

# OHIO ROVER<sub>#5</sub>

Winter 2026

Official Newsletter of the  
Cuyahoga Valley Land Rover Club

Summer Camp 2025  
Defender Offroad Day

Land Rover Competitions  
Green Oval Guild at 20

# Ohio Rover #5

## Winter 2026

### CONTENTS



Page 3: Editors Letter: Out the Alpine Window

Page 4: Sumer Camp 2025

Page 10: Defender-Off Road Day Land Rover Solon

Page 13: 2026 Event Dates

Page 14: A New Golden Era of Land Rover Competitions!

Page 25: A Note of Appreciation

Page 26: Green Oval Guild Turns 20

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About Us: CVLRC is an unincorporated volunteer community of rover enthusiasts in Northeast Ohio. CVLRC is also a supporting member of the Association of North American Rover Clubs (ANARC).

Note: Motorsports are dangerous. Participation is voluntary and participants assume all risks. Participants agree to abide by the law and to follow all safety measures to ensure their own as well as other participants safety.

Front Cover: Bill Fishels Defender sits proudly at Rover Summer Camp 2025 by Rob Cox

Back Cover: Chris Ray AKA “Mud Ruts” 2014 at The Wilds by Sean Sloane



# Out the Alpine Window

DJ Harvey

When you look at the North American Rover event calendar the active event season begins in March, swings into full force by summer, and then slowly tapers off through November. Considering this natural pacing as we move into our third year of the Cuyahoga Valley Land Rover Club the focus for 2026 will be two events: a late spring rover camp and an autumnal drive like the covered bridge tour.

We saw a lot of enthusiasm and participation in 2025 and I sincerely appreciate you all for your involvement. We had nine opportunities to meet in 2025. In January and April we met at the Irish Pub Mavis Winkles in Twinsburg. In May we met twice, the first for coffee at Heartwood in Hudson and second for our annual ice cream social at Country Maid Ice Cream in Richfield. In June we met at Southington Offroad and in July we had coffee at Northeastern Ohio's British Car Day in Hudson. In August we held our Summer Camp at Southington. In October we met for the covered bridge tour of Ashtabula County and in November a few met for Black Friday off-roading at Southington. Initial event dates have been set for 2026 so be sure to check the events page and mark your calendars! **Our rover camp will be at the end of May** and our Autumn ride will likely be the first or second Saturday in October. Trailhead 4x4 is providing a **much-requested recovery training** in February to break up the winter blues. I have some other ideas for new events and I'm working on some collaborations that will make for fun and unique outings. If you would like to organize an event or have an idea, I will gladly support you!

Lastly, the pacing of the newsletter was initially set for quarterly. I did well the first year in 2024 but less well in 2025 (only one newsletter). Like many of you, 2025 brought me some unplanned surprises that demanded a lot of attention. I had aimed at getting a newsletter out in late summer or fall, particularly to commemorate 20 years of our mother club the Green Oval Guild. Well, its 2026 and here we are. I pause, and again I write with true happiness and gratitude: HERE WE ARE! I'm glad to be here, and I'm glad you are here too.

We are a small group of rover enthusiasts but we have a lot of heart and we are comprised of many wonderful people. Our influence is likely greater than we know. I've truly enjoyed every moment we've spent together this past year. I hope the reflections and stories from this newsletter inspire you to keep living your rover dreams and to keep connecting with our community in 2026. Enjoy reading about your CVLR club, the Green Oval Guild's birthday, and a new era of Rover Competitions!

Happy Rovering,

DJ

# Summer Camp 2025





Story: DJ Harvey Photos: Rob Cox, DJ Harvey



The Cuyahoga Valley Land Rover Club once again hosted its annual Rover Camp at Southington Offroad in Garrettsville, Ohio from August 15-17, 2025. This was the second year for camp. This event was extended from the first's year event of a Friday overnight to Saturday to now include two full nights of camping and access to the offroad park through Sunday afternoon. The sky started clear with a few clouds in the sky, but unlike the year prior, the event weekend was hot and humid. New in 2025 was online registration via the

website Zeffy which was generously set-up by ANARC's (Association of North American Rover Clubs) John Kostuch.

Attendees rolled into camp on Friday afternoon and evening and were greeted by the large welcome sign hanging over the cabin door, land rover flag, and a land rover banner at the campground entrance. Once camp was set up early attendees set out on a guided evening trail ride letting everyone unwind on the dirt and rocks of Southington. Trail ride participants included Mike Nizami (Disco





II), Steph Honrek (LR4), Bill & Deb Fishel (Defender 110), Scooter & Michelle Wickham (D90), Rob Cox (Defender 110), Dave Whaling (Disco II), Tom & Cora Martin (Defender 90 NAS & Disco II), Josh and Shannon Kearney (Disco II), and DJ Harvey (Disco II). Waiting for the group back at camp was Eric Brown (Disco II) who rolled in late after dealing with a flat tire on his trailer. After the ride the group gathered under the pavilion for family style burgers and hot dogs with sides sent lovingly from Pennsylvania by Kris (Dave) Whaling who couldn't make it this year. As dinner unfolded the group was surprised by a sunset serenade by local 87<sup>th</sup> Cleveland Pipe and Drum band member Reece Calovini who played his bagpipe for the group! After dinner the group settled down to a nice bonfire to swap stories and dreams. A few drinks were shared including a bottle of Kilchoman Islay Series Vineyard Series



5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary that was released a few months earlier in honor of five years of the Vineyard Series at Martha's Vineyard (thank you Cooper Murray!).

Saturday morning began calmly as campers rolled out of their tents and the smell of breakfast soon filled camp. A 9 o'clock drivers and welcome meeting was held followed by a free morning training covering the basics of off pavement recovery by International 4-Wheel Drive Trainers Association (I4WDTA) certified instructor and owner of Trailhead 4x4 Eric Brown. Eric is known nationally in the off pavement recovery world and in addition to his work with I4WDTA, he has been hired by Ford, the US military, and various clubs to share his expertise. In 2025 he was an instructor at the ANARC Stewards Training Event and Rover Owners of Virginia Mid Atlantic Rally, as well as invited by SAREK autowerkse to guide at HYPER FEST (Virginia). The training started with a didactic lesson complete with hands on introduction to





gear followed by on site demonstration of various safe winching technique. Later in the day Eric did a demonstration of self-extraction in sand after burying his Discovery to its frame by using a pole pal sand anchor. After training, the group split into easy and advanced groups. A ride was done by each group before returning to the Pavilion for lunch. Additional attendees on Saturday included Rhys Russell (Range Rover Classic – rebuild in progress!), Dom Salim & Nivarro (Discovery II), and Jerry Prosser (LR3).



With the heat and humidity climbing in the afternoon, the group took advantage of the first Road Tax Vehicle (RTV) trials course set up in Northeast Ohio. The single stage course included 12 gates and was set up pre-event by Tom Martin and DJ Harvey. With everyone getting a chance to clear the course and three people getting perfect scores: Rob Cox, Mike Nizami, and Bill Fishel, the group headed back to camp to relax and try and hide from the heat. A second group dinner was held, and the group was entertained by singer song writer Tom Quinn ([www.tomquinnohio.com](http://www.tomquinnohio.com)). Saturday evening saw a few attendees leave, while the remainder went back out on the trails to explore some mud and take photos. The evening ended again around the campfire.

Sunday morning started with a lightning flash and the crack of thunder before a heavy isolated thunderstorm poured onto the grounds. Some people scrambled to break down camp before the rain started while others enjoyed the storm in their tents. After a quick breakfast and breaking down camp, one last trail ride was done through the newly muddy tracks. The group returned to camp and one by one the rovers rolled away. After a short visit with the landowner the final rover rolled off the grounds and the gate was locked up behind it. Anticipation for next year's event sat companion to all on their way home.





Southington Offroad can be visited multiple times per year, however, the rumble of a 100-300 Jeeps will be heard, which brings its own set of fun and adventure. But this one special weekend

a year, where a small group of Rovers meet, is exciting, rejuvenating, and a delight for rover enthusiasts in this corner of the world.









