



Heron Tracks

The Quarterly Newsletter of Seven Ponds Nature Center

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NATURE PLAY

Article by Carrie Spencer

What are your favorite memories of outdoor childhood play? It is likely that those memories involve some kind of unstructured, free play in a wild area, with no adult around. That play could have happened in a field or pasture, a ditch or creek, a pocket park on your block or a vacant lot next door. These “wild” experiences helped shape you into the nature lovers you are today. But this generation of children are spending less time outside. In fact, studies have shown that the children of today spend less time outside than any other generation, devoting only four to seven minutes per day to unstructured nature play. This lack of unstructured outdoor play means children are less likely to build deep and meaningful connections with nature, and probably won't become our future advocates for conservation and the environment.

There is no evidence that suggests today's children enjoy playing outside any less than children of past generations, only that they are doing less of it. That leads to the question of, “Why are children spending less time outside?” Technology is probably the greatest factor contributing to less time outside. The average American child spends five to eight hours a day in front of a digital screen. Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*, interviewed a child for his book that stated he liked to be inside because that is “where all the electrical outlets are”.

Urbanization is another contributing factor. Eighty percent of Americans now live in city areas where access to natural areas appropriate for children's play is often limited. A study by the Outdoor Foundation showed that sixty-three percent of Americans play outside within ten miles of their homes. That means less wild places close to home, less outdoor play will be happening.

Parental fears have contributed to less outdoor, unstructured play for children. Parental fears like abduction, animal bites, “bad” weather, traffic, and injury seem to be at an all-time high. Twenty-four hour news media have given parents the impression that crime against children has increased, but the opposite is true, statistically these crimes are less common now than they were a generation ago.

Children's daily lives are often overscheduled leading to less time for nature play. It was not too long ago that children came home from school and played outside. Now, on average, American children from ages 3-12 years old participate in five structured activities a week, anything from dance to music lessons to organized sports. These activities are not bad, but when there is no down time there isn't any time for free play outside. These structured activities are also usually planned, scheduled, and facilitated by adults.

Removing the benefits of unstructured nature play will lessen the opportunities for children to use their creativity, to have spontaneous social interactions, time for quiet and thoughtful play, and even valuable opportunities to learn how to deal with boredom.

All of these changes together have dramatically changed childhood within the last generation, and it is not clear what long-term effects they may have on our children. What we are realizing is time in nature that is unstructured is very important to children according to the mounting scientific evidence showing a correlation between the time a child spends outside playing to the child's mental and physical health.



Reflections...

Let's talk revenue. I am tasked each year with developing a balanced budget for the nature center. That means the expenditures we expect to pay out must be balanced with the revenue we expect to receive. With uncertainty in both columns, it is not an easy task. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, Seven Ponds Nature Center does not generally benefit directly from tax-payer dollars. We must rely on funds we can generate through several other means.

One of our largest sources of revenue comes in the way of earnings on our investment funds. In the early days of the nature center's existence, two funds were set up to ensure to long-term financial stability of the nature center – our Endowment Fund and our Reserve Fund. These funds are carefully managed by a team of investment professionals, guided by our board of directors, and held to the terms of our by-laws. Over the decades, these funds have continued to grow – both through sound investment practices and ongoing contributions. We take a modest percentage each year to help fund our operational costs, with the intention that over time the funds will continue to grow.

While these investment funds certainly support a large percentage of our annual costs, the bulk of our revenue comes from sources that we must generate each year. Chief among them are membership dues. We love our members, and we truly value the funds their dues provide. Non-members pay a trail fee when visiting the nature center, and this is another important source of revenue. On a regular basis, members and supporters choose to send in a donation – often in memory or honor of a loved one, but sometimes simply out of the generosity of their being – isn't that wonderful? Occasionally the nature center is the beneficiary of a planned gift when someone chooses to include Seven Ponds in their will, which is the ultimate gift.

Program fees, while not completely covering the true cost of putting on our programs, help us fulfill that very important part of our mission: environmental education. The nature center offers a few field tours each year, and these provide important funds as well. Grants from various organizations, including our two local community foundations, help our ability to conduct special projects and programs. The Rookery Gift Shop is not only a wonderful place to shop locally and purchase nice things, but also a place where you can be assured that your purchase dollars help support a place you love.

