. Warm weather is responsible for this early spring emergence of adult butterflies. Susan Altemus was able to take a picture of five feeding on nutrient rich marshland.



An early announcement of the end of winter is the chirping of spring peepers and tree frogs. Now that temperatures have warmed considerably, the larger bullfrogs and leopard frogs are in abundance. They sun alongside the wet marshy areas of the trail and are always quick to leap back into the water if they feel threatened. Fortunately, this one felt safe enough for a photo op.

The same warmth from the sun that has brought out the frogs has also stirred turtles and snakes to bask on floating trunks or rocks. The eight turtles pictured here were almost all aligned in the same direction.

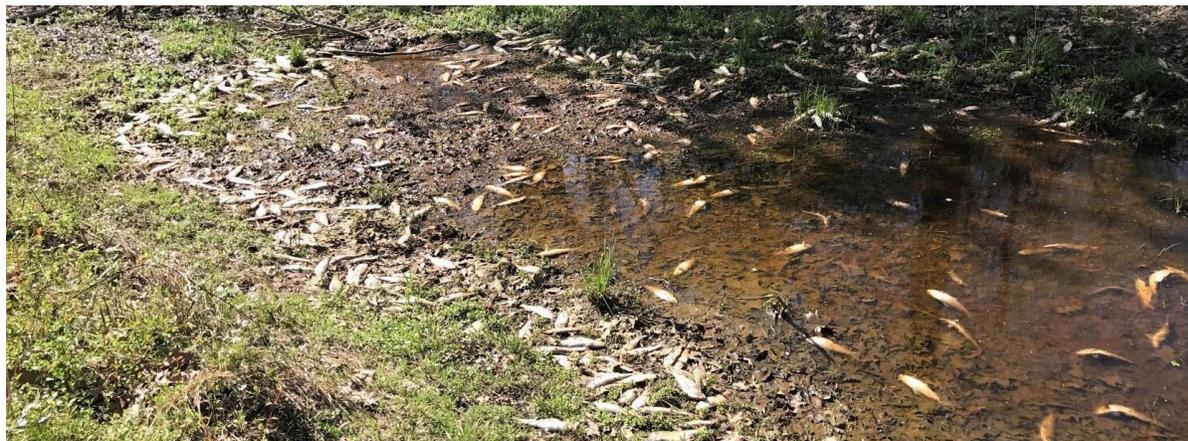




Common water snakes, gray brown in coloration, also enjoy the sun. They will entangle themselves while sunning. There is a mass of four to six in the center of the picture below; sharp eyes can pick up another one or two solitary snakes among the rocks.



Not all wildlife sightings had a happy ending, unfortunately. American shad migrated up the Potomac and its tributaries to spawn. A large number ventured into Mattawoman Creek when the waters were higher than normal in mid April. Sadly, the waters receded faster than the shad were able to retrace their routes, resulting in several depleted "ponds" filled with dead fish.



Come out and join us on when you can for our Friday IHRT rides. You never know what wildlife you might see.

Oxon Hill Bike and Trail Club Board Meeting Minutes

Date/Time	Monday, April 18, 2022, 5 PM
Attendance	Jim Hudnall, Jane Hudnall, Harry Kidd, Joan Oppel, Jessica Hirschhorn, Jay Lewis, Leslie Tierstein, Nancy Avitabile, Wally Huie, Ellen Goodwin, Walt Roscello, Diane Harris, Barbara Haney, Randall Schoch, Blake Altman, Elizabeth Willis, Sherwood Beyers, George Martin

Treasurer's Report – Nancy Avitabile - Full report to follow

Membership Report – Jim Hudnall: 397 members +4 this year

Road Captain Report - Barbara Haney: All class ride 4/30 all set, leaders assigned. Starts at Indian Head Pavilion. Not posted yet.

Business Items:

- **END HUNGER RIDE:** 4/23
- **BIKE to WORK DAY: 5/20** Stops at Indian Head, National Harbor, King Street Alexandria, Freedom Plaza. Discussion felt best bang for the buck (and least chaotic) is King Street Alexandria. Nancy A will investigate the price of a table and giveaway bling.
- **LEGACY RIDE: June 11** : No charge, has been decided to change it to a multi class ride without rest stops or SAG. Four routes of varied distances, 30 to 62 miles. Joan O will look into the need for water stops.
- **WATERMELON RIDE:** July 10: Multi-class ride followed by watermelon.
- **INDIAN HEAD 100:** DISCUSSION about organizing it this year. Jane H felt it was a lot of work but could be done. Absolutely need OVERALL IH Czar to make sure all the jobs get done. Jobs include Volunteer coordinator, Routes & Signage, Website and registration, SAG drivers, Picnic. A suggestion was made to farm it out to a commercial firm. Sherwood will look into this possibility.