Story + Photos: Land Rover Solon + DJ Harvey

On Sunday July 13, 2025, Land Rover Solon hosted Defender Off-Road Day at Southington Offroad in Garrettsville, OH. In the spring of 2025 Taylor Davis, owner of Land Rover Solon, reached out to Eric Brown about contacts at Southington Offroad for a dealer sponsored event. Eric in turn reached out to me for contact info at Southington (where the Cuyahoga Valley Land Rover Club hosted their first summer event in 2024 and several smaller get togethers). I gladly shared the contact info with Eric and Taylor, and tried to coordinate a formal Cuyahoga Valley Land Rover Club presence at the event in support of Land Rover Solon. I was able to meet with LR Solon's Marketing Coordinator and offer some guidance as to the event, however, the event was largely managed by JLR and outsources to KRO Events, the company that

manages JLRs national Destination Defender Events.

The event was marketed on social media and interested attendees could sign up for a timed slot for a 30 minute test drive on a closed guided course in a new Defender. Two instructors from the Land Rover Experience Centers were in attendance along with their Defenders as well as an additional Defender from Land Rover Solon. To accommodate as many interested with the limited Defender slots, those who did not have a guaranteed time in a Defender could drive their own vehicle through the course. In addition to the guided trail, a food truck was on hand and entertainment was provided by Jungle Terry lending a Safari vibe to the event ([www.jungleterryandfriends.com](http://www.jungleterryandfriends.com)). The course was compromised of counterclockwise run of the lower





rim trail, crossing the main road south towards the lake by the owner's entrance, up some rock climbs, and around the lake back to the pavilion. Those who drove the new Defenders had a Land Rover experience instructor in the passenger seat with them. I drove my own LR4 (actually my 16 year old nephew drove) as there were no Defender slots available for the time I could go in the afternoon. We drove the trail following a new Defender while the Land Rover Experience Instructor guided my nephew over the radio. Eric Brown followed behind us in his Discovery 2. Club members Eric Brown, Tom and Cora Martin, and Steph Honrek were present when I arrived and had all experienced the new Defender.

In speaking with the KRO event organizer Melissa Eckman, Land Rover Solon had a very successful day with approximately 40 attendees throughout the day. Speaking with some of the attendees, they were impressed with how easy the Defender made the trails seem. When

I returned a month later for our Cuyahoga Valley Land Rover Club Summer Camp, I led several people on the same course that the Land Rover Experience instructors had set up and to my surprise, some of the obstacles were VERY challenging to a few of the vehicles in the group. What the new Defender made look extremely easy, left a few in our group unable to complete. Seeing the difference between the new Defender and classic rovers on the same obstacle left me more impressed with the capability, ease, and refinement, of the new Defender.











# 2026 Event Dates

## **Off-Pavement Recovery Training**

Feb 7, 2026

9AM-4PM, hosted by Trailhead 4x4

Cost \$75

Location: 7777 Exchange Rd, Valley View, OH 44125

Please RSVP to Trailhead 4x4 via phone, facebook, or to admin at CVLRC FB or Website

## **ANARC Stewards (Spring!) Training**

April 15-19, 2026

Cost: \$1250.00

Location: Cole Learning Center, 67-61 Bridal Falls Lane, Tularosa NM 88352

Registration: <https://www.anarc.club/steward-training>

Note: 2 scholarships will randomly awarded in mid January 2026

## **CVLRC Rover Camp**

May 29-31, 2026

Cost: TBD (was \$65 last year, likely cost increase in 2026)

Location: Southington Offroad 10321 Silica Sand Rd Garrettsville OH 44231

Registration will be online again this year

## **CVLRC Autumn Driving Tour**

Likely first Sat in October

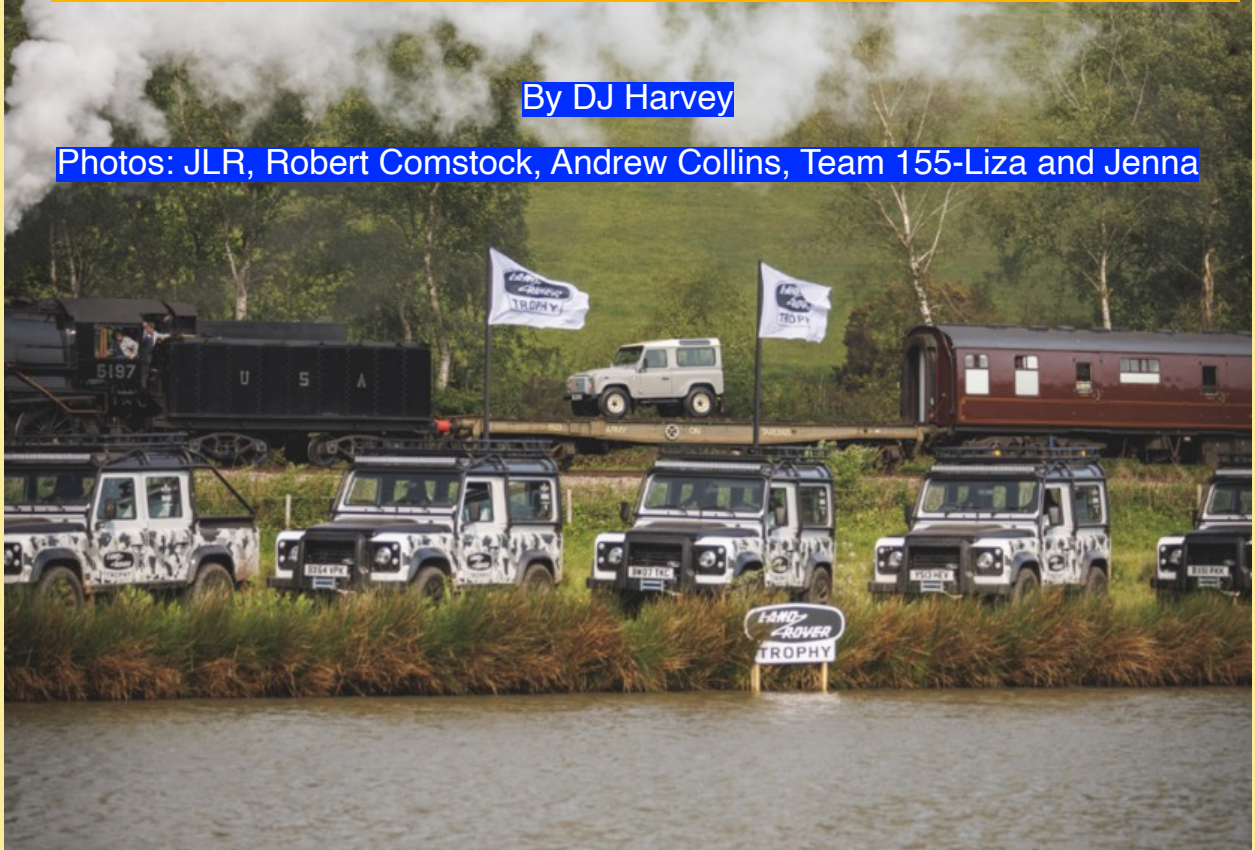
Some debate on doing a different trip this year, if you have an opinion, please share!



# A New Golden Era of Land Rover Competitions!

By DJ Harvey

Photos: JLR, Robert Comstock, Andrew Collins, Team 155-Liza and Jenna





**M**any of the seasoned rover enthusiasts recall quite vividly the Camel Trophy Competitions that ran from 1980 to 2000. Land Rover vehicles served as the primary competition vehicle from 1981-1998 and the primary support vehicle in 2000. When the relationship with Camel tobacco ended and the competitions ceased Land Rover had to find a new way to market and promote itself. Unsure of a way forward and missing the excitement (and advertising) that the “Olympics of 4x4”, the Camel Trophy, brought to the brand and enthusiasts Land Rover attempted twice to recapture the magic with the G4 Challenge in 2003 and 2006. A third G4 Challenge event was scheduled for 2009 however this was cancelled due to costs and the economic downturn of 2008.