The final piece of the revenue puzzle is fund raising. At Seven Ponds we have a handful of important fund raisers. In the spring, our bird-a-thon always provides a small but important source of income. Corks & Caps, in early June, has become one of our biggest fund-raising events. The Stingers have long sponsored a rummage sale in June, and this, along with their other ventures, helps the nature center financially. Trek the Trails is our latest effort, which encourages staff and supporters to get out, be healthy, and raise money. Our final two fund raisers are upcoming: our members-only Holiday Auction and our end-of-year Special Gifts Campaign. Combined, these two events provide absolutely critical revenue for the nature center.

In spite of financial challenges that we are all facing, I hope you will find a way to continue to support Seven Ponds Nature Center. Renew your membership, sign up for programs, shop at the Rookery, honor a loved one with a donation, contribute to a fund raiser, include Seven Ponds in your will. For more than half a century the nature center has endured, even thrived, through the continued support of those who care about this place and its mission. Let our actions make that another half-century and beyond.

Daryl Bernard, Executive Director



Heron Tracks

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The mission of Seven Ponds Nature Center is to conserve the natural environment of Seven Ponds as a sanctuary for native plants and animals, as a living classroom for environmental education, and as a peaceful retreat for its visitors. The nature center fosters an understanding and appreciation of our natural world and development of an environmental ethic in the people and communities of Southeast Michigan through education, service as a community resource, and responsible stewardship of Seven Ponds and adjacent lands.

Executive Director:	Daryl Bernard
Director of Environmental Education & Chief Naturalist:	Carrie Spencer
Office Manager:	Diane Rankin
Naturalists:	Madison Christol, Katie McKiernan
Weekday Receptionist:	Gina Stoldt
Weekend Receptionist:	Damian Goidich
Maintenance - Buildings & Grounds:	Mike Grappin

Physically and mentally, nature is awesome for children. Studies are suggesting that nature improves children's cognitive abilities. Spending time outside in nature play increases a child's confidence because it allows the child to choose how they will treat nature and gives them the power to control their own actions. Nature play promotes imagination and creativity. The unstructured play allows a child to think freely, design their own activities, and interact with the world on their own terms. Nature teaches responsibility. If things are mistreated or not taken care of properly they will die. Trusting a child to take care of nature means they will learn what happens if you pull a plant from its roots or squish an animal. Nature also allows a child to develop a sense of wonderment like no other environment. Studies have also show that time in nature is soothing and improves moods and reduces stress, lowering depression and hyperactivity.

Physically, nature provides opportunities to be active with higher levels of fitness. Studies show if children are exposed to more natural light they will have higher levels of vitamin D. This means nature kids are less vulnerable to bone problems, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. Children that spend more time outside could have improved eyesight because it decreases the chance of being nearsighted. Lastly, kids sleep better after spending time outside. Being exposed to natural light, and lots of running, climbing, and

playing outside help reset a child's natural sleep rhythms.

While spending time in nature does wonderful things for the body and mind, Seven Ponds Nature Center is focused on the environmental connections that are fostered by unstructured nature play.

Studies from around the world have searched for crucial influences during childhood that foster environmentally conscience behaviors in adulthood. It has been found that many factors play a role, but the highest ranked influence is "frequent unstructured time in nature during childhood", or nature play.

Playing outside cannot be taken for granted. We have to be purposeful with our intention of getting kids outside to play, and creating spaces for them to do so. Seven Ponds is so excited to have such a space for kiddos to explore, build, imagine, dig, and climb in nature. Come check out our Naturescape... it will definitely be worth your while.

One part of Seven Ponds' mission is environmental education which starts with an emotional connection. We want to light a spark that will eventually become a fire. As the Green Hearts Institute for Nature in Childhood states, "The crucial first step towards embracing conservation is to fall in love with nature – which kids often do when they play in it, day after day". Just like naturalist John Burroughs knew over 100 years ago, "Learning without love will not stick. But if love comes first, learning is sure to follow".



Seven Ponds Tributes Memorials, Buy-a-Tree, In Honor

In memory of Esta B. Corbin

• Frank Ciccone

In memory of Judy Goldfaden

• Gavin Awerbuch

Buy-a-Tree in memory of Norman M. Braidwood

• Emersyn & Wesley Ousnamer

Buy-a-Tree in memory of Dahna Loeding

• Lapeer Wildflowers Brand WNF&GA

Holiday Auction...it's BAAAACK!

