

Friends of Shades Creek, Inc.

Walks by James Lowery in Scotts Branch (Shades Creek Tributary)

Preliminary Report – Section 1 has not yet been walked.

As of February 17, 2007

Section 1: Not Yet Walked (From source as two forks to West Oxmoor Boulevard in west Homewood) NOTE: These forks are heavily overgrown and may be too dangerous to walk until plants along the banks loose their leaves later in the year.

Section 2: October 15, 2006 (Long section from West Oxmoor Boulevard in west Homewood to convergence with Shades Creek behind Wynnsong Theaters west of Wildwood Shopping Center near Lakeshore Drive) Length: Approximately 2.5 stream miles.

Notes:

Section 1

Scotts Branch begins as two “forks” north of West Oxmoor Boulevard. The eastern fork begins within sight of a rear entrance to the ADEM Birmingham Field Office on Vulcan Road. The western fork begins within sight of the Storm Water Management Authority offices on Summit Parkway. It appears that the western fork may be composed of one mostly above-ground creek course and one completely piped underground course.

Overgrown banks and creek course did not allow this section to be walked safely. An attempt will be made to walk this section when overgrown brush has died back or has lost its leaves.

Section 2

This section consists of the last portion of each of the forks mentioned above as comprising section 1. The western fork at the beginning of this section is completely concreted (bottom and side walls). During the October 15, 2006, walk, there was no water in this portion of this fork; however, several large, mature willow trees were growing in cracks in the concrete creek bottom. The eastern fork at the beginning of this section starts as a “natural” stream channel but then is concreted (and goes underground) before merging with the western fork. During the October 15, 2006, walk, there was no water in this portion of this fork.

The two main forks converge underneath Oxmoor Road and across the street from the Shades Valley Community Church on Oxmoor Road. The church property is bordered on one side by the western fork and partially on the other side by the eastern fork. At the merge point and for a

ways after that, the creek bottom and sides are concreted. After the merge point, the creek flows past the Homewood Senior Center, through a residential area, under Ridgemoor Drive, and alongside part of the Buffalo Rock Bottling Company (Pepsi Cola) before going underneath the buildings and the truck parking areas of the Buffalo Rock Bottling Company. Until the Buffalo Rock Bottling Company property, there was no water in the creek except for a puddle or two at the edge of that property. No fish or other aquatic animals were seen all the way from West Oxmoor Boulevard, through the Buffalo Rock Bottling Company property, and on to just upstream of West Homewood Park (see also below).

As the creek emerges from underground at the opposite end of the Buffalo Rock Bottling Company property, there was “significant” flow, possibly contributed by water from that facility. From that point on, there was significant algae buildup in the creek until well past West Homewood Park. Even though there was sufficient water in the creek with riffles and pools of water, no fish or other aquatic animals were observed from the Buffalo Rock Bottling Company property until much farther downstream. Only one fish was seen as the Snow Drive bridge came into view upstream from West Homewood Park. That fish was sighted just past the midway point between the Oxmoor Circle (west portion) bridge and the Snow Drive bridge. No additional fish were seen until the Snow Drive bridge. Beginning at the downstream side of the Snow Drive bridge and continuing the entire length of the creek to its convergence with Shades Creek, there were large numbers of fish including medium-size bass. No crayfish, snails, or mussels were seen throughout the entire length of Scotts Branch.

At the Snow Drive bridge in West Homewood Park there is a city-installed sign that reads “KEEP OUT OF DITCH.” A “ditch”??!! But it is Scotts Branch of Shades Creek! In spite of the sign, there were several Little League Baseball players playing in the creek, apparently between games.

After the creek leaves West Homewood Park, the creek banks are mostly riparian with a variety of trees and understory. Small, medium, and large rocks and some small “boulders” comprise the creek bed. It flows parallel to West Oxmoor Road, flows past Waldrop Stadium (Homewood High School football stadium) and behind John Carroll High School, and flows through a set of three huge round metal culverts underneath part of the United States Armed Forces Reserve Center property. A large turtle (approximately 14 inches long) of unknown species (not Snapping, probably Slider) was seen at the entrance to those culverts. The creek then flows through three huge, tall rectangular concrete culverts underneath Lakeshore Drive. At that point, the creek is so far below Lakeshore Drive that it is not visible from that road. Scotts Branch enters Shades Creek just west of, and behind, the Wynnsong Theaters which are just past the western end of the Wildwood Shopping Center.

Several small tributaries were observed entering the creek during its course, but most of them were dry. The largest one was a square concreted one entering from “river left” from between West Homewood Park and Waldrop Stadium. It contained some standing water but no observable flow.

Aquatic Plants Observed:

Section 1: Not yet walked.

Section 2: The western fork at the beginning of this section is completely concreted, but several large, mature willow trees were growing in cracks in the concrete creek bottom. Algae and “scum” covered most of the rocks and substrate from the Buffalo Rock Bottling Company property all the way to the convergence of Scotts Branch with Shades Creek.

Non-aquatic Plants Observed:

A small tree of unknown species with two fruits very similar to the Passion Fruit was seen on the creek bank where the western fork emerged out from under West Oxmoor Boulevard.

Kudzu was not seen until the end of the huge concrete culverts through which the creek flowed under Lakeshore Drive. Perhaps it was indicative of an encroachment from Lakeshore Drive above.

Wildlife Observed:

Section 1: Not yet walked.

Section 2: Fish and minnows were not seen (other than one exception) upstream of the Snow Drive bridge but were abundant (including bass) downstream of that bridge and all the way to Shades Creek.

4 Herons

1 Turtle (14 inches long, “thick” body, unknown species, not Snapping)

No Crawfish

No Mollusks (snails and mussels)

Summary of Items Collected:

Section 1: Not yet walked.

Section 2:

- 1 Corn on the cob – Nibbler size – Cooked, fresh, complete, and edible
- 1 Men’s deodorant – Still usable (Degree brand, Clean Slate scent)
- 1 Pair of men’s camouflage sunglasses – Mossy Oak coloration
- 1 Public Storage padlock for use on self-storage unit
- 1 Microtel Inn hotel room keycard

- 1 BIC disposable cigarette lighter
- 1 Set of earplugs
- 1 Work glove
- 1 High pressure air hose

- 1 Automobile battery – DuraLast brand.
- 1 Plymouth automobile hubcap
- 1 Vehicle trailer license plate – Tuscaloosa County

- 1 Chain link fence post top

- 1 Badminton racket
- 11 Baseballs (Personal record for collection on these types of stream walks)
- 1 Softball
- 1 “Nerf” softball (Brand: Dunlop, Speedball model)
- 2 Golf balls
- 1 Golf ball “innards” – Golf ball without the outer two layers
- 22 Tennis balls (Brands: 13 Penn, 6 Wilson, 1 Gamma, 2 unknown brands)
- 1 Tennis court water roller sponge – metal portion only

Collected from Shades Creek where Scotts Branch entered Shades Creek:

Full-size, folding metal ladder.

Observed, But Not Collected from the Creek:

Card table – Complete with legs still extended.

Automobile exhaust system – All pipes still intact including catalytic converter.

“Weedeater” – Brand unknown.

Twine-type string underwater that stretched for nearly 1/5 mile to the convergence of Scotts Branch with Shades Creek.