After 2006 there was a long hiatus of Land Rover sponsored vehicle-based competitions. The almost decade and a half that followed between competitions brought momentous changes for Land Rover including the end of an era when the last Defender was produced in 2016. This was the end of a sixty-eight-year legacy that started with the Series I and the evolution of an icon that became the Defender. The iconic marque was reborn in 2020 with the new Defender along with the reintroduction of Land Rover sponsored competitions. The public was introduced to Land Rover Trophy events and North American Land Rover dealers were invited to again participate in exclusive Land Rover TRĚK competitions. After fourteen years, Land Rover sponsored competitions returned in 2020 and have continued in record numbers over the past five years. While the significant nostalgia for the Camel Trophy past is often in the mind and rearview mirror of owners, journalist, and enthusiasts, we must not overlook that a new Golden Era of Land Rover based competitions has not only

arrived but the signs ahead point to an even more exciting future ahead! Read-on for details about the new golden era and what lies ahead.

### **Return of Land Rover TRĚK Competitions for North American Retailers 2020-2025**

While Land Rover was still very involved with Camel Trophy in the 1990’s Land Rover North America set out to create its own North American retailer only competition known as Land Rover TRĚK. TRĚK was created in 1996 by Bob Burns who carried the title Training and Development Manager Offroad Programs for Land Rover North America. Bob wanted to “infuse the people who interact with Land Rover customers with product and brand knowledge and a level of four-wheel drive expertise not seen from any other automotive manufacturer”. The competition was seen as a mini-Camel Trophy event held over two days. Instead of miles of driving the competition would focus on special tasks. The first competition was held at The Buckhead Ranch in Georgia in 1996 with MY1996 Discovery I vehicles. The ranch was owned by Mark Hennessey who was also the owner of the winning Land Rover Dealer team from Atlanta: Land Rover North Point.

The 1997 Land Rover TRĚK competition was held at the Tinmouth Hunting Reserve in Vermont in 1997. The competitor’s vehicles were the new 4.6L Range Rover HSE P38. Winners were again Land Rover North Point (Atlanta). The 1999 TRĚK competition was held near Bodega Bay, California using the Land Rover Discovery II’s as competition vehicles. Land Rover Buckhead (Atlanta) was the winner. Land Rover TRĚK 2000 was held at the Land Rover Experience Center at The Greenbrier Resort in West Virginia with forty-



six teams competing in Land Rover Discovery II's. The winner was Land Rover Greenville.

The first Global TRĚK was held in 2001 in South Africa. Every global region held its own TRĚK competition to select finalist to compete in South Africa. Eleven teams of three people were selected from the following markets: Australia, Austria, Dubai, Holland, Ireland, Japan, Latin America, South Africa, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States (Land Rover Greenville). A twelfth media team was selected. Black and orange right hand drive Land Rover Discovery II's were fitted with Td5 diesel engines and a manual gearbox for the competition. The event was held at Umhloti Lodge and Game Farm near Kruger National Park. For a detailed writeup about the event please see Atlantic British's Roverlog from Jan 2, 2002.

2002 was a gap year for the TRĚK competitions but the events returned for a final year in 2003. Land Rover TRĚK 2003 was held at the Forbes Trinchera Ranch in Colorado. Again, Land Rover Discovery II's were used. The winners were Land Rover Eden Prairie of Minnesota. This was the final year of the competition until 2019/2020.

In preparation for the new Defender the Land Rover TRĚK competition returned in January 2020 at the 4xFAR Festival in Palm Springs, California. Qualifying trials were held at the Land Rover Experience Center in Asheville, NC with fifty-three teams competing in October 2019. Each team drove a MY2020 Discovery 5. The winning team was Land Rover Roaring Fork (Glenwood Springs, CO).

The Land Rover TRĚK 2021 competition was held at the Land Rover







MY2022 Land Rover Defender 110 for Land Rover Trophy 2021

Experience Biltmore in Asheville NC in October 2021 using MY2022 Defender 110's. Seventy teams competed in the qualifying trials in September and seven teams progressed to the finals. The overall winners were Land Rover Rochester (NY) announced on October 6. Land Rover TRĚK 2022 saw 100 three person teams compete in a 2-day event with the finals being held in October in Manchester, VT using MY2023 Defender 110's. The winners of 2022 were again Land Rover Rochester (NY) announced on October 17, 2022.

Land Rover TRĚK 2023 brought the MY2023 Defender 130 P400 SE to the competition. One hundred and nine teams competed. The finals were held at Hidden Falls Adventure Park near Austin, TX on Nov 8-10 2023 and the winning team was Land Rover Tulsa. For a detailed write-up, read Katt Min's article at *ROVERS Magazine* titled "2023 Trek" from April 2, 2024. Land Rover TRĚK 2024 saw the return of the MY2024 Defender 110S on 18" steel wheels for the competition. Finals were held on Nov 20-23, 2024 at Land Rover Experience Center in

Carmel, CA. Land Rover Buckhead (Atlanta) won the competition. In 2025 ninety-one teams competed at the XOverland Ranch in Three Forks, MT. MY2025 Defender 110s were used in the competition. Land Rover Calgary (Alberta) won the competition.

### **Land Rover Trophy: North America 2021-2023**

The North American Land Rover Trophy events had two components. The first being a US/North American based annual competition reserved for the owners (and a teammate) of limited-edition new Defender Trophy Edition vehicles. These events were held in 2021, 2022, and 2023. The second component of the Land Rover Trophy events was a three-day competition held in England (next subsection). The UK competition was reserved for the owners of the limited produced Land Rover Classic Defender Works V8 special edition Defenders. These UK events were held in 2022 and 2023 and titled Land Rover Trophy and Land Rover Trophy II respectively. Participation was limited to the owner and a teammate of one of the 25 special classic vehicles. The first UK





Land Rover trophy also welcomed the winner of the 2021 North American Land Rover Trophy Competition. A few media/press representatives were also given a coveted opportunity to participate.

In February 2021, JLR announced that Land Rover Classic Defender Works V8 would build 25 special edition Land Rover Trophy Defenders. These would be based on 2012-2016 Land Rover Defenders that would undergo a frame up rebuild and feature a 5.0L Land Rover V8 engine. Due to import regulations these would not be available in the US. The cost started at £195,000. Following this announcement, JLR North America announced in July 2021 that it would be selling 220 Land Rover Defender 110 Trophy Editions in the US. The vehicle would be based on the model year (MY) 2022 Land Rover Defender 110 P400 X-Dynamic SE. Prices started at \$91,350. The black vehicles would have additional Eastnor yellow wrapped body panels and Land Rover Trophy decals on the front doors in addition to others package elements, a modern styling to pair with the Works V8 Defenders. Owners would

be invited to participate in an all-day event at the Land Rover Experience Center in Asheville, NC at the Biltmore Estate. Starting on October 11, 2021 the Defender Trophy Event began with six waves (days) of competition and over 80 teams competing. There were fourteen challenges in total ranging from physical events, puzzles, and off-road challenges. Points were awarded for the greatest number of successfully completed challenges. The overall US winners were Jonathan Steppe and Max Thomason from Charlotte, NC. They were invited to travel to England to participate in the Land Rover Classic Defender Works V8 Trophy event in 2022.

Because of the events success a second North American Land Rover Trophy limited edition vehicle and event was announced on August 19, 2022 by JLR North America. JLRNA was to produce 250 limited edition Defender 90 Trophy Edition vehicles based on the MY2023 Defender 90 P400 X-Dynamic SE. Again, the vehicle would have a heritage yellow inspired wrap to the body panels and Defender Trophy logo badging on the doors.