After a two year hiatus due to COVID, the nature center's annual **Holiday Auction and Christmas Party** is back for 2022. Saturday, December 3 is the date, 6:30 PM is the time, Seven Ponds is the place - and we are ready to celebrate the season with you! The evening is always a lot of fun and all Seven Ponds members and their guests are invited. Now is a good time to start thinking about gift items for the silent and live auctions. Auction items might include artwork, antiques, holiday items, services, or gift certificates. Use your talents and resources to provide a unique item for the auction. This is a very important event for the nature center and we need everyone's help to make this year's auction a big success. Make a contribution and then join us for an entertaining evening. All proceeds help support environmental education activities at Seven Ponds. Contact the nature center for additional information.

Corks & Caps a Big Success!

Seven Ponds held its annual Corks & Caps fundraising event on June 17 at the Metamora Golf & Country Club. Over 200 people attended this event, which featured a wonderful dinner, wine and beer, raffles, live auction, and the beautiful setting at the country club. Due to the large attendance and the generosity of those present, the nature center netted just over \$42,000 at this event. Special thanks to Rick Fleming and his staff at the Metamora Golf & Country Club for providing an outstanding venue and service, and to Brian Rowley for donating his professional auctioneer services during our live auction. Additional thanks, of course, to all those who purchased a sponsorship for the event (see below).

Next year's event will take place on Friday, June 9, 2023. Mark your calendars and plan on joining us at this event.

HERON TRACKS via EMAIL!

Many members have asked about the possibility of receiving an electronic version of *Heron Tracks* rather than the printed and mailed version. Starting with this edition, *Heron Tracks* will now be emailed to all Seven Ponds members who have provided an email address. Check your email inbox, or check your spam/junk folder. If you find it in your spam/junk folder, be sure to mark it "not spam" so it will go to your inbox going forward.

Soon we will offer you the opportunity to choose to continue receiving the print version or go paperless. Going paperless will save us both printing and mailing costs, allowing us to make your membership dollars go further. We'll be using fewer natural resources and producing less waste.

Stay tuned as we work to make this cost-saving measure a convenient benefit for our members.

Seven Ponds Nature Center's 2022 Corks & Caps Thank You Sponsors!

◆ Platinum ◆

Advanced Auto Trends	Jocelyn Scofield
Gaye Butterfield	Dr. James Sillers
Wayne & Amelia Inman	Douglas & Nan Toppin
Carole Porretta	Metamora Equestrian
Coventry Realty/KW Premier	Conservation Alliance
Charles & Yolanda Turner	

◆ Gold ◆

Dr. Michael Kubinski DDS	Susanne Stroh
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◆ Silver ◆

Dr. & Mrs. Gregory Gossick	
Chris & Kelly Heyner	Bill & Karen Rykhus
Bob Kaiser	Phyllis Schroeder
Dale & Julie Markgraf	Casey & Wendy Wise
Gary Wasserman & Charlie Kashner	

◆ Bronze ◆

A&T Leak Technologies, LLC	Hutchison Enterprises, LLC
Monique & Brian Bates	Hutchison Excavating, LLC
Bonnie & Bruce Bennyhoff	Nancy & Richard Kautz
Katherine Horton Boyle	Kevin & Lynn Knisely
Curt Carter & Marty Homan	Raymond & Delores Malski
Robert & Sarah Champion	Joanna Pease
Kathy & David Churchill	Patti & Bruce Robinson
Emory & Christina Clark	Kim Van Dyke
Roy & Barbara Holden	Sandy & Thomas Vukonich
Peggy & Douglas Warner	

Wandering with the Birds *By Daryl Bernard*

At some point in a birder's life, we've seen almost every bird that can be seen in our area. We love the local birds, of course, but we want more. One way to see and experience more is to travel to other places with different habitats: the desert for roadrunners and phainopelas, the mountains for ptarmigan and dippers, the prairie for longspurs and burrowing owls, the sea for puffins and shearwaters. Traveling for birds is exciting and rewarding. But sometimes the faraway birds oblige us and visit Michigan: birds normally residing in Florida or Colorado or even as far away as South America stray off course and find themselves in the Great Lakes state. This is called vagrancy.

Vagrancy in birds is not much studied or terribly well understood. What we do know is that birds have wings, and many can fly great distances. When they fly in the wrong direction, either blown by storms and strong winds or led by faulty wiring in their directional system, they often end up in places far away from their normal range. Birders take advantage of this navigational error by tracking down these wayward travelers and enjoying them much closer to home than they otherwise could. In birding terms, this is referred to as chasing (U.K. birders call it twitching). There are no guarantees in birding, and sometimes a birder chases a rare bird but doesn't find it – and this is called dipping. I've chased successfully and I've certainly dipped!

