



What's Happening at Blue Marsh Lake?

USACE

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Blue Marsh Winter Wonderland

Winter has arrived at Blue Marsh Lake. Portions of the lake are ice covered, and the water temperature is near freezing. Some of the ice may be snow covered which can be misleading as snow actually insulates the ice and prevents it from getting thicker. The boat ramps may be ice covered, so call before bringing your boat out.



The number one item that should not only be on the boat, but should be worn is a Coast Guard approved life jacket. Life jackets are required to be worn from November 1—April 30 if you are on a boat less than 16 feet in length or in a kayak or canoe, regardless of length. They make all types of life jackets, including inflatable life jackets and a type that resembles a coat. They even come in bright orange or camouflage colors for hunter awareness.

If you are planning on being outdoors on the water or ice, dress appropriately for the conditions. Layer your clothes, starting with a base layer that will wick moisture away from your body while still insulating you. Follow that with a layer that will insulate and keep you warm. The outside layer should be a fabric that is both wind and water proof.

If you fall into cold water, remember the 1-10-1 rule. Cold shock will pass in approximately one minute. This is an initial deep and sudden gasp followed by hyperventilation. You must concentrate on not panicking and getting your breathing under control. Over the next 10 minutes you will lose the effective use of your fingers, arms and legs. During this time concentrate on self rescue initially, and if that isn't possible, prepare to have a way to keep your airway clear to breath and wait for rescue. Never boat alone, let someone know what your plans are, and when you plan on returning home. **STAY SAFE!**

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Upcoming Volunteer Work Days:

Meet at the Visitor Center at 9:00 am
 March 5
 April 16 (Take Pride in Blue Marsh)

Programs

Mid Winter Outing, Feb. 6
 Control Tower Tours 10am:
 February 18
 March 17
 Early Evening Excursion:
 February 20
 Hike with a Ranger:
 March 19

Ice Safety

Be forewarned, we do not check the ice thickness at Blue Marsh Lake. This practice is avoided because the ice thickness can vary greatly from one area to another. There are many factors that influence ice thickness, including fish, protruding objects, rotting vegetation, snow cover, and running water. If you plan to venture out onto the ice wear a life jacket, check the thickness, and carry ice awls or a sharp object in your pocket such as a knife, keys or nails. If you fall through the ice, use ice awls or a sharp object to dig into the ice while kicking your legs/feet and pulling yourself out of water and up onto the ice. **DO NOT** stand up next to the hole or you could end up right back in the cold water. Roll away from the hole towards safety. When walking on the ice shuffle your feet across the surface as this has less impact on it than stepping does. Remember, the only safe ice is that which you stay off of!



Take Pride in Blue Marsh

April 16th, 2016 is the 36th Take Pride in Blue Marsh event. It is the largest volunteer event held at the lake annually. The staff has many environmental projects planned for volunteers to complete. Projects that we hope to have participants complete include painting picnic tables, spreading mulch, planting native plants in the Sensory Garden and at the Visitor Center, planting native seedlings around the lake, reconstructing a bridge and guardrail, trail work, and much more.

A unique recreation opportunity that we allow for participating groups is camping for the weekend. Lunch is provided for the volunteers by local businesses and put together by the Family Campers and Recreational Vehicle club. Over the past 35 years the volunteers that attend Take Pride in Blue Marsh have saved \$242,000.00 worth of work.

We look forward to having you here to celebrate this special day with us. Please contact the park office at 610-376-6337 to sign up for a project.



Meet Volunteers Peter and Jane Wolfe

Peter and Jane have volunteered at Blue Marsh Lake for five years. They help out with the interpretive programs and oversee the bird feeders at the Sensory and Great Oak Nature Trails. That means they periodically fill up the feeders and at the end of the feeding season they take them down, clean them, and get them ready for the next season. From time-to-time they have even donated the bird seed! When out hiking or bird watching at Blue Marsh they also pick up trash along the way.

Both Peter and Jane love the outdoors. They have been section hiking the Appalachian Trail, and have completed the trail in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland. Bird watching is one of their favorite activities. They have a lengthy bird list from not only the United States, but from several other countries as well. Peter and Jane do a good bit of traveling, but when they are at home they have plenty of hobbies to keep them busy. Jane practices Yoga, attends Zumba, and likes to read non-fiction. Peter, in addition to learning about birds, also likes to garden. He grows grapes, apples, and houseplants, and tries to promote the use of native plants, and less use of invasive plants.