Land Rover Classic Defender Works V8 Land Rover Trophy

Of the 250 vehicles to be produced 220 were slated for the US and 30 for Canada. A second North American Trophy Competition was held beginning on October 8, 2022, this time in Manchester, VT at the Land Rover Experience Center. With a similar format as the year prior the 2022 winners Natasha Radwan and teammate Jonathan Gunsur from Los Angeles, CA were invited to participate in the Classic Defender Works V8 Trophy Experience in 2023.

A third iteration of the competition and special edition vehicle was announced on August 10, 2023. The special edition vehicles were based on the MY2023 Defender 130 P400 SE. These vehicles were painted Santorini black with bespoke Trophy Edition topographical map wrap on the doors and spare tire cover. Additional interior badging was also noted. 220 vehicles were earmarked for US sales and 10 for Canada, priced at \$103,000. Owners and a friend would be able to participate in the 2023 North American Trophy Competition starting October 29,

2023 near Austin, TX. According to JLR press release, the winners were awarded a grand prize 2023 DEFENDER Biltmore Experience that included a 4-day trip to Asheville, NC. Unfortunately, it has been difficult to identify the winners of this competition.

On June 19, 2025, a fifth Defender Trophy Competition event was announced, this time with a global scale, to be held in Africa in 2026. Limited edition Defender 110 trophy editions were also announced. This vehicle is currently for sale at \$87,400 and can be ordered in Deep Sandglow Yellow or Kewick Green.

### **Land Rover Trophy: England July 18-20, 2022**

Land Rover Classic Defender Works V8 announced the production of twenty-five limited edition V8 Defenders in February of 2021. The rebuilt 2012-2016 Defenders would be both Defender 90 and 110 vehicles. In addition to the 5.0L V8 engine paired to an



automatic eight speed ZF gearbox, the exterior was painted Eastnor yellow with Narvik black highlights (reminiscent of the Camel Trophy sandglow yellow), A frame bar and Warn winch, underbody protection, 16-inch body-colored wheels, roof rack, roll cage, raised air intake, and additional lights. The interior featured black leather with Recaro seats and a new bespoke analog clock created by British watch maker Elliot Brown. The three-day competition was initially planned for 2021 but due to the pandemic, lockdowns, and restrictions the event was moved to July 2022.

The three-day event began on July 18, 2022 at Eastnor Castle which is the longtime home to Land Rover testing and site of the Land Rover Experience Center. Of the twenty-five owners, eleven were able to attend with a teammate with some owners seeing their new purchase for the first time. Additional competitors included the North American Trophy winners Jonathan Steppe and Max Thomason from Charlotte NC and a press team consisting of Pat Cruywagen from *Land Rover*

*Monthly* and teammate Neil Watterson from *Land Rover Owners International*.

The three-day event began with introductions to the vehicles and skills training. The second day was the beginning of competition which involved driving skills challenges, vehicle recovery, and bridge building. The final day involved additional challenges and skills including tug of war with a Defender on a barge, a Musto Water challenge driving course, and an Elliott Brown Time Trial. That evening concluded with a gala and awards ceremony. Overall winners Eric Tick and Jurgen Straatman won a trip to Namibia's Skeleton Coast. Other attendees to the event included former Camel Trophy winner Bob Ives and UK stunt driver Jessica Hawkins. As part of the sponsorship with Elliott Brown every driver and teammate received one of fifty bespoke Trophy Defender Holton Professional Watches to match the vehicle. The watches featured a dial with topographical contours of Eastnor castle created using invisible UV reactive varnish. Competitors discovered the hidden dial face contours at the gala when their watches reflected



Land Rover Classic Defender Works V8 Land Rover Trophy II



UV light! For a detailed write-up of the three-day event read *Land Rover Monthly's* detailed write up by Pat Cruywagen called "Trophy Hunters" dated Feb 20, 2023.

### **Land Rover Trophy II: England, May 20-22, 2022**

On the heels of the successful inaugural Trophy Event Land Rover Classic Defender Works V8 announced Land Rover Trophy II on July 28, 2022. A second round of twenty-five 2012-2016 Defenders would be rebuilt with 5.0L V8 engines. In addition to the Defender 90 and 110, five double cab 110 pickups would also be produced. The exterior would be painted Fuji white with Narvik black accents and a unique camouflage pattern that pays tribute to twenty-three countries explored by Land Rover in past competitions and expeditions as well as hidden new defender silhouettes within the camouflage pattern. Other modifications included a roll cage, A frame front bar with winch, roof rack, raised air intake, underbody protection, expedition roof rack and ladder, and 18-inch sawtooth wheels. Land Rover Trophy logo badging on both front doors was also added. The interior featured a split color leather interior with Recaro sport seats. British Watchmaker Elliott Brown reprised their role creating a custom analog clock for the dash. Prices started at £225,000. The watchmaker Elliott Brown also made 1000 bespoke Land Rover Trophy II watches released for sale to the public.

The competition was again a three-day event, this time held at the award-winning Staffordshire Hotel "The Tawny" at Consall Estate from May 20-22, 2023. Very little press release information could be found about the competition and most information was gathered from social media on the

landrover.classic instagram page. Day one of the event featured a caravan from Land Rover Classic headquarters to The Tawny hotel. Photos show the vehicles in caravan as well as a beautiful lunch spread and photos of the award-winning hotel. Additional photos from the subsequent day's events highlight water crossings, log bridge building and crossing, and a rope course challenge with competitors and other items being pulled on a line above a small stream. The Land Rover Classic Defender Works V8 Islay Edition made a surprise visit on a steam train to the competition. The Islay Edition is the first heritage edition by Works V8 and is based on Maurice Wilks' 1965 Series Ila. Additional photos showed competitors with their vehicles, driving under bridges, an Elliott Brown time trial station, and competitors paddling a Defender on a log barge across water. No information about the winners could be found. From the images, it looked like Trophy II was a huge success and fun had by all participants.

### **Defender Rally Series: 2022-2025**

Jaguar Land Rover acquired world famous British rally racing brand Bowler in 2019 and subsequently became part of Special Vehicle Operations. Under the guidance of JLR Motorsport, the Defender Rally Series was created with the inaugural championship in 2022. Each series is comprised of seven events across the UK and Ireland with each event hosting up to sixteen

Defender Rally Series Defender 90





Rebelle Rally Team 155 Defender 130



competitors. In 2023, several of the UK championship teams moved on to the European Baja Championship that consisted of four rounds in UK, Spain, France, and Ireland. The Bowler Defender is a Defender 90 with a P300 Ingenium 2.0-liter four cylinder turbocharged petrol engine with significant modifications including a full roll cage and 18-inch wheels. Plans are underway for the Defender Rally Series to continue in 2025.

### **Rebelle Rally: 2023-2024**

The Rebelle Rally is an all-women's one-week map-only navigation offroad rally created by Emily Miller. The first Rebelle was held in 2016. There have been multiple teams driving Land Rovers vehicles in the competitions history and a teams have comprised of Land Rover employees has participated. Despite the prior six years of some Land Rover based teams, 2023 was the first year that JLR North America officially sponsored a team. Team 155, comprised of Liza Beres and Jenna Fribley, was provided a Defender 130 for the 2023 competition. JLRNA continued their sponsorship of the

team in 2024 with a MY2024 Defender 130. The 2025 competition saw several Land Rover based teams, but the absence of formal JLR sponsorship.

### **Dakar Rally: 2025-2028**

The Dakar Rally is considered the world's most difficult off-road endurance race. The event began in 1978 as a staged endurance rally race from Paris France to Dakar, Senegal traversing several African countries. The race is known to be quite dangerous and there is a list of competitors and pedestrians that have perished in past races. The race continued from Paris to Dakar until 1992, when some events either didn't start in Paris or didn't end in Dakar. In



Defender 110 support vehicle



2008 the rally was cancelled due to security concerns in Mauritania. Beginning in 2009 the race was held in South America until 2019. Since 2020, the Dakar Rally has been held in Saudi Arabia. On November 22, 2024, JLR announced that Defender would be the official car partner of the Dakar Rally from 2025 onward. JLR also announced that the Defender Works team will begin competing in the Dakar Rally in 2026, which is occurring at the time of this writing. JLR has three Dakar Rally teams driving rally versions of the Defender OCTA. The modified Defender D7X-R vehicles will be running in the new stock category. The three driver/navigator teams are Stéphane Peterhensel and Mitka Metge, Rokas Baciūška and Oriol Vidal, and American Sara Price and Sean Berriman.

