

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF
DARKE COUNTY PARKS
Winter 2017-18

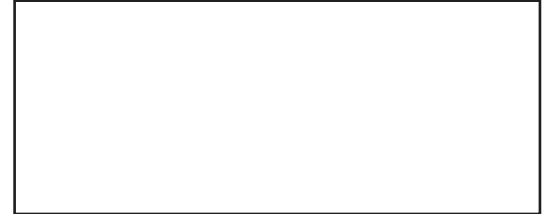
Nature Notes



Darke
County Parks

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~10TH ANNUAL~
WALKIN' IN A WINTER WONDERLAND
Saturday, Dec. 2: 6:00pm - 9:00pm
Shawnee Prairie Preserve



This holiday season join Darke County Parks for an evening stroll through our winter wonderland! There will be over 400 luminaries lighting your way along the wooded trails, allowing for a peaceful winter's night in nature. As you hike along the illuminated trail toward the Log House and blacksmith shop, you can enjoy the crisp air, the bright stars, and perhaps the light crunch of snow on this early December evening.



In the Log House the fire will warm you while enjoying pioneer music of Christmas past as you relax in the comforts of the 18th century. Stop and warm up by the campfire and visit with the Parks Director. Holiday crafts for all ages will be available in the Nature Center to fuel the memories of this staff-favorite event. The Nature Center and gift shop will be open offering a selection of unique gifts or that perfect stocking stuffer! Santa will once again pay us a visit from the North Pole!

New this year for the 10th anniversary, we will offer an extended path option for those who can't get enough of the luminary trails. Don't forget about our new Snowman Decorating Contest! Local businesses, families and non-profits decorate their own "snowman" to compete in a people's choice award! Call the Nature Center today to participate in this great way to advertise your business/non-profit to our estimated 1,000 luminary visitors!



Walkin' in a Winter Wonderland is the perfect event for the whole family to celebrate the winter season. Don't forget to bring a votive candle (or two) as a donation for next year's path!

Yours To Discover...

Senses of the Season

As I write this, the time has changed and we must once again adapt to the sunset casting darkness on the land by 5:30pm. The winter months can often feel dead and vacant after the liveliness of the warmer months, and yet, if one ventures onto the trails and is patient enough; just the opposite can be discovered. Try utilizing senses other than sight to keep the mind active and alert during the bleakness of winter. The winter soundscape can be uniquely rewarding if given the chance. Take a hike along the trail, listen for the soft rustle of twigs, the tapping of a woodpecker, the gentle "chip"-note of a sparrow alert us to these winter flocks. Journey near a creek or marsh near dawn and encounter the majesty of waterfowl flocks lifting off for the day. Stand in the middle of the pine trees, eyes closed, listening to the wind "whisper" to you on a crisp winter's day is a magical experience.



Stepping into the realm of touch, we can discover a vast array of textures. Take a walk and hug a tree; feel the bark on your face. The bark of each tree species has its own feel; some are surprisingly soft, others impressively hard. When was the last time

you stood at the base of a tree and looked up? Even better, lay down with your head at the trunk, feel the cold earth underneath you and look straight up into the limbs (The ancient oaks of Shawnee Prairie or Prairie Ridge Meadow provide an excellent opportunity for this activity). If we are greeted with a snowfall; feel the soft kiss of the flakes as they land upon your upturned face.

Taste is often an avoided activity while one is out of doors. This can both be wise and foolish. To be sure, eating anything and everything one encounters or trying something on an "I think this is..." can end with less than desirable results. Instead,

stick to the "generally safe" options. How you ever nibbled on the needles of a pine tree or the sprigs of wild onion? Tap a maple tree and try your hand at maple syrup making. Can you taste the slight sweetness of the raw sap straight out of the tree?

The smells of winter can be few and far between. Early in the season, grab a handful of dead leaves from the earth's floor, rub between your hands vigorously, cup your hands and inhale. The earthy aroma can be quite calming. In late winter, see if you can discover the pungent smell of skunk cabbage, one of the earliest blooming plants in Darke County. As winter yields to spring, enjoy the revitalizing scent of a fresh rainfall.



