



# Heron Tracks

The Quarterly Newsletter of Seven Ponds Nature Center

VOLUME 54 NUMBER 1 • SPRING EDITION • MARCH—MAY 2021

## I am Depending on You!

by Daryl Bernard

In ecology we talk about basic principles like the food web, which outlines the relationships between various organisms in a community, and the food pyramid, which describes the basic role organisms play in an ecosystem. We know that plants form the basis of the food pyramid, that herbivores feed on those plants, that carnivores prey upon those herbivores (and in many cases on other carnivores), and that decomposers break everything down and return precious nutrients to the soil so the process can continue. Of course, that is a gross simplification of very complex processes, and each organism plays a very specific role in a grand, elaborate scheme. That role is called the organism's niche, which defines the organism's relationship to the other organisms in its community.

Some of these relationships involve highly developed connections between two species – the connection is called **symbiosis**. A symbiotic relationship can take on several forms, but here we will talk about three of the most common forms that exist in nature all around us: mutualism, commensalism, and parasitism.

Many people are aware of the crocodile bird that supposedly earns its living as a dental hygienist, feeding on parasites and decaying meat inside the mouth of the mighty Nile crocodile. This relationship seems to be beneficial to both parties: the bird gets a tasty meal, and the crocodile gets its teeth and gums serviced. This is symbiosis – a close relationship between two organisms. More specifically, it is a type of symbiosis called **mutualism**, in which both organisms benefit from the relationship – provided the croc doesn't suddenly develop a taste for plover. Unfortunately, as it turns out, this particular relationship is a popular myth attributed to Herodotus from the 5th Century BC, has never actually been documented, and probably does not occur. But, many other mutualistic relationships do exist in nature, and many of them are in our own backyards.

In her Winter 2020-2021 *Heron Tracks* article titled [The Fungal Connection](#), Seven Ponds Naturalist Nicole Kopas introduced readers to mycorrhizal fungi, detailing the symbiotic relationships between various fungi and host plants. In the scenario that Nicole described, the fungi receive necessary carbohydrates formed by the plant through photosynthesis in exchange for increasing the plant's ability to absorb water and nutrients from the soil. Both organisms benefit, which makes

this mutualistic symbiosis, or mutualism. This interconnectedness is directly underfoot and all around us and is just the tip of the symbiotic world of nature.

The interdependency of flowers and pollinators is well known, and honeybees quickly come to mind as key pollinators in our ecosystem. However, the European honeybee is not a native species in North America, and for millennia plants have depended on a wide range of other animals to help them move their reproductive pollen from flower to flower. Three-quarters of all flowering plants in the world depend on pollinators for reproduction, and the list of pollinators is wide and varied. Insects such as butterflies, birds such as hummingbirds, and mammals such as bats all feed on the sweet nectar produced by plants, and in so doing they unwittingly take up tiny pollen grains, which then get transferred to other flowers as the animal feeds from plant to plant. Many of these flowers and pollinators are generalists – the flower is content to let any number of organisms transfer its pollen, and the animal enjoys nectar from numerous plant species. Everybody benefits, so clearly this is mutualism.

Nature abounds with mutualistic relationships, many of them familiar – bacteria in the guts of animals, clownfish and sea anemone, mixed flocks of songbirds benefitting from the alertness of one another, and so forth. Regardless of all this mutual benefitting going on, it must be noted that all organisms in nature are keenly selfish. Their own well-being, not a concern for others, is the only driving force in their mutualistic relationships with other species.

There are plenty of examples mutually beneficial relationships, but what about relationships in which only one species actually benefits?

Cattle egrets were so named due to their habit of hanging out with large, four-legged grazers. As buffalo, wildebeest, zebras, and other grazers (including cows!) move through the grass, they inadvertently kick up insects, which the egrets quickly eat. The egrets benefit from this relationship by receiving a steady supply of disturbed insects, while the grazer neither benefits nor is harmed by the association. This type of symbiotic relationship is called **commensalism**.

## Reflections...

Because of publication and mailing deadlines, I am writing this *Reflections* article in late-January, looking out my office window at a white blanket of fresh snow covering the grounds, while thinking ahead to spring. In my mind's eye I can picture the greening of the grass, the budding of the trees, and the songs of our spring frogs and birds. I am also thinking about operations resuming some kind of normalcy. Hoping, anyway. Perhaps by the time this is published and you're reading it, some normal will have returned to our world.