Thank you Peter and Jane. You both do a fantastic job!



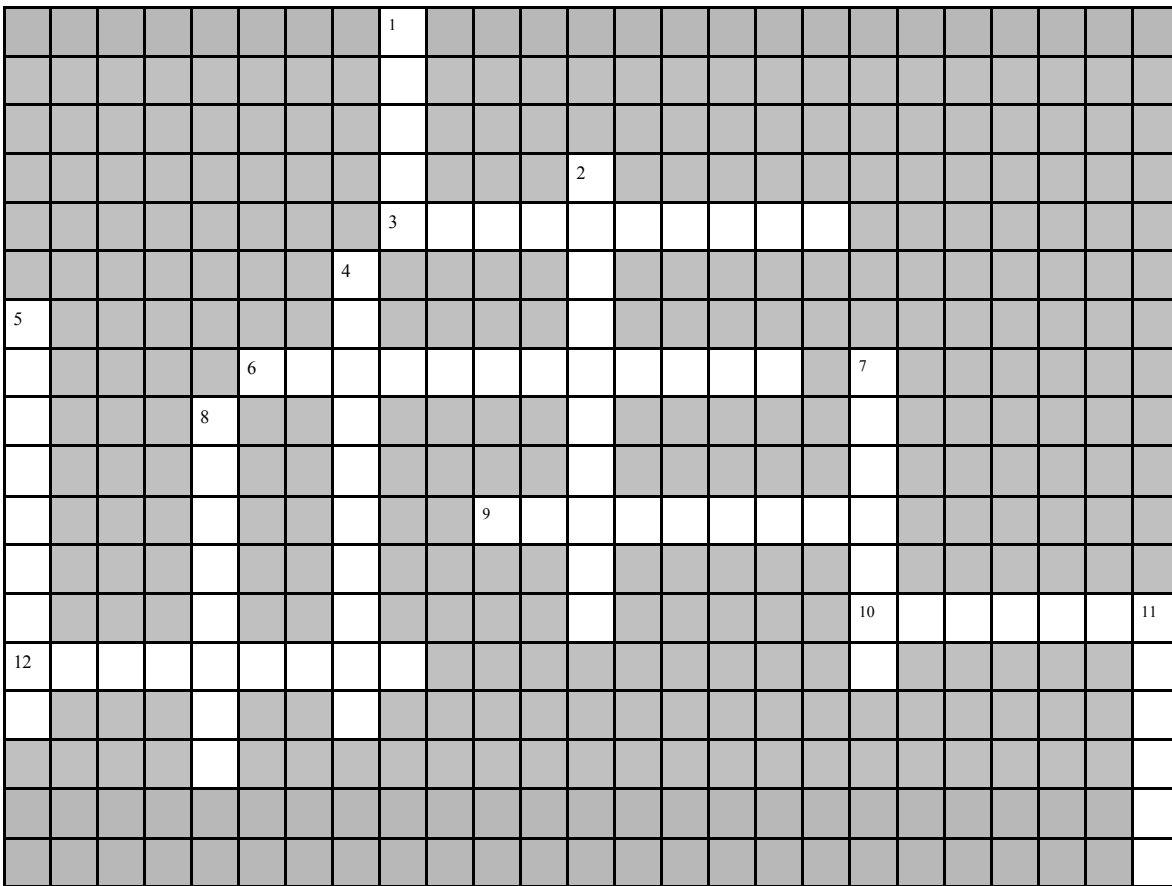
Winter Recreation

Twenty-eight inches of snow has fallen over the lake. Rangers and maintenance staff have worked together to open the Dry Brooks Day Use Area, Visitor Center, Stilling Basin, Reber's Bridge parking area, and State Hill Boat Ramp for your recreation use. The day after the snowstorm, there were already people wondering where they could park to walk their dog, cross county ski, or snowshoe. This was a record snowstorm for the area. The last snowstorm that was close to this one in size was in 1996.

The lake is open year round. We only close the areas to the public for plowing purposes, and for flooding or drought conditions. Come out and take part in our winter programs including cross country skiing or snowshoeing with a ranger. Please make sure you dress in layers, wear warm boots, and always let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return.