If we neglect to fully experience our natural world, then we will remain removed from it, and perpetuate the disconnect so many of us feel in today's age. I hope to see you on the trails this winter.

-Robb Clifford, Chief Naturalist



Volunteer in the Spotlight

Meet Lorraine Gebhardt, this quarter's Volunteer in the Spotlight! Lorraine has been a park volunteer since 2015 and has dabbled in many areas such as school programs, event prep, cleaning, cooking and everything in between. Residing in Lewisburg, Lorraine is retired and likes to read, walk, garden and listen to music in her spare time. She loves volunteering because it keeps her moving while being able to help and be useful to the park. Lorraine would like to see growth and continued encouragement of the community to enjoy the parks. Thank you Lorraine for your hard work and dedication!



COMING SOON!

Maple
Syrup Festival
&
Waffle Breakfast
Saturday, March 3rd

Teachers:

Check out the Classroom Program Guide for more info about our special school-age program!

Thank You for Your Generosity

Grants Awarded:

□ Wayne Builders/St. Henry Tile Co

Donations for Room Use/Programs Given:

□ Darke Co. Health Dept
□ West Central Gourd Patch

Monetary / Material / Service Donations:

Sydney Baker; Tom Lucas; Kline Timber; Dave Meyer; Tractor Supply Co., Greenville; Roger Van Frank; Deb Shiverdecker; Roberta Williams; Brandi Brumbaugh; Richard Martin; Ansonia Volunteer Fire Department; Countryside Gardens/Kathy & John LeMaster; Tracey Tryon

Discovery Awaits...



December

WALKIN' IN A WINTER WONDERLAND

Dec. 2, 6-9pm: Shawnee Prairie Preserve; FREE

Our 10th anniversary of this peaceful welcome to the holiday season! Hundreds of luminaries will illuminate the trails and the Log House.

PROJECT FEEDERWATCH

Tuesdays 9-11am & Wednesdays 3-5pm
Shawnee Prairie Preserve; FREE

NATURAL WREATH MAKING WORKSHOP

Dec. 9, 10am: Shawnee Prairie Preserve
Fee: \$10/person Registration Required
Learn the basics of wreath making for the season. Using natural materials, create a one-of-a-kind decoration for home or gift.

PARENT & PRESCHOOLER ADVENTURES: SNOW

2-3 Year Olds: Dec. 13, 10am
4-5 Year Olds: Dec. 14, 10am
Registration Required \$2

F.O.N.D.

Dec. 16, 1pm: Shawnee Prairie Preserve
FREE
Family Outdoor Nature Discoveries: explore what nature has provided for the day!

NATIVE ANIMAL ENCOUNTER

Dec. 23, 10am: Shawnee Prairie Preserve
FREE
Turtle, snake, bats or owl? Come visit today.

NATURE CENTER CLOSED - DECEMBER 25

WINTER BIRD HIKE

Dec. 30, 9am: Shawnee Prairie Preserve
FREE



January

NATURE CENTER CLOSED - JANUARY 1

PROJECT FEEDERWATCH

Tuesdays 9-11am & Wednesdays 3-5pm
Shawnee Prairie Preserve; FREE

BROOM-MAKING WORKSHOP

Jan 13, 10am - Turkey-wing broom
Jan 13, 1pm - Woven hearth broom
Shawnee Prairie Preserve
Registration Required Fee: \$25

WINTER BIRD HIKE

Jan. 13, 3pm: Shawnee Prairie Preserve
FREE

PARENT & PRESCHOOLER ADVENTURES: CARDINALS

2-3 Year Olds: Jan. 17, 10am
4-5 Year Olds: Jan. 18, 10am
Registration Required \$2

HAND-FEED A CHICKADEE

Jan 19 & 20, 9am, 9:30am, 10am, 10:30am
Shawnee Prairie Preserve
Registration Required FREE

F.O.N.D.

Jan. 20, 1pm: Shawnee Prairie Preserve
FREE
Family Outdoor Nature Discoveries: explore what nature has provided for the day!

NATIVE ANIMAL ENCOUNTER

Jan. 27, 10am: Shawnee Prairie Preserve
FREE
Turtle, snake, bats or owl? Come visit today.