With that said, I take a measure of pride in the nature center and our dedicated staff. Proud that we have remained a place where people can enjoy and commune with nature. A place where educational programs have continued (modified for public health considerations, of course). A place where our community can turn in difficult times to escape to the trails. It has not been without challenges, of course. When staff were placed on temporary leave last March and the trails were closed for a short time through May, we were incredibly frustrated and disappointed. But that passed, and here we are still.

Financially, we suffered losses across several anticipated revenue streams. School programs were cancelled en masse. Three field tours that had been planned were scrapped. Sales in our Rookery Gift Shop came to a screeching halt. The Stingers were unable to hold their annual summer rummage sale. Our two largest fundraisers of the year - Corks & Caps and the Holiday Auction - were cancelled outright. Fortunately our members and supporters came through for us mightily during our annual year-end Special Gifts Campaign, and we made it through 2020 in sound financial condition. How very wonderful that so many people care so deeply about Seven Ponds Nature Center. We appreciate you all!

As I reflect on the year now behind us and continue to work through the current year, I am very thankful to find myself at a place that so many people truly value. And I am thankful more than ever that I have my connection to nature to help me remain grounded and hopeful. Throughout this experience I have been able to turn to the woods and the fields and the trails. I hope you have, as well. And I hope you continue to do so. Nature provides respite for all those who seek it. As naturalist John Muir said well over a century ago, "And into the forest, I go to lose my mind and find my soul."

Daryl Bernard  
Executive Director

## CORKS & CAPS ~ save the date!

Our annual Corks & Caps Fundraiser will be held Friday, August 6, 2021 at 6:00 PM at the Metamora Golf & Country Club. This fun event is one of our most important fundraisers of the year and we hope you will be able to attend and support the nature center. Typically held in late May/early June, we decided to move the event back a couple months in hopes that we will be able to get together and enjoy a fun evening together by then.

Individual registration for the event is forthcoming, but if you'd like to support the event as a sponsor, please consider taking advantage of the following sponsorship levels:

### Platinum \$1000

Signage and Recognition in program & *Heron Tracks* newsletter  
8 tickets to Corks & Caps plus 8 passes to Seven Ponds

### Gold \$750

Signage and Recognition in program & *Heron Tracks* newsletter  
6 tickets to Corks & Caps plus 6 passes to Seven Ponds

### Silver \$500

Signage and Recognition in program & *Heron Tracks* newsletter  
4 tickets to Corks & Caps plus 4 passes to Seven Ponds

### Bronze \$250

Recognition in program & *Heron Tracks* newsletter  
2 tickets to Corks & Caps plus 2 passes to Seven Ponds

## *Heron Tracks*

is published quarterly by Seven Ponds Nature Center  
a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation  
[www.sevenponds.org](http://www.sevenponds.org) 810-796-3200

*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.*

<b>Executive Director:</b>	<b>Daryl Bernard</b>
<b>Director of Environmental Education/Chief Naturalist:</b>	<b>Carrie Spencer</b>
<b>Office Manager:</b>	<b>Diane Rankin</b>
<b>Naturalists:</b>	<b>Nicole Kopas, Katie McKiernan</b>
<b>Gift Store Manager/Receptionist:</b>	<b>Stacey Holinsworth</b>
<b>Maintenance - Buildings &amp; Grounds:</b>	<b>Mike Grappin</b>

Many trees naturally develop cavities as they grow. A wide variety of birds and mammals take advantage of these natural cavities as resting and nesting places. The birds and mammals benefit by having a ready-made shelter, and the tree is generally unharmed by their presence, nor does it benefit. Frogs and turtles take advantage of lily pads as a handy place to soak up the sun and warm themselves, and fish likewise utilize the shade provided by lily pads as a cooler place to hang out. The lilies, of course, neither benefit nor are harmed by these temporary tenants. Dung beetles feed on the waste left behind by many mammals. The dung beetle benefits, and the animals whose droppings are being used most certainly don't mind.