Not to be overlooked is the various teams that competed in 2025 and currently in the Dakar Classic 2026. At the time of writing five teams are competing in the Dakar Classic in a Land Rover including team 703 in a Series III 109", Team 728 in a Defender 100, team 735 in a Range Rover Classic, team 736 in a Range Rover Classic, and all-female team 737 in a Land Rover 110.



### **The Golden Bright Future Ahead**

The future of Land Rover competitions is bright for both the general public and the



professional driver. Upcoming competitions are built around the Defender brand. The Defender served as the official vehicle partner for the 2025 Dakar Rally and the 2025 FIA World Rally-Raid Championship (W2RC) with a fleet of twenty Defenders supporting the 2025 Dakar Rally with an additional three years as official partner planned until 2028. Six “highly specialized recce (reconnaissance)” Defenders were used by Dakar organizers to plan the routes for the upcoming 2026-2028 Dakar Rallies. A new Defender works team will run two Defenders in the five rounds of the W2RC and three Defenders in the Dakar Rally from 2026-2028. The three 2-person teams were announced by JLR on August 27, 2025. The Dakar Rally will run from January 3-17, 2026 starting and ending in Yanbu, Saudi Arabia. The teams will be racing the Defender Dakar D7X-R in the stock category for production-based vehicles, a race modified version of the Defender OCTA.

For the public, a global search is currently on for the next competitors in the Defender Trophy Adventure Competition set to take place in a yet to be disclosed location in Africa in October of 2026. Applicants from fifty countries will be selected for national qualifiers. The winners of those qualifying events will participate in the global final in

Africa hosted by Defender and the conservation partner Tusk. The Africa final competition will consist of three adventure stages made up of driving, ingenuity, and physical challenges. Finals competitors will compete in pairs but scored individually. If by chance you're not selected for the final, you will be able to follow along online in October of 2026. In North America, you can apply online but must be at least 23 years old, have a valid drivers license, and in good physical condition (able to swim at least 50 meters). Up to 44 Canadian and 190 American slots are available for a two-day competition with up to 16 challenges at Stave Lake in Mission, British Columbia between April 15-May 5, 2026. Two finalists from Canada and two finalists from the USA will be selected to proceed to the finals in Africa. Your application must be received before November 30, 2025.

As has been done in the previous Trophy Competitions, a limited edition 2026 Defender Trophy vehicle is available to purchase. Based on the Defender 110 with a 3.0L 6 cylinder, the vehicle can be ordered in Deep Sandglow Yellow or Keswick Green. Gloss black 20" wheels have all terrain tires, and the vehicle is fitted with a black deployable roof ladder, side-mounted gear carrier, front and rear mud flaps, expedition roof rack, and a raised air intake. The interior has black ebony Windsor leather throughout and special Defender Trophy badging. Prices start at \$87, 400 and ordering is currently available.

### **Conclusion**

The fourteen-year hiatus of Land Rover competitions between 2006 and 2020 left enthusiasts and adventurers with little besides the Camel Trophy era of the 1980s and 1990s to reflect on. However, the

introduction of the new Defender in 2020 has sparked nothing short of a new golden era of Land Rover Defender Competitions for owners, enthusiasts, and adventurers. With the "House of Brands" strategy, the other Land Rover models are out of the competition segment for the time being. The composition of the competitions has changed since the Camel Trophy era; however, opportunities for driving challenges, physical skills, teamwork, and spirited adventure are again plentiful - all while behind the wheel of a Land Rover Defender.

Despite the myriad of pressures a modern automaker faces including international regulations, technological demands to achieve safety benchmarks, corporate sustainability goals, electrification, and the demand for modern design and luxury, Land Rover Defender based competitions has resulted in the automaker returning to the foundation of what made the Land Rover brand iconic – rugged capability. No other automaker has the heritage of long-standing rugged capability, global competition, decades of marketing, and iconic design that evokes confidence, freedom, luxury, and the ability to move above and beyond the ordinary for the average consumers, the enthusiasts, and the professional drivers. Congratulations to JLR for reigniting a new era of competition and passion for both the seasoned enthusiasts and the next generation of Land Rover owners.





# A Note of Appreciation

In 2025, there were several people and organizations that supported our Northeast Ohio group of Rover Enthusiasts in various ways with their time, talents, and/or financial contributions. It is only fitting to recognize them and their efforts. When you see them, please extend a warm thank you (or feel free to write them a note!)

On behalf of the Cuyahoga Valley Land Rover Community, Thank you!

## **Club Members**

*Dave + Kris Whaling*

*Tom Martin*

## **Organizations/Businesses**

Trailhead 4x4: *Eric Brown*

Planet Motors: *Mike Nizami*

ANARC: *John Kostuch, Scott Preston, Jeff Aronson*

OVLR: *Dixon Kenner*

Southington Offroad: *Cheryl*

# Green Oval Guild Turns 20!

Story: DJ Harvey Photos: Chris Ray, Sean Sloane, Nigel Pence, Jay Vee,  
Rod Wiggins, Ryan Hill, Alex Schum, David Welch





The Green Oval Guild, Ohio's longest running Land Rover club, celebrated 20 years as an organization in 2025. While most enthusiasts' groups fade into the twilight before the age of twenty, the Green Oval Guild's presence has never been stronger. It's Facebook membership tops over 1400 members and an impressive 8000+ followers on Instagram with over 2100 posts. The Green Oval Guild reached meteoric fame by hosting its offroad events at The Wilds in Southeastern Ohio, the largest wildlife conservation center in North America. As the Green Oval Guild turns twenty, we reflect on its origins and history.

### Origins

The Green Oval Guild (GOG) was started in 2005 by Joe Cole after he and his wife purchased a used 1999 Discovery II. At a dealer run event Joe met another couple in a new Freelander HSE. A friendship was born between Nate Jedinak and Joe Cole. The two discussed Land Rovers and Nate added a Discovery II and Series truck to his new Land Rover collection. Before long Nate's neighbor, Brian Domke, was also hooked on rovers and the three men decided to form The Green Oval Guild. Through engagement at central Ohio Land Rover dealerships and mailings, the club quickly grew to twenty members. The club structure was formalized and became a 501(c)(3) with bylaws and officers. Membership could be obtained at one of three levels: Charter Adventure Rover for \$100 that included a polo shirt, access to off-road events, GOG decal, website recognition, and a newsletter. Safari Rover level was \$45/year and included one year of access to off-road events, decal, and sticker. Social Rover level was

\$25/year and included a decal and newsletter. The levels of membership were eventually streamlined to "new member" and "renewing member" fees.

The GOG has been a very active group since its formation. The group initially organized three to four offroad events with an additional three to four social events and tech events yearly. The GOG collaborated with Land Rover Dublin (Dublin, OH) in 2006 to host the first club defining event named "Wilds Safari". Although the Wilds Safaris are the iconic event of the GOG, the group has hosted countless other off-pavement events.

### The Wilds Safari Years 2006-2014

The Wilds is a private wildlife conservation center 50 miles east of Columbus, OH. The Wilds was incorporated in 1984 as a 501(c)(3) under the name The International Center for the Preservation of Wild Animals (ICPWA), which was the formalization of an already existent private-public partnership between the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Ohio Zoos, and private parties. After the non-profit was formalized, it was gifted 9,154 acres from the Central Ohio Coal Company. The land is reclaimed surface coal mine land. The first visitor center was built in 1989 and fencing was completed for the first animals, Przewalski's horses (Mongolian Wild Horses) which arrived in 1992. Public tours followed and were started in 1994. A formal partnership began with the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium in 2001 with a purchase of 20% of the conservancy by the zoo with \$500,000 in 2003. The Lodge was opened in 2002 for visitors to book overnight



accommodations. The partnership between the Zoo and The Wilds developed its first Strategic Plan in 2005. At that time the animal management area covered 5000 acres leaving the other half of the property unused at the time. The topography was rolling and wooded, and off pavement trails already existed in part due to a small, abandoned test track (dubbed “The Course” at future events) that had been built by AM General for Hummer to unveil the H-2 for the media. The Green Oval Guild, along with the backing of Land Rover Dublin, was able to negotiate a use agreement with Wilds CEO and Executive Director Dr. Evan Blumer for the ability to use and maintain non-utilized areas of the property in exchange for volunteer hours and cross promotion.

