



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND NATURAL RESOURCES



For More Information Contact:

Bendigo State Park
533 State Park Road
Johnsonburg, PA 15845-0016
814-965-2646
email: bendigosp@pa.gov
GPS: Lat. 41.53168 Long. -78.62849
An Equal Opportunity Employer

www.visitPAParks.com

Information and Reservations

Make online reservations at:
www.visitPAParks.com or call toll-free
888-PA-PARKS (888-727-2757), 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.,
Monday to Saturday, for state park information
and reservations.

Bendigo State Park

The 100-acre Bendigo State Park is in a small valley surrounded by picturesque hills. About 20 acres of the park is developed, half of which is a large, shaded picnic area.

The forest is predominantly northern hardwoods and includes beech, birch, cherry and maple. The East Branch of the Clarion River flows through the park. This beautiful waterway was once polluted by abandoned mine drainage. It now provides excellent fishing and is stocked with trout by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

Directions

In Jones Township, Elk County, Pennsylvania, Bendigo State Park is four miles northeast of Johnsonburg on SR 1004, which branches off of US 219 in Johnsonburg.

Reservations

Make online reservations at: www.visitPAParks.com or call toll-free 888-PA-PARKS (888-727-2757), 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Saturday, for state park information and reservations.

Recreational Opportunities

SWIMMING: The pool is open daily from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day, unless otherwise posted. Depth ranges from three to five feet. Certified lifeguards staff the pool. The pool has an ADA accessible lift.



PICNICKING: Over 150 picnic tables are located in several picnic areas. Within these areas are charcoal grills, drinking water, four horseshoe pits, restrooms and three picnic pavilions. Picnic pavilions may be reserved up to 11 months in advance for a fee. Unreserved picnic pavilions are free on a first-come, first-served basis. Pavilion #1 is ADA accessible.

FISHING: The East Branch of the Clarion River flows through the park and is an excellent fishery. The river is stocked with trout and is home to many cold-water species. A fishing platform behind the pool allows for easy access for children and the elderly.

CANOEING/KAYAKING: The East Branch of the Clarion River is scenic and appropriate for beginning boaters under normal conditions. A canoe launch is three miles upstream along Kilgus Road. Best water conditions are generally in the spring. To launch in a state park, a non-powered vessel needs a state park or PA Fish & Boat Commission launch permit.



Bendigo SnowFest

Held on the first Saturday in February, visitors can participate in a variety of outdoor activities including snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, sledding and geocaching. Children and adults of all ages are welcome at this celebration of winter in the Pennsylvania Wilds. The SnowFest will have alternate activities in the event of no snow.

Environmental Education and Interpretation

Bendigo State Park offers year-round environmental education and interpretive programs. Hands-on activities, guided walks and historical talks are offered to park visitors. Participants will gain an appreciation and understanding of the natural world and develop a sense of stewardship for the park's natural resources. Group programs must be arranged in advance and may be scheduled by calling the park office.

History

Bendigo State Park has a mysterious and interesting history. It includes the Bible, boxing, lumbering and a mysterious name.

William Abednego Thompson (1811 - 1880) was born into a poor family in Nottingham, Britain. The last of 21 children, Thompson was one of triplets named for three men who escaped a fiery furnace in the Book of Daniel.

Thompson began bare-knuckle boxing to make money. He was nicknamed Bendi Abednego due to his bobbing and weaving. The name eventually evolved into 'Bendigo'. He was popular with fans because of his wild behavior in the ring. Bendigo was known to do flips, taunt his opponent, and skillfully avoid punches. After becoming a champion in British boxing, he retired and became a Methodist preacher. There are no records of Bendigo ever leaving Britain.

In 1895, fifteen years after Bendigo's death, a lumbering operation began on a small creek in northwestern Pennsylvania. The operation was built and operated by Alfred Truman, who also built a small town named Bendigo. After five years of business, the operation exhausted the available timber. The mill and town disbanded and the lumber company razed the facilities.

It is still a mystery how a mill town and creek in Pennsylvania came to bear the name of a left-handed boxer from Britain.