Researchers in Arizona noticed that Black-chinned Hummingbirds seemed to nest in clusters near Cooper's Hawk nests. While Cooper's Hawks prey primarily on birds, hummingbirds are simply too small and too quick for them to bother with. But they do prey upon jays, which are known to locate the nests of small birds (including hummingbirds) and eat both eggs and young. By nesting in close proximity to the hawks, hummingbirds had essentially enlisted the services of a protector, though of course the hawk had no interest in protecting the nests of hummers – they just wanted to catch and eat jays. Hummingbirds benefitted and the hawks were not affected by this commensalistic relationship. When a band of white-nosed coatis (related to raccoons), moved into the area and destroyed the Cooper's Hawks' nest, the hawks moved on and the jays moved in. In short order, the hummingbird nests were raided, as they had lost their bodyguards.

In some relationships, one member benefits to the detriment of the other. This type of symbiosis is known as **parasitism**. If you haven't yet done so, I highly recommend reading the article titled Ticks, written by Seven Ponds Chief Naturalist Carrie Spencer in the Fall 2020 edition of *Heron Tracks*. In her article, Carrie details the mechanisms by which Michigan's ticks feast on their hosts, potentially resulting in a wide array of health issues. Such is the nature of parasitism: one organism (the parasite) benefits while the other (the host) is harmed. Most of us are familiar with, and shudder at the thought of, such parasites as ticks, fleas, mites, lice, bedbugs, scabies, hookworms, and tapeworms, so we won't even go there. And let's make no mention of brain-eating amoeba! Instead, we'll take a look at a different type of parasitism: brood parasitism.

The vast majority of the ~11,000 species of birds in the world construct their own nest, at least to some degree, in which to lay eggs and raise young. Some birds, however, have devised a system of parenting that is decidedly hands-off (or wings-off, as it were). Instead of raising their own young, they place that considerable burden in the nests of other birds. Brown-headed Cowbirds originated on the Great Plains of the American West, where they followed the immense herds of bison, feeding on the insects disturbed by the grazing bison. Due to the nomadic nature of these herds, cowbirds were unable to spend weeks on nest-building and young-raising, as the bison on which they depended would be long gone by the time the young cowbirds had fledged.

Cowbirds developed an ingenious means of propagating their species: they learned to lay their eggs in the nests of other songbirds, letting them do the parenting while the cowbirds followed the great herds. These songbirds became the unwitting surrogate parents of ever-hungry baby cowbirds. The cowbird eggs would hatch sooner, and the young cowbirds would be more aggressive than the host-species' nestlings. Outcompeting their step-siblings, the cowbird chick would grow faster and soon be much larger than its nestmates, often even larger than its unrelated parents. Dutifully, the host birds would raise the adopted cowbird chick as their own, feeding it continuously until it fledged and learned to be a cowbird.

Fortunately, most host birds learned to recognize foreign eggs in their nests, often destroying the odd egg or building a new nest – sometimes on top of the old nest. In this manner, cowbirds were successful often enough to make the strategy worthwhile, but not so often as to completely decimate the population of any of their host birds. However, with the clearing of forests and the spread of cattle, cowbirds expanded eastward where they found a host species that was completely unfamiliar with their parasitic ways: the range-restricted Kirtland's Warbler. Nesting only in a small region in Michigan's northern Lower Peninsula, the Kirtland's Warbler population was never very large. Habitat loss due to land management practices further reduced the jack pine forests on which they depended, leaving them exceptionally vulnerable to a threat for which they had no defense: the brood parasitic strategy of the expanding Brown-headed Cowbirds. By the 1970s, an annual census showed that the population of Kirtland's Warblers had dropped to fewer than 200 singing males, and more than 70% of Kirtland's Warbler nests were successfully parasitized by Brown-headed Cowbirds.

Fortunately for the warbler and for those who enjoy seeing them, this story has taken a turn for the better. In addition to a devoted effort to manage appropriate habitat, a plan was undertaken to remove the bird responsible for the accelerated decline of the endangered warbler: the Brown-headed Cowbird. Systematic cowbird trapping in Kirtland's Warbler habitat over the next four decades proved successful, and the small songbird has recovered to historic highs, with the total estimated population now around 5,000 birds. Without the pressure of brood parasitism, the Kirtland's Warbler is thriving once again.