Susan Altemus has an organizational chart and a binder, and we will take a look at this. Ideally this should start in January.

- **OH ZOOM ACCOUNT:** Recommended by Sherwood. Vote PASSED. Joan will look into a non-profit account, and we will purchase it.

Next Meeting: May 9, 2022 at **new time, 7 PM**, via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Hirschhorn, Acting as Recorder

Adventure Cycling Tour of Big Bend Texas

by Leslie Tierstein and Joan Oppel

Two club members, Joan Oppel and Leslie Tierstein, recently got back from a bicycle tour of southwestern Texas, including Big Bend National Park. The tour was sponsored by the Adventure Cycling Association (ACA), a non-profit organization that has been in business since before 1976. (It was originally named Bike Centennial.)

Leslie's general comments:

ACA leads a variety of tours in various areas; at various price ranges; in various styles; and of various lengths. (For me, this is a refreshing change from bicycle tours which stress high-end accommodations with a price to match, but YMMV.) In fact, this tour was a little too "low-end" for me – I have, alas, decided, that I might be getting too old to enjoy tent camping. That doesn't mean I need a fancy hotel room, however, where I might be torn between enjoying the hotel amenities and being on my bike. Glamping ("glamour camping") or hosteling (alas, very rare in the USA) would be fine with me. But even though we were camping, we didn't have to carry our stuff on our bikes – the trip was "van-supported" and had a van to shuttle riders and a trailer to carry our luggage.

I have to admit (as the blog posts linked at the end of this article will attest) that I am not gonna give an A+ rating to this tour (unlike the ACA tour of the Natchez Trace which I did a few years ago and absolutely adored). Mea culpa – I don't just mean the camping. Natchez Trace was also a van-supported tour with camping; but the camp grounds were shady, grassy spots, not wind-swept sand and dirt, and there was stuff to see between the campgrounds besides for rocks. (Hmm, maybe a little appreciation of geology would also have helped, as would knowledge of the critters and birds we came across.) The highlights of the tour for me were the settlements (towns and former towns) we came across outside the National Park and the history behind those settlements, both centuries-past (Indian wars and the Mexican Revolution) and more recent (the rise of Marfa TX as an arts center).

Joan's general comments:

I have a somewhat different perspective on this trip. Since Leslie mentions it first, I'll note that I didn't mind the camping. Of the nine nights on this tour, the ACA put us up indoors for two of them, the first night and the eighth. That provided a respite from putting up/taking down tents.

One major takeaway for me from this trip was the **incredible dark night sky!** The Big Bend area of Texas is very, very remote; a notable lack of light pollution makes it a destination for sky watchers. An advantage of being in a tent is getting up in the middle of the night and being immersed in the stars above. Most of our trip occurred during a new moon, affording us the darkest of conditions. It was an amazing experience, one I've only had as an adult maybe three times. And it happened here almost every night, as I had to get up at least twice each night. There was no need to know anything about the constellations or what was a star versus a planet. The surrounding immersive sky was enough for awe.

There **was** a lot of brown desert on our routes, but also mountains and cliffs on several days, with striations of different rock layers. And – desert flora: many desert plants were flowering. It's not the same experience as the Eastern spring riot of color but it brings a different kind of color to the desert. One special item – a “chocolate daisy” – was pointed out to me by a local. It flowers on a low desert bush, looks like a daisy but has a strong chocolate odor up close.

