

Friends of Shades Creek, Inc.

**Walks by James Lowery in Watkins Brook (Shades Creek Tributary)
(Also known as “Watkins Branch”)
(Also known as “Waddell” for the Waddell area
near where the gristmill is on Shades Creek)**

Updated February 17, 2007

- Section 1: July 13, 2006 (Short section from source under Crestline Post Office to Crestline Village)**
- Section 2: July 12, 2006 (Major portion from Crestline Village to convergence with Shades Creek at downstream end of Jemison Park)**
- Section 2a: July 3, 2006 (Repeated small portion near Office Park)**

Source and Drainage:

Watkins Brook begins as an underground spring completely underneath the Crestline Post Office building and parking lot on Montclair Road. It first sees the light of day after passing under Montclair Road. Part of the first portion of its course is very “wooded” and narrow with vines and growth extending across the channel. It then flows through the “boulder area” alongside Memory Lane near Crestline Village. It then enters the Country Club of Birmingham property where it serves as the water hazard for the golf course (see also below). It then passes through Mountain Brook Village on its way to meet Shades Creek at the western end of Jemison Park.

Watkins Brook drains all three of the villages of Mountain Brook: Crestline Village, the eastern half of English Village, and all of Mountain Brook Village. One of its major tributaries drains the area beginning with the Embassy Suites, passing under the Elton B. Stephens Expressway, through the former Shades Valley High School property, the Birmingham Zoo, and the Birmingham Botanical Gardens.

Note:

As Watkins Brook winds its way through the Country Club of Birmingham, it is entirely different from Shades Creek as it winds its way through the Mountain Brook Country Club.

The channel of Shades Creek through the Mountain Brook Country Club has been made into a box shape with straight vertical walls of concrete and/or rock and a very flat bottom. It was basically devoid of plant life and there was very little aquatic life other than crayfish and minnows at its upper end.

However, as much as can be expected in a golf course, the channel of Watkins Brook through the Country Club of Birmingham has been left as a more natural-looking stream with sloping banks.

Because of this and because of the absence of vertical, manmade “walls” on the sides, Watkins Brook supported a tremendous amount of plant and animal life – aquatic plants that are cleaning the water as it flows off the golf course as well as huge quantities (perhaps millions?) of minnows and other larger fish.

Aquatic Plants Observed:

Cattails (In bloom)
 Pickerel weed (In bloom)
 Duck weed (Second smallest flowering plant)
 Scouring Rush (Horsetail -- Equisetum) – Two large stands of big, tall plants

Wildlife Observed:

Cliff Swallows or Barn Swallows and nests under golf course bridges
 Two huge soft shell turtles – one disappeared burrowing into the gravel/sand substrate.
 Turtle eggshell
 Indirect – two golf balls that had been chewed-on by probable snapping turtles.
 Bullfrog
 Banded water snake
 Snake skin in the water
 Millions of fish -- Sunfish (Bream), bass, stonerollers(?), minnows, etc.
 Fish beds – more than I have ever seen before – so many in one spot that I could not walk without stepping on the beds.

Summary of Items Collected:

190 Golf balls (19 golf balls and two broken tees in one spot)
 1 Plastic practice golf ball
 1 Tool to retrieve golf balls from the water
 30 Tennis balls
 4 Lacrosse balls
 1 Basketball
 7 Baseballs
 1 Softball
 3 Plastic practice baseballs
 1 Child’s soft baseball
 1 Plastic bat
 1 Hockey stick
 1 Child’s ring toss (game piece)
 1 Fishing bobber
 1 Poker chip

- 1 Umbrella
- 1 Patagonia jacket
- 1 Shoe – loafer
- 1 Shoe – Child’s water shoe
- 1 Pair of men’s shorts
- 1 Mannequin’s hand

- 1 Borders Gift Card
- 1 \$20 Nextel Card
- 1 CVS/Pharmacy ExtraCare Card
- 1 Days Inn room key
- 1 Employee identification badge

- 1 Wine bottle
- 1 Wine bottle cork
- 1 Auburn drink hugger/coozy

- 9 Marlboro cigarettes in box – found on gravel bar – not water soiled at all
- 1 Unused wooden pencil
- 1 Compact Disc (CD)
- 1 Latex glove
- 1 Earplug

- 1 Toy wagon – 12 inches long
- 1 Section of child’s train track
- 1 Baby’s pacifier
- 1 Child’s play cup
- 1 Deflated child’s balloon with string still attached

- 1 Door knob
- 1 Old brass toilet mechanism
- 1 Paint scrapper handle

- 1 Pet silent fence flag
- 1 Animal leg trap

- 1 Gary White campaign yard sign and stand – covered in algae
- 1 “For Sale” sign with post
- 2 Gas pipeline location signs
- 1 Survey marker