In recent years some of the vagrants I've successfully chased in Michigan include Western Tanager, Snowy Plover, Pacific Loon, Black-legged Kittiwake, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Rock

Wren, White-faced Ibis, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Varied Thrush, Spotted Redshank, Vermilion Flycatcher, Tufted Duck, Lazuli Bunting, Spotted Towhee, Cinnamon Teal, Black-headed Grosbeak, Wood Stork, Cassin's Finch, Sage, Thrasher, Neotropic Cormorant, Mississippi Kite, Roseate Spoonbill, Say's Phoebe, and Lewis's Woodpecker, among others (look these up online at AllAboutBirds.org to see their normal range). Of course, I've also dipped – oh, I've dipped plenty – but I'd rather not talk about those experiences...

Recently, a very unusual visitor was found on the mowed grass and tarmac of the Oscoda-Wurtsmith Airport: Southern Lapwing (*Vanellus chilensis*). Historically found throughout much of South America, this bird has been expanding its range in recent decades into Central America and southern Mexico. How one ended up in Oscoda, Michigan is open to conjecture, and is currently being debated by birders nation-wide, many of whom traveled to the northern Michigan airfield to see this handsome long-legged, shortgrass-loving member of the plover family. My son Daniel and I arose very early one morning (2:40 AM) to make the three-hour drive to Oscoda in hopes of catching a glimpse at this bird – which had established a habit of being quite visible very early in the morning, then disappearing mid-morning and going absent most of the day. After arriving just before 6:00 AM, we found the bird within minutes and enjoyed watching it from our vantage point outside the chain link fence that encloses most of the airport. Another successful chase! Sometimes you find a fellow wanderer when you're out, wandering with the birds.



Southern Lapwing (*Vanellus chilensis*) at the Oscoda-Wurtsmith Airport *photo courtesy of Kenneth Bishop*

Volunteer News

On the Trail

Thanks to all the many volunteers who helped with a variety of tasks this past summer:

- Thanks to our **Friends of Herbs** for all their work in the herb garden this summer.
- Thanks to our **Butterfly Gardeners** for once again creating and maintaining a beautiful pollinator garden.
- Thanks to **Claudine Zach** for feeding the animals in Critter Corner every week.
- Thanks to **Don Dukelow** for completing various tasks around the center.
- Thanks to **Chas Miller** for helping with several projects around the nature center.
- Thanks to **Joey Janicki, Lilah Pratt, and Ava Sweeny** for helping with trail trimming and invasives.
- Thanks to **the Stingers** for another awesome effort hosting their rummage sale to raise funds for the center.
- Thanks to **Joanna Livingston, Darya and Julie Markgraf, Vicki Baden, and Suzanne Filimon** for helping the Stingers with the rummage sale
- Thanks to **Kathy Cole** for helping with Camp Seven Ponds!
- Thanks to **Marianna Fitzgerald** for helping with IndigoFest at Indigo Lavendar Farm.
- Thanks to **Nancy Kautz and Marianna Fitzgerald** for helping with summer kids groups.
- Thanks to **Marianna Fitzgerald and Kathy Cole** for helping with Party at the Ponds.

If you are interested in volunteering at Seven Ponds, contact Katie McKiernan at kmckiernan@sevenponds.org, call us at 810-796-3200, or complete the volunteer interest form on our website at sevenponds.org.

ASSISTANT NATURALIST CLASSES

These classes are open to Assistant Naturalists only. Classes take place on the third Thursday of the month and begin at 3:00 PM. If you would like to become a part of this rewarding program, contact Naturalist Katie McKiernan at 810-796-3200 or kmckiernan@sevenponds.org.

SEPTEMBER

Native Americans of Michigan

We will learn about the tribes that historically (and still do) call Michigan home. We will discuss their use of natural resources and how it relates to what we use today.

OCTOBER

Fungus Among Us!

Did you know we are more closely related to a mushroom than we are a plant? A discussion and walk all about fungus awaits you during this class.

NOVEMBER

How Animals Survive Winter

Colder months are upon us. Animals of all types are getting ready to outlast the winter. We will learn all about their adaptations to survive the long haul.