The Park

Early European settlement in the area was centered on the abundant timber of northwestern Pennsylvania. Towns and services sprang up around the lumbering industry. Starting in 1887, the towns and mills were linked by the Johnsonburg and Clermont Railroad that carried timber to the market. When the timber was exhausted, the railroad, sawmills and towns slowly disappeared. The old railroad bed is now the main park road.

In the 1920s, the townspeople of Johnsonburg joined together to form a community park for swimming, picnicking and outdoor recreation. The lumber company that owned the former village of Bendigo gave 100 acres to the county to be a park.

In 1936, during the Great Depression, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) began building roads, a dam and a pool at Bendigo Community Park. However, there were not enough funds to complete some projects and the pool and other facilities remained unfinished. Visitors to the park in that era were able to swim in the river behind the dam and enjoy the picnic tables and grills.

Floods destroyed many of the facilities in 1942, but the stone wall and dam on the East Branch of the Clarion River survived. Due to the debris, most of the park was unusable; however, visitors still frequented the swimming hole and picnic area.

In 1948, the late State Senator George B. Stevenson introduced a bill that transferred the property to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Now a parcel of the State Park system, improvements were made to the park facilities, including the building of a swimming pool. Bendigo State Park opened in 1954, completing the vision that the community began.

Nearby Attractions

Information on nearby attractions is available from: Great Outdoors Visitors Bureau, 814-849-5197. www.visitpago.com

ELK STATE PARK: This beautiful park contains the lake formed by the East Branch Dam. Recreational opportunities include unlimited horsepower motor boating, waterskiing, hiking, fishing and hunting. 814-965-2646

EAST BRANCH LAKE: The East Branch Dam of the Clarion River was finished in 1952 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The dam provides flood protection and recreational opportunities. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers operates a recreation area by the East Branch Dam that has camping with facilities, sanitary dump station and boat launch. 814-965-2065

STATE GAME LAND 25: This 24,523-acre wooded area consists of long narrow valleys and flat mountaintops. Visitors are welcome to hunt, fish, hike and bird-watch. A large stone marker at the entrance to State Game Land 25 in Glen Hazel commemorates the purchase of this land in 1920. State Game Land 25 was the first purchase by the Pennsylvania Game Commission from the proceeds of hunting license fees. John MacFarlane Philips, Game Commission member from 1905-1924, worked tirelessly to

develop a statewide system of public hunting grounds and game refuges, and this land purchase was significant in those efforts. The marker was erected in 1948 by sportsmen and friends of Philips.

ELK STATE FOREST: The western section of this 195,911-acre forest is adjacent to Elk State Park. Hiking, bird-watching, fishing, hunting and outdoor recreation is permitted on state forest land. 814-486-3353

Protect and Preserve Our Parks

Please make your visit safe and enjoyable. Obey all posted rules and regulations and respect fellow visitors and the resources of the park.

- Be prepared and bring the proper equipment. Natural areas may possess hazards. Your personal safety and that of your family is your responsibility.

- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.

- Because uncontrolled pets may chase wildlife or frighten visitors, pets must be controlled and attended at all times and on a leash, caged or crated. Pets are prohibited in swimming areas.

- Do your part to keep wildlife wild! Enjoy wildlife from a safe distance and do not feed or approach wild animals.

- Prevent forest fires by having a fire in proper facilities and properly disposing of hot coals. Do not leave a fire unattended.

- Please park only in designated areas and obey all traffic regulations.

- Please recycle. Place trash accumulated during your stay in proper receptacles, or take it home with you.

Access for People with Disabilities

♿ This symbol indicates facilities and activities that are Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible for people with disabilities. This publication text is available in alternative formats.

If you need an accommodation to participate in park activities due to a disability, please contact the park you plan to visit.

In an Emergency

Contact a park employee or dial 911. For directions to the nearest hospital, look on bulletin boards or at the park office.

NEAREST HOSPITAL
Elk Regional Health Center
763 Johnsonburg Road
St. Mary's, PA 15857
814-788-8000