Mutualism, commensalism, and parasitism: three common symbiotic relationships in the natural world around you. On your next walk in the woods, look for evidence of symbiosis all around you. Consider who benefits, who doesn't care, and who, if any, suffer. And use this handy graphic to remind you:





## Wandering with the Birds

By Daryl Bernard

There are birds, and there are dreams. And occasionally - if one is fortunate - there are dream birds. The Gyrfalcon is just that: a bird that birders truly dream of seeing. Noted bird author Pete Dunne wrote, "Birdwatchers the world over are drawn to the mere rumor of a Gyrfalcon." Preeminent raptor expert Jerry Ligouri states that "the Gyrfalcon is the largest, most powerful, rarest North American falcon, and likely the most sought-after raptor by birders." They have been highly prized by falconers throughout history, and in the Middle Ages only a king could hunt with a Gyrfalcon.

Adult males may never leave their home in the high Arctic, even during the coldest, darkest, bleakest winters. The larger adult females will wander somewhat, particularly during winters of food scarcity. Young Gyrfalcons tend to wander the most, and the most widely. Even then, they are very rare in the Lower 48 states.

A young Gyr was spotted in rural Washtenaw County, east of Ann Arbor, of all places. Subsequently it was also seen pursuing gulls at a lake in nearby Wayne County. Word of the falcon quickly spread through the Michigan birding community.

I made the trek to the farm fields in of eastern Washtenaw County, daring to hope - along with dozens of other birders - that I might catch a glimpse of this majestic visitor from the far north. For hours we waited, scanning the fields and utility poles, while others checked nearby locations, including the Wayne County lake. Then, around noon, a report came in of a "possible" from nearby Willow Run Airport. A photo of a distant, silhouetted raptor was falcon-like enough to send the masses scrambling for the airport. I was among the masses.

After fifteen minutes of fruitless searching the perimeter of the airport, I spotted a Red-tailed Hawk being harassed by a large raptor - rapid, powerful wing beats, long sharp angular wings, a heavy chest full of strong muscles, highly maneuverable flight compared with the relatively cumbersome red-tail - this was the falcon! THE GYRFALCON. I was out of my car in an instant, binoculars trained on this bird, this dream bird! I watched for an unmeasured amount of time - moments, I suppose, certainly not minutes - as the falcon exercised its superiority over the normally dominant hawk. Enough time to sear the bird's image in my brain. The image of a bird of dreams. What a day, wandering with the birds!

*Washtenaw County Gyrfalcon photographs used courtesy of Mandy Roberts and Dominick Fenech - thank you!*

*Heron Tracks page 4*



© Mandy Roberts



## FINAL BOOK SALE!

The Stingers will be holding a "Getting out of the Book Business Book Sale" during our EcoDay/Native Plant Sale on Saturday, May 15, from 9:00 to 5:00. We have discovered that we accumulate donated books at a much higher rate than we can sell them at our limited number of events every year and we no longer have room to store them. We have tables full of gently used books from all genres. The books will be sold at \$2.00 per bag. If you know of an organization that would like to take the books remaining after the sale please let us know. The book sale will be at a different entrance than the rest of the EcoDay activities and will be open to the public. Limited numbers of people will be allowed in the room at one time to allow for social distancing. Masks will be required for all book shoppers.

**EVERY BOOK MUST GO!  
LEAVE NO BOOK BEHIND!**

# Seven Ponds Tributes

Memorials, Buy-a-Tree, In Honor

## ***In memory of David Wood***

- Lee Bley
- Patricia Cromell
- Marcella Giesseman
- Susan Harvey
- Diane Toebe
- Cathe and Jim Hughes
- Bob and Kathy Pihlstrom
- Kay and Jim Shepherd

## ***In memory of Richard Greer, Sr.***

- Richard Greer, Jr.

## ***In memory of Dale Lopus***

- Judith Lopus

## ***In memory of John O'Neill***

- Madeline O'Neill

## ***In memory of Ted Rankin***

- Independent Food Retailers Association

## ***Buy-a-Tree in memory of David Wood***

- Nancy and Richard Kautz

## ***Buy-a-Tree in memory of Ronald Evans, Sr.***

- Kelly and Chris Heyner

## ***Buy-a-Tree in memory of Margaret M. Kraft and Tom Kelley***

- Barbara Kelley

## ***In honor of Faith Gill***

- Meagan Muladore

## ***In honor of Lynn and Alec Harding***

- Lyndsay Pond White

## ***In honor of Judy and John Lochtefelt***

- Irma Hoops

## ***In honor of Mr. Lynn Rose***

- Julia Raymond

## **Here and There...**

Thanks to **Hollow Corners Veterinary Services** (Dryden) for providing veterinary care for our eastern garter snake.