Rummage Sale Recap

The Stingers' Annual Rummage Sale was held during mid-June at the nature center and was a smashing success! The sale raised nearly \$8,500 during the sale - their best earnings ever. These funds directly benefit the environmental education programs at Seven Ponds, and we are truly grateful for the effort of our small but dedicated crew of Stingers. This year saw an incredible number of items brought in for donation. Stingers would like to thank everybody who donated items for the sale, and all those who came out shopping and made generous offers for the goods they took home. We will begin accepting items for next year's sale on March 1. Look for a further announcement in the winter edition of Heron Tracks.

Seven Ponds Clubs!

**Astronomy Club • Beekeeping Club
Birding Club • Photography Club
Butterfly Gardeners • Friends of Herbs
Friends of Seven Ponds (The Stingers)**

**Visitors are welcome at all
club meetings.**

For additional information about any of the clubs which meet at Seven Ponds, please visit sevenponds.org or call the nature center at (810) 796-3200

Around the Center

Farewell Nicole

Naturalist Nicole Kopas returned to her native Virginia to be closer to family and friends. She accepted the position of Plant Protection Inspector with the Virginia Department of Agriculture. Nicole began her career as a naturalist at Seven Ponds in January of 2020. In addition to her duties as an interpreter and educator, Nicole was responsible for land stewardship, overseeing the nature center's invasive species management. We enjoyed Nicole's presence at the nature center, her positive spirit and energetic smile, and while we certainly wish her well in her new endeavors, we will absolutely miss her.

Welcome Madison

We are very excited to welcome our new Naturalist, Madison Christol. Madison hails from Menlo, Georgia; she attended the University of Georgia's Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources, earning a Bachelor of Science in Forest Resources in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management. Madison comes to us with certifications and work experience that we believe qualifies her for the position of Naturalist at Seven Ponds. Along with her interpretive duties, Madison also oversees the Land Stewardship program. Madison has a lot to learn about Seven Ponds - the grounds, the history, and the people - but we are very confident that she is a great fit for our nature center, and we look forward to helping her grow as a Naturalist. Be sure to introduce yourself to Madison next time you stop in.



School Groups at Seven Ponds

One of the greatest frustrations we experienced during the pandemic was the absence of school groups at Seven Ponds. This past spring, we finally returned to some sense of normalcy as our naturalists welcomed a full slate of classes here at the nature center. From March through early June, nearly 1,000 students experienced the wonders of nature up close as our expert naturalist staff led them through various investigations and hands-on experiences. Districts serviced included Lapeer, Imlay City, Oxford, North Branch, Dryden, Port Sanilac, and Richmond. Among the programs was a week-long session of Annie's Big Nature Lesson with Dryden Elementary sixth graders. No doubt the fall will see large numbers of area students at Seven Ponds as well.

Critters in the Corner

Next time you are at Seven Ponds you must say "hi" to our new Eastern Garter Snake, American Toad, and baby Common Snapping Turtle. Make sure you look carefully for the toad. It likes to bury itself in the substrate and hide in plain sight. Talk about amazing camouflage!

Purple Martins at Seven Ponds

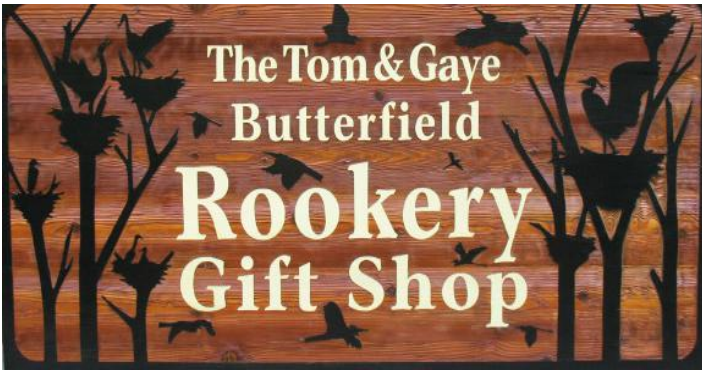
A martin colony tower has been in place at the nature center for more than 20 years, and in all that time, not a single Purple Martin has taken up residence. We have tried many things to entice them: we've put up a martin decoy, we've played the martin dawn song, we even moved the tower to what looked like a better location. Still, no martins moved in - until this spring! A pair of Purple Martins successfully nested and fledged four baby martins. Hopefully this success will lead to a growing colony in the years to come.

Naturescape Still Taking Shape

Although it wasn't ready mid-summer as we had hoped, our Naturescape for children is progressing, and should be ready for exploration and play at some point during the fall. We will send out a notification when it is ready for play!