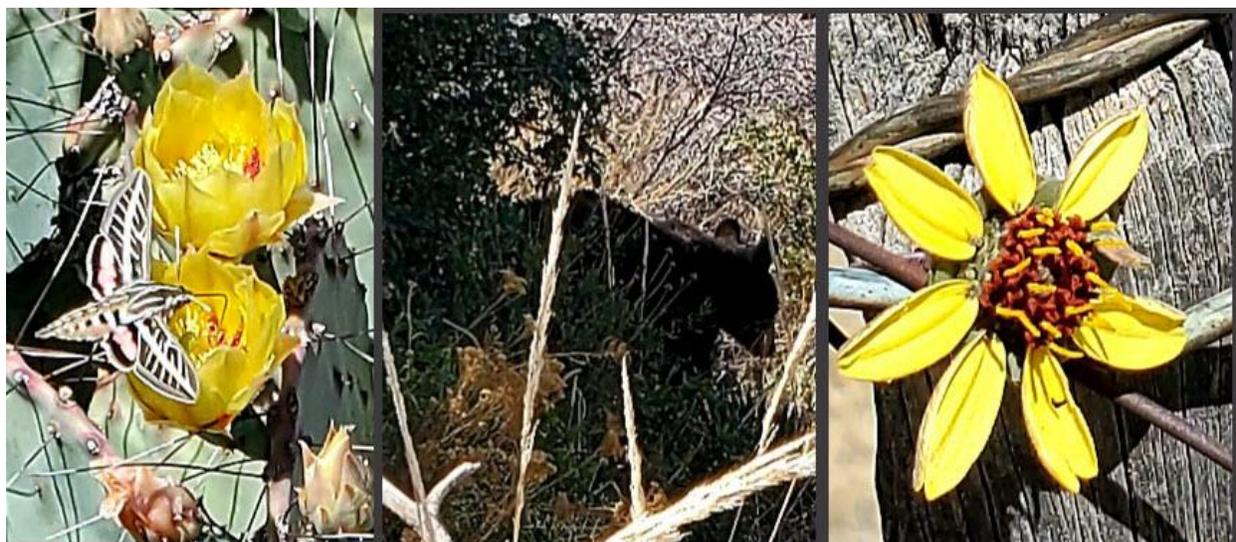
As for fauna, I saw a coyote while riding – plus heard them calling as a group during the night at our campground – an experience in itself. I also saw a javelina mother and two babies while I was riding alone (saw more at dusk one night during our group camp dinner).

Major sighting: the mama bear during our hike at Chisos Basin in Big Bend NP. There are only 30-40 black bears (no grizzlies) in all of Big Bend NP – the park is larger than the state of Rhode Island. And we saw one!

I second Leslie's notes about the history, lots to learn about along our way.

Joan's photos:

hummingbird moth, mama bear, and chocolate daisy



And Leslie's blog posts:

If you'd like to read more:

<https://bikesbytesbites.wordpress.com/2022/04/17/el-paso-tx/>
<https://bikesbytesbites.wordpress.com/2022/04/18/big-bend-texas-part-i/>
<https://bikesbytesbites.wordpress.com/2022/04/21/big-bend-texas-part-2/>
<https://bikesbytesbites.wordpress.com/2022/04/22/big-bend-texas-part-3/>
<https://bikesbytesbites.wordpress.com/2022/04/23/big-bend-texas-part-4/>
<https://bikesbytesbites.wordpress.com/2022/04/25/big-bend-texas-part-5/>

Save the Old Nice Bridge for Bike/Ped Path

Submitted by Mark Holt

On behalf of the Potomac Heritage Trail Association, OHBTC member Mark Holt sent a letter in March to all the announced candidates for Governor of Maryland asking whether they supported the preservation

of the existing Nice Bridge over the Potomac River for bicyclists and pedestrians after the new one is completed.

Only Maryland Comptroller Peter Franchot responded, but it was with an enthusiastic yes. Campaign Manager Ben Smith wrote, "Thank you for reaching out on this issue, as well as your advocacy on it! We are in support of keeping the Nice Bridge and converting it to pedestrian and bicycle usage."

Supporters of saving the old Nice Bridge have had follow-up discussions with the Franchot campaign and his staff in the Comptroller's Office. A meeting on the subject with Comptroller Franchot and his official staff is planned at the Nice Bridge in May. In the meantime, Jim Hudnall spoke to Franchot about the Nice Bridge at a campaign event at Tucker Road Park on April 23, where the candidate affirmed his strong support (photo on left). Ben Smith reiterated the campaign's support for the idea to Mark Holt as well. Jim and Jane Hudnall also talked with Franchot's running mate for Lt. Governor, Monique Anderson-Walker (photo on right).