Thanks to **Chad Gregory** for the donation of several Wood Duck nest boxes and cedar planks for various projects.

Thanks to **Mutch's Hidden Pines** (Lapeer) for the donation of a wonderful Christmas tree for display at the nature center. We appreciate your continued generosity and support!

Thanks to **Crooked Creek Farms** (Lapeer) for keeping us well stocked with beef suet for our bird feeders. The birds thank you as well, especially on the coldest winter days!

Thanks to our own **Friends of Herbs** for adorning the nature center for the holidays with wreaths and other festive decor.

Thank you to our **Secret Santa** - the staff thanks you very much for the wonderful gifts!

## **Around the Center**

### **Baby Birds Abound!**

2020 was another successful year of bird box monitoring. Out of 88 nest boxes we had 180 Tree Swallows, 54 House Wrens, and 35 Eastern Bluebirds fledge. That is a lot of baby birds!

### **Duck!**

Thanks to a generous donation of new Wood Duck boxes, we were able to replace some of our older boxes and provide new nesting opportunities for potential wild tenants. Eastern Screech-Owls also use these boxes for roosting.

## **Seven Ponds Clubs!**

Visitors are welcome at all club meetings. For additional information about any of the clubs which meet at Seven Ponds, please visit [sevenponds.org](http://sevenponds.org) or contact the nature center.

**Astronomy Club • Beekeeping Club  
Birding Club • Photography Club**

# Thank You!

# Volunteer News

## On the Trail

Thanks to those who helped with a very successful Winterfest including: **Kathy Cole, Marianna Fitzgerald, Karen Blaszyk, Alan Rifenbark, Penelope Spencer, Carrie Spencer, Nathan Spencer, and Nancy Kautz.**

Thanks to all the many volunteers who helped with a variety of tasks this past winter.

Thanks to **Noah Elkins** for helping out and completing a wide variety of tasks around the center.

Thanks to **Don Dukelow** for helping with various maintenance projects.

## Volunteer Opportunities

Contact us at 810-796-3200 or Katie McKiernan at [kmckiernan@sevenponds.org](mailto:kmckiernan@sevenponds.org) if you can lend a hand in any of the areas described below. Or please fill out the volunteer interest form located on our website at [sevenponds.org](http://sevenponds.org)

## Nest Box Monitors

We are again looking for dedicated volunteers to monitor our bluebird nest boxes this year. This very important opportunity helps us to keep track of not only bluebirds, but also wrens, swallows, chickadees, and other small birds that use these boxes. Please contact Naturalist Nicole Kopas at [nkopas@sevenponds.org](mailto:nkopas@sevenponds.org)

## Garden Volunteers

Volunteers are also needed for the various gardens at Seven Ponds. These gardens are a beautiful focal point during the summer months for teaching and reflection. If you are interested in doing general garden maintenance for the Butterfly Garden, the Herb Garden, or the Woodland Wildflower Area, contact the nature center.

## The Butterfly Garden

We will be in need of plenty of volunteers to spruce up the new garden after a long winter. Call the center if you are interested in joining our butterfly gardeners.

## The Woodland Wildflower Area

Our naturalists are planning a workday on May 7th at 2:00 PM. Please come and help us spruce up this very special area in time for the spring display of wildflowers.

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## Winterfest 2021

### A Great Day Outdoors!

Winterfest 2021 was another beautiful winter day. In the cool, crisp air at the end of January we were able to allow 50 people to join us for our annual winter fun day. While this number is far less than what we are normally accustomed to we were able to safely distance ourselves while still having fun. S'mores were eaten as the fires blazed. The ice was thick and just smooth and slick enough for some good ice skating and cutting. Snowballs were attempted but the snow quality just wasn't up to snuff for the task and they broke apart mid-air in a puff. The absence of the larger crowd was felt this year but we hope that Winterfest 2022 will allow us all to be together again for a fun day in the snow.