Mowing the Fields

You may have noticed that we are mowing the fields near the nature center and out front near the farm house. This mowing regimen is an attempt to control an invasive plant called crown vetch (*Securigera varia*). Crown vetch is a low-growing legume vine, native to Africa, Asia, and Europe, but now pervasive here in North America where it was introduced for erosion control, roadside planting, and soil restoration. At Seven Ponds it has become quite a problem as it takes over fields and crowds out native plant species. Our hope is that a few seasons of regular mowing will keep this nonnative plant in check.



THINK GLOBALLY, SHOP LOCALLY

Have you stopped into the Rookery Gift Shop lately? We have been working hard on getting new items in stock for both kids and adults. As we get closer to the holidays, keep the Rookery in mind for your holiday shopping - we have something for everybody on your list. Stop in and check it out!

For the holidays we will have wooden monarch and swallowtail ornaments as well as a new Seven Ponds wooden ornaments and our bird and animal ornaments.

Don't forget that members get a 10% discount (volunteers get 20%) off most purchases in the shop.

Include a Seven Ponds Nature Center gift membership or Rookery gift certificate with your next purchase. If you give a gift membership to a friend or family member, you are also giving them 10% off purchases for the entire year. This is truly a gift that keeps giving through all the seasons.

The Rookery Gift Shop is open during our normal business hours, Tuesday through Sunday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

Purchases made in the Rookery Gift Shop support the nature center, including all of the programs we do and land stewardship we perform. Your purchase dollars help us do good things!



Seven Ponds Nature Center

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Fall Programs

September - November
2022

Autumn brings crisp, cool air and glorious colors to the landscape, making it a wonderful season to visit Seven Ponds. Check out the line-up of fun and informational programs below, and join us as we celebrate the season. Programs are \$3 for members and \$5 for non-members unless otherwise noted. Pre-registration is required for all programs, and registering online is quick and easy. Visit sevenponds.org to register.

September

Prairie Walk

Sunday, September 4, 2:00 PM

We're nearing the end of summer and the prairie is a beautiful sight to see! Hike with a naturalist to learn about the amazing features of our tall grass prairie.

Yoga at the Ponds with Peaceful Moon Yoga

Wednesdays, September 7, 14, 21, 6:00-7:00 PM

Unwind, rejuvenate and relax with Cat Minolli and the 'Peaceful Moon' series. These classes are designed for newcomers and beginning yoga students and/or those who wish to become re-acquainted with the practice. Participants will experience the mind, body, spirit connection while learning basic yoga poses in a serene environment. You don't have to be able to touch your toes or twist into a pretzel to participate, however many postures are done from a seated or prone position on the floor. Participants should wear comfortable clothing and bring a yoga mat or a blanket. Pillows, additional blankets, and any other "creature comforts" are also welcome. Fee is \$10.00.

Invasive Species Work Days

Saturday, September 17, 10:00 AM

Saturday, October 29, 2:00 PM

Invasive species are in full swing here at Seven Ponds. These work days provide a great opportunity for people who are community-minded to come out and get some volunteer hours helping the nature center. Join our Land Steward as you learn about invasive plant species, and also help manage them. Please bring gloves and water; tools will be provided.

Seasonal Walk - Change is in the Air

Sunday, September 18, 2:00 PM

Enjoy the changing seasons around the ponds as we see how nature is getting ready for the onset of autumn. On this hike we'll head wherever the winds take us. Join us!

Spider Discovery Walk

Saturday, September 24th, 2:00 PM

From the big and showy to the small and secretive, spiders of Michigan come in all shapes and sizes. On this walk we will look at some of the different species that call Seven Ponds home and learn about their amazing lives along the way.

October

October Trail Walk in Paul's Woods

Sunday, October 2, 2:00 PM

October has arrived! Let's take a walk over the A-Frame Bridge to see what's happening along the Miller Pond Boardwalk and in Paul's Woods.

Yoga at the Ponds with Peaceful Moon Yoga

Wednesdays, October 5 through 26, 6:00-7:00 PM

See September for the full yoga program description.

Fall Paddle on the Ponds

Saturday, October 8, 10:00 AM

Before winter freezes the ponds up for the year we will take one last turn around the waters and view the vibrant fall colors. Migrating birds and other animals will be readying themselves for colder months ahead. Let us paddle out and see what awaits us! Participants must be 5 years old to ride and 10 years old to paddle.