The ensuing years saw The Wilds continue to grow and develop albeit with times of turbulent challenges. The



Carnivore Conservation Center opened in 2007, luxurious yurts at Nomad Ridge were opened in 2009, and the Conservation Science Training Center opened in 2010. In 2009 the State of Ohio eliminated the annual \$500,000 funding, affecting the 4 million dollar a year budget. After a subsequent difficult financial year, Dr. Blumer left at the end of December 2010 after filling the role of CEO since 2002. The Wilds board decided not to search for a new director and instead worked out a new organizational structure with the Columbus Zoo managing the facility. The conservation center continued to grow with the addition of various adventure tours added in 2011 including a zipline, horseback riding, and fishing tours. The Hellbender Conservation Center opened in 2013 (aquatic salamanders native to North America and one of the largest amphibians relatively unchanged since prehistoric eras). The largest Rhino herd barn in the world was opened in 2016 and lakeside cabins at Straker Lake were opened in 2018.

The Green Oval Guild’s hosting of the Wild’s Safari events spanned nine years in total. The first Safari was a single day event in April 2006 with around 15 vehicles and approximately 40 people in attendance. It was set up as a family friendly event with a guided tour of the conservation center to see the animals in



the morning, followed by off-roading the rest of the day. Some attendees chose to stay the night in Mongolian yurts. The first event was deemed a success, and efforts were made to repeat the event yearly. The Wilds Safari events continued to grow in attendance. 2008 saw approximately fifty trucks as well as the addition of off pavement driving and vehicle recovery education by the infamous Bill Burke from BB4WA. The president of the Green Oval Guild, Joe Cole, was invited to write an article about the GOG in 2007 for *Land Rover Monthly* and again in 2011 for *ROVERS Magazine*. The Fifth Anniversary of the "Wilds Safari" in 2010 grew to a three-day event with 75 trucks in attendance. Outside of the June event, the GOG also managed the Course for other groups at 500\$ an event. In 2011 (June 17-19), the well-attended event added a winch challenge to the events activities. The

event was also covered on film by Justin Monnin of Lucky8 Off-Road and can be found on YouTube. The 2012 Wilds Safari (June 15-17) saw the return of Lucky8 Off-Road as a Premiere Sponsor. A new camp area was introduced and no trail driving after dark. The 2013 Wilds Safari (June 14-16) hosted a poker run as well as a popular animal pasture tour in your own vehicle early Sunday morning (the animal pasture tours are still talked about to this day by members who took advantage of the opportunity!). Rumors abound about a drowned P38 at that event. The 2014 Wilds Safari (June 19-22) was the last event at that location. Dinner was included for attendees and Bill Burke from BB4WA returned for more off-pavement instruction. A side note, the GOG held other club events at the Wilds throughout the years (Occupy the Wilds on Dec 30, 2011 Land Rover Dublin event on Sep 26, 2012 for example, and





Wilds Thanksgiving “Turkey” Runs Dec 8, 2013), however the summer Safari events held on Father’s Day weekend have been the distinguishing events for the Green Oval Guild. Sadly, due to changes in the Wilds management and the conservations growth and mission expansion, the Wilds significantly restricted property usage and increased its fees making future events wildly out of reach for continued events.

Fundamental to the Wilds Safari events success was the amount of work and effort needed to host these events. Countless hours were spent planning, coordinating with sponsors, trail preparation, volunteer recruitment, organizing, as well as managing the event itself. The initial event was organized by the club founders who first organized the event with Land Rover Dublin, however, as the events grew in attendance and popularity, the lion’s share of the work was done by Chris Ray aka “Mud Ruts”. For many years Chris volunteered countless hours, personal resources, and sweat equity into ensuring the Wilds Safari events were fun, safe, and memorable.

## Post Wilds Safari 2015-2025

On January 20, 2015 an announcement was made on discoweb.org that there would be no further Wilds Safaris: “There will be no Wilds event in 2015! Thank you to everyone that came and supported us all these years. The costs have greatly increased and we are being limited on the property usage. There is no way to grow the event to add more so we can bring in more participants. As a club we barely squeak by even or just a little in the red each year. Maybe 2016 will be different “. The comments to the post expressed the deep sadness for the loss of the event: “it is the best Family event for Rovers” expressed one commenter. The GOG leadership shifted gears to continue its annual Father’s Day events. In place of the Wilds Safari, the GOG celebrated its tenth anniversary at Northbend State Park in WV for a 3-day GOG Summer Rally on June 19, 2015.

In 2016, the GOG began focusing more on off pavement trails available in Vinton County, OH and maintaining a signature June event in addition to the other trail outings throughout the year. The 2016 summer event held on June 16 was the Vinton County Trail Run. In the summer of 2017, the GOG returned to Northbend State Park in WV on June 17. A second autumn event was held on September 30 at Tar Hollow State Park Run. In 2018 the Vinton County GOG Expedition was held on June 29. In June of 2019 the GOG traveled to the Daniel Boone Backcountry Byway in Kentucky for its signature summer event. A second local to Ohio event was held on September 6, 2019 called the GOG Fall Safari. 2020 saw the start of the corona



virus pandemic and no event was held in June, however, despite the pandemic, there was a GOG Fall Rover Rally on October 16, 2020.

2021 was memorable for two events: the first was the GOG Trophy Run on June 4-6 limited to ten trucks/teams competing over two days. The second event was an evening with Bill Burke hosted by Land Rover Easton (Columbus, OH) followed up the next day with Rovers Wheeling in Vinton County on September 11, 2021. Starting in the spring of 2022, the GOG organized the GOG Offroad and Recovery Training Day on May 21 led by I4WDTA certified instructed from Trailhead 4x4's (Cleveland, OH) Eric Brown. For Land Rover's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2023 the GOG in collaboration with Land Rover Easton and Bill Burke from BB4WA hosted a 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event at Tar Hollow State Park on June 9-10, 2023 that included lectures, food, customer appreciation tent, and trail riding. 2024 and 2025 continued the well-established tradition of numerous social gatherings including off-roading in Vinton County and West Virginia as well as coffee meetups. The GOG expanded with



Cincinnati and Dayton chapters hosting Rover and Coffee meetups while the sister club Cuyahoga Valley Land Rover Club in Northeast Ohio hosted a summer camp and offroad in July 2024, a fall covered bridge tour, numerous social gatherings, and a second summer camp in August 2025.

### **Club Organization**

The founding president of the GOG, Joe Cole, set up the non-profit based in Columbus, Ohio. As the club grew and people's personal situations and involvement changed, a new leadership group was eventually transitioned after the Annual club meeting and Holiday Party on Jan 21, 2012. The baton was passed and Chris Ray became the succeeding president of the GOG while additional officers included Eric Brown, Stacy Harley, Jeff West, and Roy Ball. The new leadership was fit for the task as they had served for years as primary organizers, volunteers, and supporters of the GOG. The second generation of leadership saw the addition of a Cleveland Chapter to the GOG. With previous years of experience with organizing and executing events, the young leadership grew the Wilds Safari events until the Wilds broke away in 2015. The GOG leadership tackled the changing times and navigated the organization through the post Wilds era. Twenty years after its inception the GOG leadership has continued to grow the organization with chapters in Cincinnati, Dayton, and the evolution of the Cleveland Chapter to the sister club Cuyahoga Valley Land Rover Club (CVLRC). After the Wilds events ended, the organization transitioned its financial

status to a social club without annual meetings and formally elected officers.