FULL SNOW-MOON HIKE

Jan. 31, 6pm
Worth Family Nature Preserve FREE

"Time in nature is not leisure time; it's an essential investment in our children's health" -Richard Louv



February

REEF HQ; LIVE!

Feb. 1, 7pm: Shawnee Prairie Preserve
Registration Required FREE
Warm up this winter by visiting the Great Barrier Reef from Greenville! [Virtually travel to Australia](#) as we talk in real-time to divers at the Reef HQ Aquarium while exploring their open air coral reef exhibit.

WINTER BIRD HIKE

Feb. 3, 9am: Shawnee Prairie Preserve
FREE

HAND-FEED A CHICKADEE

Feb. 3, 10:30am, 11am, 11:30am, 12pm
Shawnee Prairie Preserve
Registration Required FREE

DOWN TO EARTH BOOK CLUB:

"SILENT SPRING" BY RACHEL CARSON
Feb. 5, 6:30pm: Shawnee Prairie Preserve
Registration Required

PROJECT FEEDERWATCH

Tuesdays 9-11am & Wednesdays 3-5pm
Shawnee Prairie Preserve; FREE

THE HOME HERBALIST: DRIED HERBS

Feb. 10, 1pm: Shawnee Prairie Preserve
Fee: \$10/person Registration Required
Learn to craft home herbal remedies for digestion, boosting immunity and beyond.

PARENT & PRESCHOOLER ADVENTURES: HIBERNATION

2-3 Year Olds: Feb. 14, 10am
4-5 Year Olds: Feb. 15, 10am
Registration Required \$2

F.O.N.D.

Feb. 17, 1pm: Shawnee Prairie Preserve
FREE
Family Outdoor Nature Discoveries: explore what nature has provided for the day!

NATIVE ANIMAL ENCOUNTER

Feb. 24, 10am: Shawnee Prairie Preserve
FREE
Turtle, snake, bats or owl? Come visit today.

BACKYARD SUGARIN'

Feb. 24, 10am: Shawnee Prairie Preserve
Registration Required FREE

Ever think of volunteering?

We are always looking for volunteers to help out within the Parks. We have a wide variety of ways you can volunteer, whether it be assisting with animal care, leading school groups, operating festival stations, there is something for everyone. Stop by the Nature Center today to get registered as a volunteer and start giving back to your community!

OUTDOOR EXPLORATION & CLASSROOM PROGRAM GUIDE

Darke County Parks' outdoor and in-classroom programs are designed to enhance Ohio's curriculum standards and incorporate inquiry based learning activities. Through hands-on exploration, students are encouraged to make discoveries about the natural world and evaluate their findings



NATURE'S CLASSROOM OUTDOOR ADVENTURES 2017-2018

NATURALIST IN THE CLASSROOM

- K **The Power of Plants:**
Identifying the six plant parts and their needs for survival
- 1 **Getting Ready for Winter:**
Winter survival strategies for Ohio's wildlife
- 2 **Honeybees and Humans:**
Human effects on honeybee populations & pollination
- 3 **Rocks Rock:**
Sorting, graphing and classifying rocks and geology basics
- 4 **Ohio Wildlife Timeline:**
Hands-on timeline activity of Ohio's wildlife history
- 5 **Owls of Ohio:**
Discovery of nocturnal birds of prey and their life history
- 6 **Mammal Biology:**
Classifying mammals using skulls, fur and tracks

K **Adapted to Survive:**

Discover traits plants and animals to survive in different habitats

1 **Resources: Naturally:**

Defining natural resources and conservation practices

2 **Water Cycle:**

Precipitation, evaporation & condensation in the water cycle

Life Cycles:

3 **Discovering plant and animal cycles and seasonal changes**

Positively Plants:

4 **Plant structure, functions and life cycles are explored**

It's All Connected:

5 **Tracing the flow of energy through ecosystems**

Wading into Wetlands:

6 **The value, function and biotic diversity of wetland ecosystems**

Maple Sugarin': Nature's Sweet Treat!