Autumn Hike in Jonathan Woods

Sunday, October 16, 2:00 PM

The cool, crisp days of autumn are upon us, and the big trees in Jonathan Woods should be ablaze in fall color. Take a walk through Jonathan Woods with one of our naturalists and enjoy the October air. We will meet at the nature center and drive over separately.

Vibrant Fall Sunday Walk

Sunday, October 23rd, 2:00 PM

The colors around the nature center should be something magical this time of year. We will casually stroll through different parts of our property to view the sights and sounds of nature getting ready for winter.

Hike Around the Ponds

Sunday, October 30, 2:00 PM

With leaves falling off the trees each day, we'll take advantage of the opportunity to see through the forest to the ponds. On this hike we'll check out Treetop Pond, Little Pond, Miller Pond, Big Pond, and Long Pond. It's all about the ponds!

November

Owl Prowl

Saturday, November 5th, 7:00 PM

Step into the world of night with one of Seven Ponds' naturalists to look for the owls that call the center home. On this walk, we'll hope to hear (or see) Barred Owls and Eastern Screech-Owls.

Sunday Naturalist Walk

Sunday, November 13, 2:00 PM

Let's enjoy a nice walk around the North-80 as nature gets ready for winter. Dress for the weather and bring your curiosity as we look for end-of-the-year life.

Prairie Seed Collecting

Saturday, November 19th, 1:00 PM

Want to attract all kinds of animals to your property? Plant native plants! Follow a naturalist on a turn around our tall-grass prairie to collect seeds you can take home to start your own ecosystem.

Nature Center Interpretive Building Closure

Thursday and Friday, November 24-25

The Interpretive Building will be closed so the staff can enjoy Thanksgiving. As always, Seven Ponds members may use the trails dawn to dusk.

Thanksgiving Weekend Walk

Sunday, November 27, 2:00 PM

Looking for something to do with the family after the holiday feast? Let's enjoy a nice walk around the ponds and see how winter is approaching the nature center.

FALL BIRD WALKS

This fall we will offer bird walks on select Wednesday mornings. Our bird walks are open to birders of all skill and experience levels, and beginners are always welcome. Bring your binoculars, your enthusiasm, and be sure to dress for the weather. These bird walks are \$3 for Seven Ponds members and \$5 for non-members. Online pre-registration is required, and bird walks are limited to twelve (12) participants. Note the program description for starting time and meeting place. Please arrive on time and ready to go birding!

Fall Bird Walk #1

Wednesday, September 7, 8:00 AM

Seven Ponds Nature Center

Let's spend a late summer/early-fall morning birding the grounds of the nature center, exploring the trails and the ponds to see what we can find. We'll check out the North-80, Earl's Prairie, and Paul's Woods in search of feathered treasures. Most summer residents should still be around, and we should start finding early fall migrants. Meet at Seven Ponds Nature Center.

FALL BIRD WALK #2

Wednesday, September 21, 8:00 AM

Metamora Old RR Grade

This old railroad grade has been converted into a foot trail which traverses nearly a mile north from Dryden Road in Metamora. Along the path we'll pass through edge habitat, successional forest, wetlands, and even get to check out a sewage lagoon! We'll park along East High Street (just east of the intersection) and meet at the trailhead in downtown Metamora.

FALL BIRD WALK #3

Wednesday, October 5, 8:00 AM

Sutherland Nature Sanctuary

This wonderful preserve is located near the southwestern corner of Lapeer County. Ponds, shrubs, both deciduous and coniferous forests, a small creek, and a nearby farm field pack a lot of habitat into a small area. Fall migration should be in full swing, so join us as we see what feathered creatures are moving through. We'll meet at Sutherland Nature Sanctuary.

FALL BIRD WALK #4

Wednesday, October 19, 8:00 AM

Jonathan Woods Nature Preserve

Fall colors in the big woods - what could make it better? Birds, of course! Jonathan Woods is 145 acres of mature hardwood forest that includes a large, leatherleaf bog and a cold water brook with a cattail marsh and hemlock stand. Let's enjoy the final fall bird walk in colorful Jonathan Woods! We'll meet at the nature center this morning and carpool over to our satellite property.

Knee-High Naturalist Classes

Fridays

10:00 - 11:30 am

Fee: \$7.00 per child (\$6.00 for members)

For preschool children around 3 or 4 years old.