## Stingers Rummage Sale ...it's BACK!

After an off-year in 2020, the Stingers will be holding their annual rummage sale once again in the summer of 2021. The sale is scheduled for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, June 17-19 (member's only pre-sale June 12). **ITEMS ARE NEEDED!** Starting March 2, you may bring your household items, clean and mended clothing, books, toys, and other goodies. All items should be in good condition and in working order. Please pack books and clothing in separate containers. We will not accept large appliances, televisions, computer equipment, or building materials. Mark your calendars and join us for this sale!



# Nature Study Series for Homeschoolers - Spring Sessions

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 children 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 specific ecological concepts. Fee: \$4.00 per person. Register for the *Nature Study Series for Homeschoolers* sessions online at [sevenponds.org](http://sevenponds.org).

**Wednesday, March 17 or Thursday, March 18, 1:00 - 3:00 PM**

## Spring's First Pollinators

Grades K - 2 and Grades 3 - 6

As the days grow warmer and longer, many insects start anew and are in need of nectar for food. Thus starts the pollination game! We will find out who these pollinators are, and how they do their business during, sometimes, cold spring days. The students will be split into younger and older learners and will learn through hands-on activities, discussions, investigation, and outdoor exploration.

**Wednesday, April 14 or Thursday, April 15, 1:00 - 3:00 PM**

## The Amazing Nature Adventure

Grades K and 1

*Concept: Senses and Needs of Living Things*

We will discover nature with our senses! They will get to see and touch some of the living and once living creatures that can be found in their backyards. Through hands-on activities, and outdoor explorations students will also learn about the special senses these animals have and what they need to survive.

## The World of Dirt

Grades 2 through 4

*Concept: Earth Science and Animal Adaptations*

Homeschoolers will investigate soil and its characteristics with hands-on activities. They will also have an opportunity to meet some of the underground animals that rely on soil for their homes.

## Our Disappearing Wildlife

Grades 5 and 6

*Concept: Human Influence on Animal Populations*

We will explore the issues facing our wildlife. Using specimens from Michigan and around the world, students will work in small groups to discover the reasons species become endangered, and the ways we can help protect our natural world.

## Special provisions in place due to COVID-19:

- Classes are limited in size.
- Pre-registration is required at [sevenponds.org](http://sevenponds.org).
- All classes are held OUTDOORS; dress for the weather.
- Adults may wait outside or walk the trails.
- Participants must wear a mask unless otherwise directed.
- Classes may be cancelled due to poor weather conditions.

**Thursday, May 6, 9:00 - 11:00 AM**

## Homeschool Spring Bird Walk #1

Ages 10 years and up

On this walk, we will look for resident birds and migrant birds passing through Seven Ponds, and some setting up territories. We will practice our birding skills using our binoculars and spotting scopes. Please bring your own binoculars or you can borrow a pair from us.

**Wednesday, May 12 or Thursday, May 13, 1:00 - 3:00 PM**

## Animal Babies

Grades K - 2 and Grades 3 - 6

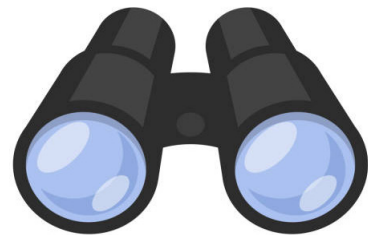
We will spend the afternoon learning about babies! Spring is the time of year many animals start preparing for babies, and give birth. This session will be divided into younger and older groups of learners. The younger learner will focus on animal lifecycles and basic needs through hands-on investigations. The older learners will focus on animal adaptations, and ecosystems.

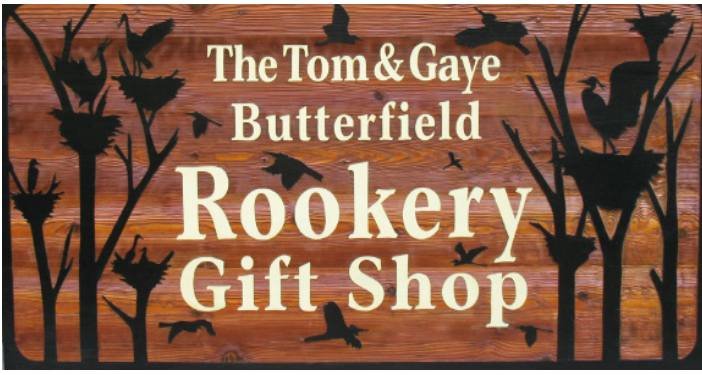
**Thursday, June 3, 9:00 - 11:00 AM**

## Homeschool Spring Bird Walk #2

Ages 10 years and up

At this time of the year, birds have set up territories and are nesting. We will look for birds called warblers and other insect eaters that have come back to town. We will practice our birding skills using our binoculars and spotting scopes. Please bring your own binoculars or you can borrow a pair from us.