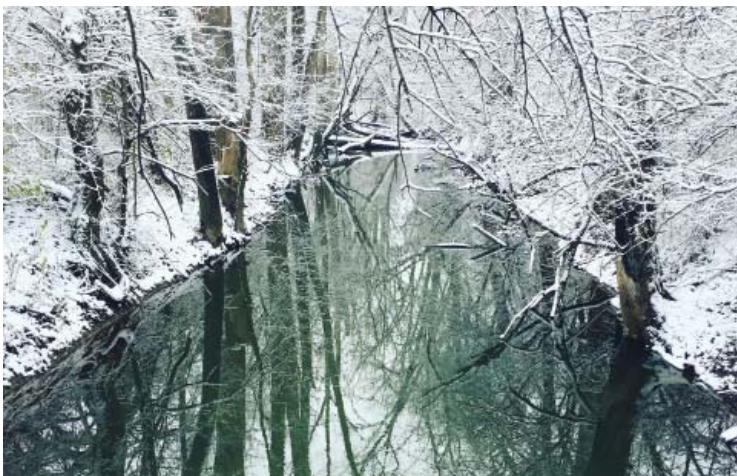
- K-6 **Students observe the process of turning sap into maple syrup!**
Discussions will cover the science and the rich cultural history of maple sugaring.

FRIENDLY GATHERINGS

Friends of The Parks

Organized in 1995, the Friends of the Darke County Park District's mission is to "Promote and support the mission of the Darke County Parks through volunteerism and fund-raising". The Friends strive to increase public awareness and appreciation of the beauty found within Darke County Parks. Meetings are held the first Tuesday of every month beginning at 6:30pm, with a gathering immediately following. Please join us!

December 5, 6:30pm - Christmas Carry-in Dinner
January 2, 6:30pm
February 6, 6:30pm



DARKE COUNTY BIRDERS CLUB

The Darke County Birders Club is open to beginning and experienced birders alike. The club meets the 4th Tuesday of each month at Shawnee Prairie Preserve Nature Center. For more information, contact Steve Miller at 547-3340.

- Dec. 17, 7am - Audubon Christmas Bird Count (meet at McDonald's north)
- Dec. 26, 6pm - MEETING: Christmas Dinner Carry-in
- Jan. 6, 12:30pm - New Year Birding
- Jan. 13, 8am - Mystery Trip
- Jan. 23, 7pm - MEETING: Wild, Wild West: Regina Schieltz
- Feb. 3, 12:30pm - Winter Birding
- Feb. 17, 8am - Pooler's Choice
- Feb. 27, 7pm - MEETING: Photo Pals Pic Parks

DARKE COUNTY CANOE & KAYAK CLUB

The club was organized to promote canoeing and kayaking. The club is open to all experienced paddlers. Beginning paddlers should learn through the Parks' instructional programs. Our meetings are held the 1st Thursday of the month at 7pm in the Nature Center; there will be no meetings during winter months. For updates call Carol Hathaway at 937-547-0220.

OLDE THYME GARDENERS

The club has a strong interest in heritage gardening techniques of the 19th century. They maintain the heirloom garden at Shawnee Prairie Preserve. No special training is necessary to become a member. Meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at 12pm. Contact them at:
Blog: oldethymegarden.blogspot.com Email: oldethymegardener@gmail.com

DARKE COUNTY PHOTO CLUB

The club was formed in 1995 to promote photography in & around Darke County. Whether a beginner or advanced photographer, all are invited to attend the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 7pm at the Shawnee Prairie Preserve Nature Center.



Sponsor a Bucket



Support Darke County Parks, and sponsor a bucket! Each sponsor will have his/her name placed on a sap bucket along the trail during the Maple Sugarin' Festival on March 3, 2018.

- ⇒ "Amber Grade" (\$25) sponsors will receive a 250 ml bottle of Darke County Parks maple syrup in a decorative maple leaf-shaped glass bottle.
- ⇒ "Fancy Grade" (\$40) sponsors will receive two complimentary tickets to the Waffle & Sausage Breakfast on March 3rd from 8AM-noon in addition to a 250 ml bottle of Darke County Parks maple syrup in a decorative maple leaf-shaped glass bottle.

Name: _____

(Print as you would like it to appear on the sap bucket.)

Phone Number: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Please return form & donation by February 15th.

Make checks payable to: Darke County Park District, c/o Naturalist Staff, P.O. Box 801, Greenville OH 45331