### **Communication**

Long standing members of the club will recall that the GOG hosted a webpage [www.greenovalguild.com](http://www.greenovalguild.com) beginning shortly after its inception. The website included a forum, photo gallery, an events calendar, a member portal for registration and membership renewal, a documents page, a FAQ page, maps and direction page, and a links page. A newsletter was also sent out to members. The GOG webpage was updated to a new design in 2011. The GOG created a Facebook page in 2013. Facebook eventually became the primary means for communication and by mid 2017 the website was fully transitioned to Facebook. The GOG also created an Instagram account that has been prolific for Land Rover clubs with over 2100 posts and over 8000 followers! A very large part of the GOG continued success has been the tireless work of the Voice of the GOG, Rick Simmonds, who manages the social media accounts along with the other club administrators.

### **Resiliency**

Ohio residents have seen several Land Rover clubs in the past 30 years including the Blue Ridge Land Rover Club, formed on May 13-14, 1989, which was a breakoff group from ROAV and comprised of Land Rover owners from a very large region including VA, WV, MD, PA, KY, TN, NC, OH. Despite its large geographic size, it eventually faded away by the end of the 2000's. The Miami Valley Land Rover Society was based in Southwest Ohio and was formed in 2006 and based primarily in Dayton and

Ciniciatti. The web page remained active until 2013. The Cuyahoga Valley Land Rover Club was formed in 2023 as a sister club to the Green Oval Guild. The Green Oval Guild, however, has set itself apart as Ohio's oldest Land Rover Club with an amazing history. The club has grown from three friends in 2005 to over 8000 followers on Instagram and over 1400 followers on Facebook. It hosted one of North America's most unique off-pavement Land Rover events for nine years at North America's largest wildlife conservation The Wilds. The club has been published in *Land Rover Monthly* and *ROVERS Magazine*. The club has enjoyed the collaboration between Land Rover Dublin and Land Rover Easton and has been sponsored by major Land Rover retailers including Lucky 8 Off Road Equipment LLC, as well as Bill Burke from BB4WA no less than four times. The Wilds Safaris may no longer exist due to changes in the conservancy's financial and business structure, but the GOG has maintained the sense of adventure that a Land Rover brings through its continued club events.

### **20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

To commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, *The CentreSteer* Podcast hosted Rick Simmonds and Austin Germain (Land Rover Easton) for its 147<sup>th</sup> podcast (see *The CentreSteer Podcast #147*, July 31, 2025). On the podcast, Rick and Austin teased the upcoming anniversary event that was later announced by Chris Ray: a return to The Wilds! The GOG leadership, along with Land Rover Easton, hosted a weekend of camping, local trail riding, opportunities for Safari tours, and rekindling old friendships. Land Rover Easton brought some new Defenders to



showcase the new vehicles at the event. The weekend peaked at the club lunch on the outdoor patio of the Overlook Cafe. Under Green Oval Guild banners the attendees dined in the open air while looking over the safari like lands, enjoying some animals (and rocks that looked like animals). Following the meal photos were taken and stickers were passed out. Attendees said their farewells, stopped by the gift shop, and made their way to their rovers for the trip home. The celebration brought smiles to faces and attendees discussed their next get togethers. Congratulations to the leaders, organizers, and participants that have given the club 20 wonderful years. With a raised glass, here is a toast to another 20!

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# GOG Over the Years



## 2008 The Wilds: Event Tickets and Roll over



## 2011 The Wilds







## 2013 The Wilds





## 2014 The Wilds + Pasture Tour







## 2019 Recovery Training @ Tar Hollow



## 2021 GOG Trophy





## 2022 Recovery Training @ Tar Hollow





## 2023 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with Bill Burke and LR Easton





# 2025 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at The Wilds

















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# LAND ROVER

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North America Edition

# CLUB OF THE MONTH

## GREEN OVAL GUILD

IF ANYONE from a Land Rover dealer or Land Rover North American reads this and is wondering if those dealer events really build the brand or are even worth the effort, let me respond with a resounding "Absolutely!"

Four years ago, my wife and I purchased a used stock 99 DII from a dealer in Columbus, Ohio.

During a golf outing with my three playing partners driving to the course, we encountered a "Road Closed" sign. Being able to see that it was a repair of a small bridge over a pint sized ravine, we decided to go around versus taking a lengthy detour.

So we slowly drove off the roadway into a small ditch around the construction work and back onto the road. By the shouts and cheers of my three passengers you'd thought we just cleared the most difficult obstacle known to mankind! Well, I was hooked, so when the dealer sent me an invitation to

an off-road event, I was there.

At a dealer event on some private land, we had an enjoyable morning of running through a couple of mud holes as we envisioned fording African streams. It was during a lunch break I approached a preppy couple having lunch in the back of their new black Freelander HSE. I thought, "Wow, brand new and already off-roading"; they are cool. Little did I know that Nate Jedinak was a Jeepster from his teenage years and the Freelander which he bought for his wife was just a convenient excuse to get back into off-roading. After a brief conversation, I knew this guy was a kindred spirit.

It wasn't long after that we started talking about forming a Land Rover Club. During those next six months we both indulged our thirst for off-road adventure by getting our Land Rovers off-road ready. I went with a lift,

traded those 18" rims for 16s and new bumpers - I was ready. Nate, added a new Disco to his stable and shortly after that a Series truck. Enter his neighbor and long time friend, Brian Domke and then he was hooked too.

There had to be more like us out there in Central Ohio. We decided a club was a must!

After lengthy discussions and several pints of ale, we unanimously settled on "The Green Oval Guild", properly aligning ourselves with the marque we so dearly loved. With the name and bylaws in place, we were officially a club. But how could we get the word out? We spoke at dealer events, hung around the dealership, trolled numerous on-line boards and we even sent out a mailing to a database provided by the dealer. Before long we had twenty members, some were friends, acquaintances but more were enthusiasts like us.

Thanks go to our friends at AM General, who constructed a small test track loop at a place that might be the closest thing to Africa in North America. The Wilds ([www.thewilds.org](http://www.thewilds.org)) is 10,000 acres of reclaimed surface mined land that resembles a Serengeti plain. Roaming wild are giraffes, antelope, onyx and even rhinos.

Thanks to the efforts of Dr. Evan Blumer, Executive Director and Rob McBurney, COO, we struck a deal where the Guild could use the abandoned Hummer Course in exchange for volunteer hours and cross promotion opportunities. It was a great marriage as it provided a family venue where you could take the guided tour and see the animals in the morning, off-road the rest of the day and get to sleep in Mongolian Yurts that night. Our first event was a resounding success with about forty people in attendance.

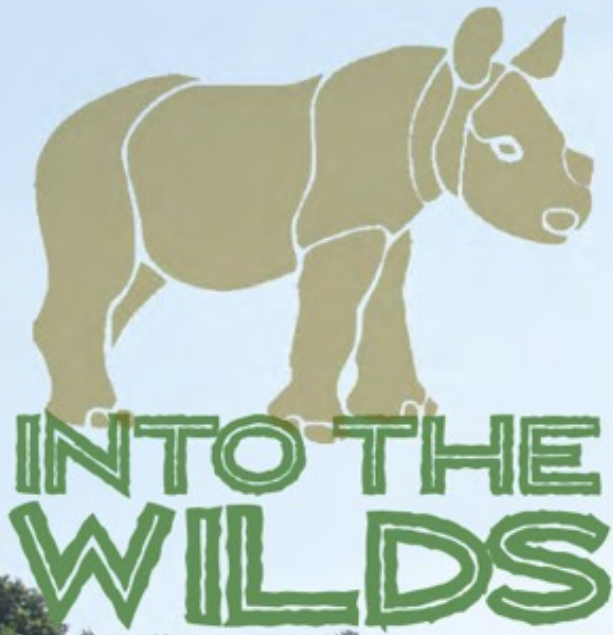
The Club has grown to 32 members from as far away as Nevada and Ontario, Canada. We conduct three to four off-road events per year along with three to four social events and a couple of tech events. Our members have taken contingents to MAR, MOAB and run the notorious passes between Silverton, Durango and Telluride in Colorado.

