

29th Annual Pinelands Jamboree

By Pat Johnson

The 29th annual Pinelands Jamboree held at Wells Mills Ocean County Park on October 14th will have a Jersey Devil theme this year.

Wells Mills Chief Park Naturalist German Georgieff explained, “Each year we feature a person or a subject centered in the Pinelands –a historical or cultural subject such as the cranberry industry or charcoaling and this year it’s a folklore theme—the Jersey Devil.”

Folklore has it that sometime in the 18th century when a Mrs. Leeds was birthing her 13th child, she cursed it and it was born with cloven hooves, wings and a face like a horse. It then flew out the window



Smokey Bear greets Bass River State Forest's table.
Photo credit: Ocean County Parks & Recreation.

and legend says it would sicken cows and slaughter farm animals. Its scream in the darkness of a Pine Barrens night would frighten grown men. Over the years the legend continued with periodic ‘sightings’ of the strange creature.

The legend was made into many campfire stories, books and even music and movies.

“We researched it and found there are a number of songs about the Jersey Devil not just the one by

Pinelands Jamboree continued...

Jim Albertson or Valerie Vaughn but even Bruce Springsteen has a song about Mrs. Leeds unfortunate child,” said Ocean County Historian Tim Hart. According to Hart, during the day, Jamboree goers will have the opportunity to view movies made in the 1970’s about the state’s famous devil myth.

The county has requested that Professor Brian Regal from the Kean University History of Science department present a PowerPoint on “The Political Origins of the New Jersey Devil.” “His research purports the birth of Mrs. Leeds 13th child happened around the time of the great Quaker schism and was actually a smear campaign.” We will have a program on the topic available for viewing, said Hart.

While the theme this year is the Jersey Devil, bluegrass and country/western groups are the real live stars performing under a tent all day.

“From day one, the Pinelands Jamboree was started as a joint project between the Pinelands Cultural Society, which runs the Albert Music Hall, and the Ocean County Parks Department, as a way to highlight the folk music of the Pinelands,” said Georgieff.

Visitors to the park will get to tour the recently renovated and re-imagined visitor’s center that was finished this spring. There are many new displays and touch screens with videos of local history.

In addition, Cedarview Lodge, the Conrad/Oakley hunting cabin by the lake, will be open to the public. Many visitors have asked about going inside [the cabin over the years] but the cabin was acquired by the parks department from the Oakley family with the understanding the Oakley’s could use it during their lifetime. With the recent passing of Mrs. Patricia A. Oakley, Cedarview Lodge is now open for scheduled tours. The County is in the process of applying to list the cabin on the New Jersey Register of Historic Places.

Other tours include nature walks in the park and the canoe rentals on Wells Mills Lake will be free for the day. There will be plenty of craft vendors selling their wares—honey made from bees within

the Pinelands, decoy carvings and bears made with a chain saw.

Environmental and government organizations will have information booths and there will be food vendors providing delicious Jersey fare and treats. The Jamboree begins at 10 a.m. and continues through 4 p.m.

Wells Mills Park, 905, Route 532 in Ocean Township is the largest park in the Ocean County parks system with 900-plus acres including the 34-acre lake. If coming from the Garden State Parkway, take exit 69 and go west. The County will provide shuttle buses to the Park from the Ocean County Vo-Tech School. Otherwise there is a parking lot at the Park and parking along Route 532—at your own risk. It’s always a great day to learn about the nature, the culture, and now, the folklore of the fascinating Pinelands.



FREE
29TH ANNUAL
PINE BARRENS JAMBOREE
Saturday October 14th
10:00am ~ 4:30pm
Wells Mills County Park
905 Wells Mills Road (Rt 532) Waretown

Music of the Pines • Cultural Demonstrations & Lectures
Jersey Devil (music, videos, lectures) • Kids Crafts and Games
Traditional Crafts & Crafters • Nature & History Programs
Food Trucks • Free Shuttle Buses & more...RAIN OR SHINE

For more information please call: (609) 971-3085
or visit: www.oceancountyparks.org

Brought to you by the Ocean County Board of Commissioners
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In Cooperation with Pinelands Cultural Society/Albert Music Hall