Winter Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

- 3. A vehicle accessory used for better traction in the snow**
- 6. This activity is not allowed at Blue Marsh Lake**
- 9. This evergreen has needles that grow in groups of five**
- 10. Deer shed these in late winter**
- 12. People create this pattern in the snow**

DOWN

- 1. Precipitation in the form of ice pellets created by the freezing of rain as it falls**
- 2. A popular winter activity that can feed your family**
- 4. Every one of these that falls from the sky is different**
- 5. These white birds stop at Blue Marsh on their northern migration route**
- 7. This bird is the color of the sky**
- 8. Groundhog day occurs within this month**

ANSWERS ON PAGE 4

Volunteer Opportunities at Blue Marsh

Blue Marsh Lake has a wide variety of volunteer opportunities. Monthly volunteer work days meet at 9:00 am on a Saturday at the Visitor Center. The upcoming volunteer work days are on Saturday, March 5th, and April 16th. A variety of projects are offered depending on how many people plan on attending. Trash bags, gloves, and safety vests are provided for those who are assigned to pick up trash. Tools are provided for trail workers.

We also offer the Adopt a Trail program where you can maintain your own section of our multi-use trail system or nature trails at your convenience. That includes hand trimming around trail markers, widening the trail to Corps standards, reporting fallen trees, and picking up litter. Loppers, hand saws, gloves and trash bags are provided. Other volunteer opportunities include interpretative programs, wildlife habitat improvement projects and photography. Please contact Hallie Groff at 267-284-6551 or email her at Hallie.e.groff@usace.army.mil if you are interested in volunteering.

USACE

Blue Marsh Lake
1268 Palisades Dr.
Leesport, Pa 19533

Phone: 610-376-6337
Fax: 610-376-1919
<http://www.nap.usace.army.mil/Bluemarsh>
Visit us on Facebook!

Newsletter prepared by:
Natural Resource Specialist Ranger Kathy Grim
Email: Kathleen.J.Grim@usace.army.mil
Natural Resource Specialist Hallie Groff
Email: Hallie.E.Groff@usace.army.mil



**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,
Philadelphia District**

ACROSS

3. Tire Chains
6. Snowmobiling
9. White Pine
10. Antlers
12. Snow Angels

DOWN

1. Sleet
2. Ice Fishing
4. Snowflake
5. Snow Geese
7. Blue Jay
8. February
11. Skiing

Winter 2016 Programs

Mid-Winter Outing: Saturday, February 6, 1:00 - 3:00 pm, Conference Center. Join Berks County Parks, Spring Township Parks and Recreation Department and Blue Marsh Lake staff on a winter outing on the trails around the lake. Depending on the weather, we will either hike, snowshoe or cross-country ski along the multi-use and connector trails. Call 610-374-2944 by February 1 to register.

Early Evening Excursion: Saturday, February 20, 4:00 - 6:00 pm, Visitor Center. Once again you will have the opportunity to join the Berks County Parks and Blue Marsh staff for a winter outing along the trails and shoreline at the lake. Depending on the weather, we will either hike, snowshoe or cross-country ski. Dress for the weather! Please call 610-374-2944 by February 16 to register.

Get Outdoors Who Lives in a Tree: Wednesday, February 24, 10:00 am, Conference Center. A variety of animals live in trees. Some build nests, and try to figure out who is actually living there. The adventure will not end there, as we will also be doing a variety of activities indoors and outdoors focusing on trees and wildlife. Bring your journals along, and if you have a pair of binoculars you might want to bring them along as well. This program is great for home school students.

Teddy Bear Hike: Saturday, March 5, 10:00 am, Great Oak Nature Trail, Dry Brooks Day Use Area (GPS Address, 1364 Palisades Drive, Leesport, PA 19533). Kids and adults bring along your favorite teddy bear or other stuffed toy as we head out on a fun-filled adventure along the Great Oak Trail. We will walk about 1/2 mile. Baby strollers are not recommended for this trail.

Hike with a Ranger: Saturday, March 19, 10:00 am, Visitor Center: Join us for a hike to State Hill Boat Launch and back. We will hike along the multi-use trail and the lake shore during this hike. The approximate distance is 4 - 5 miles. Bring along a snack and water to keep yourself hydrated and energized!

Get Outdoors Spring Has Sprung: Wednesday, March 23, 10:00 am, Stilling Basin: This spring safari will take us along the Tulpehocken Creek and the old Union Canal as we search for signs of spring. We will be looking and listening for spring peepers, ducks, geese, great blue herons, as well as other critters. Maybe we will even see some early spring plants such as skunk cabbage. Wear boots as we will be in muddy/wet areas. This program is recommended for home school students.