

Making Ripples

Volunteer for the Razorback Greenway

by Amanda Bancroft

This writer has enjoyed many of the trail systems Northwest Arkansas has to offer, including the Razorback Greenway. Many people do, and the trails are buzzing with activity. But it's not every day one has permission to go "off-road" a little, and truly get to know the trail system in a sort of behind-the-scenes way. Volunteering on a trail cleanup is a fantastic way to find oneself climbing down gullies, splashing in streams, exploring underneath the interstate and discovering wildlife one may miss when zipping along en route to a destination.

Picking up trash is a way to stop and smell the flowers (metaphorically speaking). And there are flowers in bloom along the trail, even in autumn. There are also chipmunks, squirrels, ring-necked snakes and tiny rodents scurrying and slithering around in the leaf litter on and around the trail system. A rustle next to an abandoned styrofoam cup could reward the patient litter-picker-upper with a pair of adorable beady eyes in a ball of fluff. The sights are gorgeous, too. Our trails have many small and large bridges, and much of the Razorback Greenway is accompanied by the trickling music of streams. It's an enjoyable and rewarding effort that gives back to our communities.

According to the City of Fayetteville volunteer handbook, adopting a trail requires a long-term commitment before any signage designating the adoption can be installed. "Adopters are required to work three times per year. The first work session must occur within six months of adopting, followed by two additional work dates before the year's end. After these requirements are met and the Adopter commits to continue, a sign with your organization name will be installed at the park or trail you choose to adopt." If your organization is interested in making ripples in Fayetteville's parks and trails by adopting a section of the razorback greenway, email ParksVolunteer@Fayetteville-AR.gov or call (479) 444-3467 for more information and an application. Or help an Adopter by joining in their work days.

Besides adopting a trail, simply using them responsibly (don't leave cigarette butts) is a lot of fun and does make a difference for health, happiness, the environment, and community. Exercise is great for many reasons, and if you're enjoying it, even better for one's mental health. Trail trekking, whether by bike, foot, or alternative, reduces pollution in cities and leads to a smaller personal eco-footprint. It's wonderful to share the trail with friends and family. Why not travel the entire length of the trail as a group? Some people do this in sections over months, others all at once in one day. It's a pleasant, free way to see the sights right along the trail, from beautiful lakes to lively downtown areas. Need an interactive online trail map to determine distances, trailhead locations and nearby landmarks? Visit Trails.cast.uark.edu to explore!

Amanda Bancroft is a writer, artist, and naturalist building an off-grid cottage for land conservation on Mt. Kessler. She and her husband Ryan blog about their adventures and offer a solar-hosted online educational center on how to make a difference with everyday choices at: www.RipplesBlog.org.