Come out and enjoy nature with your child. All classes include nature fun like walks, crafts, games, stories, snacks, and so much more!

Space limited. Online registration required.

Spiders ~ September 23

Shapes ~ October 14

Owls ~ November 18

Animals at the Feeders ~ December 16

Frozen Water ~ January 20

Animal Homes ~ February 17

Nature Music ~ March 24

Toads and Frogs ~ April 21

Plants ~ May 26

Nature Study Series for Homeschoolers

Seven Ponds Nature Center is an ideal outdoor classroom where children can experience nature first hand. In this series of programs, our experienced naturalists guide students toward an awareness and appreciation of our natural world, using hands-on activities, specimens, slide shows, and nature walks. These programs complement state science objectives and focus on ecological concepts. Fee: \$4.00 per person. Register for the Nature Study Series for Homeschoolers sessions online at sevenponds.org.

FOREST DECOMPOSERS

Wednesday, September 21, 1:00-3:00 PM

Grades K-2 and Grades 3-6

Nature's Clean-Up Crew is busy recycling the forest's plants back into soil. This afternoon we will focus on one of the Clean-Up Crew's star player, fungi. We will explore the wonderful world of fungus from life-cycle to relationships through hands-on activities and nature exploration.

JUNIOR METEOROLOGIST

Wednesday, October 12, 1:00-3:00 PM

Grades K-2

Concept: Weather and Climate

Homeschoolers will become meteorologists as they explore climate and weather. They will use scavenger hunts and weather stations to understand the sun and its effects on Earth. We will also problem solve how to keep plants and animals cool on sunny days.

THE FOREST HOME OF THE ANISHINAABEK

Wednesday, October 12, 1:00-3:00 PM

Grades 3-6

Concept: The effects of human-environment interactions through early Michigan history to modern times.

Michigan's once vast forests were huge supermarkets to the Anishinaabek people. Their habitat provided everything needed for survival. In modern times, most of our needs are met from items purchased from a store. Through activities and hands-on nature study, we will learn how we used our natural resources in the past and how we use them in the present.

GEOLOGY ROCKS

Wednesday, November 9, 1:00-3:00 PM

Grades 3-6

The Earth's story is written in the rocks. We will learn to "read" the rocks through hands-on activities about the different kinds of rocks, the rock cycle, and how rocks are around us and used in our everyday lives.

*****UPCOMING SEVEN PONDS FIELD TOURS*****

Fall in the Little Smokies!

A Natural History Field Tour with *Seven Ponds Nature Center*

October 16-21, 2022

Southern Ohio

Join Seven Ponds Naturalists Carrie and Katie as they lead an exploration of the streamside forests, rocky gorges, and ancient white cedars of the "Little Smokies" of southern Ohio. The Shawnee State Park Lodge will be the group's home base, and from there adventure awaits every day of the tour. Our naturalists have a full itinerary planned for you, all set in the colorful splendor of an autumn landscape. Registration is open for this tour and space may remain. Check our website for a full tour itinerary and registration information.

Southern California Birding Field Tour

With *Seven Ponds Nature Center* and *Birding Los Angeles and Beyond*

January 14-21, 2023

Southern California

Join us for a winter getaway tour to sunny Southern California with professional birding guide Luke Tiller of Birding Los Angeles and Beyond. With a base of operations in Pasadena, we'll have access to a number of different habitats as we search out the special birds of the region. We'll explore the coast, mountains, deserts, and Santa Cruz Island, along with a quest for the majestic California Condor. Registration has opened for this tour and space may remain. Check our website for a full itinerary and registration information.

Southwest Texas Birding Field Tour

With *Seven Ponds Nature Center* and *KoziBirding*

April 26-May 4, 2023

Hill Country to Big Bend to Davis Mountains

We'll start our tour in the scenic Hill Country of the Edwards Plateau, with its limestone hills, spring wildflowers, and ancient oak trees. We'll spend an evening at the Rio Bat Cave as 10-12 million Mexican Free-tailed Bats emerge from the cave for the evening. Then we'll move westward to the limestone canyons, mountain peaks, and hidden springs and waterfalls of Big Bend National Park – which boasts the biggest bird list of any of our national parks. Our tour will conclude in the Davis Mountains, a sky island area surrounded by desert that provides opportunities for additional birds not yet encountered on our trip. Join us for this adventure! Online registration for this tour opens January 3, 2023 for Seven Ponds members. Check our website for a full itinerary and registration information.