Friendships have been made, good times enjoyed and many memories that no doubt will become family stories of how rough and rugged grandpa first tamed that menacing ravine; on the way to the golf course that is!

**Joe Cole, President**  
[www.greenovalguild.com](http://www.greenovalguild.com)  
[joinus@greenovalguild.com](mailto:joinus@greenovalguild.com)







# INTO THE WILDS

*By Joe Cole*

*Joe Cole, Columbus, OH, is the president of the Green Oval Guild—central Ohio's Land Rover club—as well as a human resource consultant. His family, wife Carla and five daughters, also have a '97 Defender 90 and a kitted-out '99 Discovery II – ed*

12 Rovers magazine









As the sun rises through the mist you catch a glimpse of a white rhino, then out of the corner of your eye you detect movement in the brush—wow—it is a giraffe. Surely you are in Kenya, Mozambique or perhaps Tanzania. As your senses clear, you remember...

"I am in Cumberland, Ohio, at 'The Wilds'".

Five years ago the 60 members of The Green Oval Guild faced the tragic dilemma of being an enthusiast club in a state with no public off-road areas. There are however 10,000 acres of what once was a "surface or

*The weekend began with a Friday night social, where guests enjoyed gourmet hors d'oeuvres at sunset overlooking The Wilds pasture with all sorts of exotic game.*



strip mine" that today is home to the one of the largest and most innovative wildlife conservation center in the world, named "The Wilds". Not only has the land been reclaimed from its previous life as a strip mine, but that restored landscape now provides an open range habitat for some of the world's rarest species.

In the recent Land Rover video documentary, "In Search of the Experience", Wilds CEO Dr. Evan Blumer was quoted as saying, "Effective solutions start with strong leadership in scientific study and research, and individual empowerment through creative education." The Wilds has embraced this philosophy and promotes the educational opportunities for all age groups; most recently the highly-regarded Columbus Zoo (Jack Hannah still serves as president emeritus)



has assumed operation and management of The Wilds.

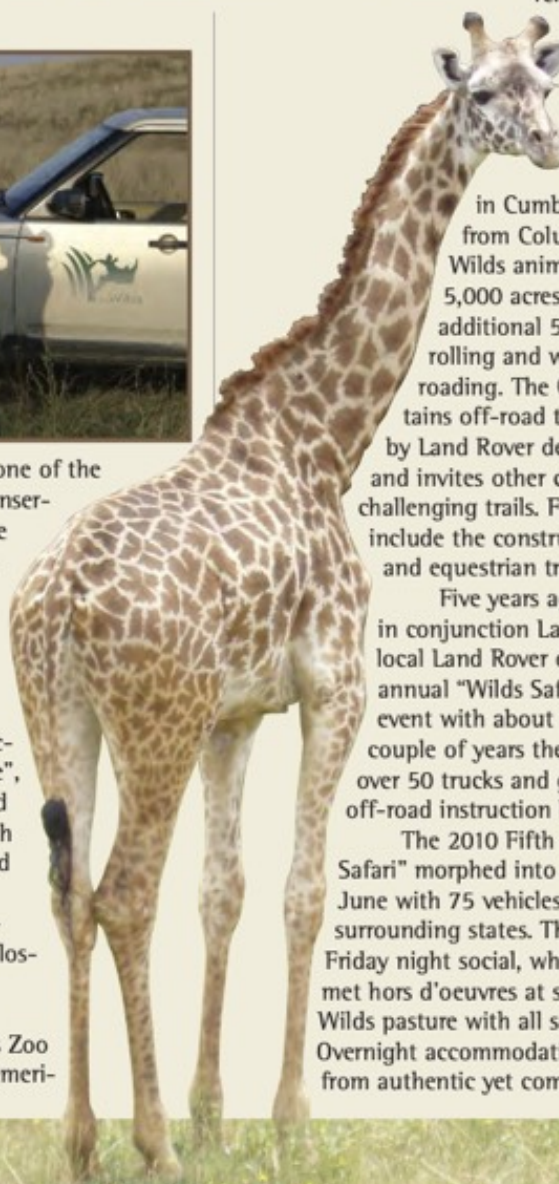
Evan Blumer's forward thinking led to the exclusive relationship between The

Green Oval Guild and The Wilds for access to and management of unutilized portions of their property. Best of all, The Wilds, located

in Cumberland, sits only 50 miles from Columbus. Apart from The Wilds animal management area of 5,000 acres, there is an additional 5,000 acres of diverse rolling and wooded terrain for off-roading. The Green Oval Guild maintains off-road trails and schedules its use by Land Rover dealers for Wheels events, and invites other clubs to share in these challenging trails. Future plans include the construction of a ropes course and equestrian trails.

Five years ago The Green Oval Guild, in conjunction Land Rover Dublin, the local Land Rover dealer, hosted the first annual "Wilds Safari". It was a one-day event with about 15 trucks. Over the next couple of years the event grew to include over 50 trucks and guest appearances and off-road instruction by Bill Burke.

The 2010 Fifth Anniversary "Wilds Safari" morphed into a three-day event last June with 75 vehicles from Ohio and surrounding states. The weekend began with a Friday night social, where guests enjoyed gourmet hors d'oeuvres at sunset overlooking The Wilds pasture with all sorts of exotic game. Overnight accommodations for the event ranged from authentic yet comfortable











Above: Off-Road instructor Bill Burke's heavily modified and fully functional Land Rover Defender 90 NAS Soft Top.



16 Rovers magazine

Mongolian yurts to primitive camping onsite.

Saturday activities began early with registration at the Event Headquarters Tent where participants could purchase event tee shirts or get some off-road modifications from one of the vendors. The trails at The Wilds encompassed a wide variety of off-roading opportunities; at the event we divided the Rovers present by off-road modifications and the owner's tolerance for challenging trails.

Trails ranged from mild to wild. The first trail called "The Course," was actually built by Hummer to unveil the H-2 for the media. It is in an open rolling meadow and features a dozen or so man-made obstacles including a small rock crawl section. Other trails developed by The Green Oval Guild are much more challenging ones in wooded areas.

After a half day of 'wheelin' everyone gathered at Event Headquarters for a cookout lunch buffet and live auction of off-road gear. One-hundred percent of the auction proceeds were donated to The Wilds to support their mission of education and conservation. The gift of auction proceeds has become a GOG annual tradition.

Saturday continued with another afternoon of





off-roading and a night run conducted by The Green Oval Guild trail guides. As dawn broke on Sunday, Rob McBurney, The Wilds COO, led a caravan of Rovers behind the scenes on a "back country" tour of the facility. He took the group through some breathtaking scenery, while talking about their program to re-introduce Native American prairie grasses and other native North American habitats. The 'piece de resistance' was a stop at the newly completed carnivore center to get an up close and personal experience with their three carniv-

orous species—African wild dogs, Cheetahs, and African Doles. In years past, Rob even arranged for the group to see the Cheetahs and wild dogs being fed.

All-in-all this annual event has proven to be a pretty unique adventure for Land Rover enthusiasts. If you run into someone who has been to a "Wilds Safari" and they get a little day dreamy when talking about it, don't remind them they were never really in Africa!! //

For more information on the club, visit [www.greenovalguild.com](http://www.greenovalguild.com)  
The website for The Wilds is at [www.thewilds.org](http://www.thewilds.org).

Rovers magazine 17





**This edition of the newsletter is dedicated to Mud Ruts. His unwavering dedication and commitment to the rover community has provided nearly two decades of camaraderie, connection, and safe enjoyment of the vehicles we love. The GOG, the Ohio rover community at large, and beyond have benefitted from his enthusiasm for rovers. Thank you!**