The Rookery Gift Shop has many new items including books, bird feeders, jewelry, toys, stuffed animals, puppets, rock decor, and reusable bags. New locally made items include wax melts, lotion bars, and new artwork. So, come out and get your unique items today!

We also offer a variety of locally handmade items, including body products like body powder, foot scrub, lip balm, tub teas, and soap. As always, we have our locally made honey, maple syrup, teas, sniffle bags, bug off, lavender wands, vinyl decals, faux leather earrings, hand crafted jewelry, and artwork made by area artists. Other items are bird houses, bird feeders, birdseed, field guides, children's books, nature-themed jewelry, toys, puzzles, games, and wind chimes.

**Seven Ponds Nature Center**

3854 Crawford Road  
Dryden, MI 48428  
810-796-3200  
[www.sevenponds.org](http://www.sevenponds.org)

*Address Service Requested*

To help reduce the abundance of single-use plastic items we have reusable Chico bags that are made from recycled materials. Other reusable items are Blue Q bags, totes, pencil cases, lunch bags, and coin purses all made from 95% recycled materials.

Include a gift membership or Rookery gift certificate with your next purchase. These are the gifts that keep giving through all the seasons.

**BIRDSEED HOME DELIVERY!**

We now offer birdseed delivery within a 20-mile radius for just a small \$5.00 delivery fee.\*

**CURBSIDE SHOPPING!**

Curbside shopping is also available - just call the nature center to place an order and we will deliver right to your vehicle.\*

\*All delivery and curbside orders must be prepaid.

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

**THANK YOU!**

Non-profit Organization US Postage PAID Permit No. 2 Dryden, MI 48428
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# Spring Programs

March - May  
2021

Ahh, Spring! As the ponds thaw and the woods wake up from its winter slumber, it's a great time to get outdoors and explore! Seven Ponds offers something for everyone, from preschoolers and families to adults and seniors. Mark your calendar for some programs, walks, and classes. Unless indicated, program fees are \$3.00 for adults, no charge for members or children 12 & under. Please register online for all programs at [sevenponds.org](http://sevenponds.org).

## March

### ***Spring Awakenings***

SUNDAY, MARCH 7, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

The days are getting longer and warmer, and the animals are "waking up." Let's see what signs we can find of their activities on this walk. Please pre-register online.

### ***Shamrock Planter Building***

SUNDAY, MARCH 14, 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Erin go Bragh! Come out and create a special planter that you will fill with shamrocks to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. Cost is \$5 per person. Please pre-register online; space is limited.

### ***Yoga at the Ponds with Peaceful Moon Yoga***

#### **Beginners/Basic Yoga Class**

THURSDAYS, MARCH 18 THROUGH APRIL 22, 10:00-11:00 AM

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. Classes will be held inside the building and COVID-19 protocol will be in place. Please register online.

### ***Invasive Plant Work Day***

SUNDAY, MARCH 21, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Looking for a volunteer opportunity? Come help with non-native invasive plant removal here at the nature center. This invasive plant work day will be focusing on garlic mustard and dame's rocket. Tools will be provided, however if you are more comfortable using your own tools you are more than welcome to bring them. You will also want to bring water and gloves. Please pre-register online.

### ***Spring Stroll***

SUNDAY, MARCH 28, 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Spring has sprung and it makes for perfect weather for a stroll around the trails. Let's see what nature has in store for us as it wakes up from a long winters nap. Please pre-register online or sign-up the day of at the desk.

## April

### ***Salamander Foray***

SATURDAY, APRIL 3, 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Join us for a salamander day of discovery at Jonathan Woods. We will be looking for many examples of the six species that reside in the rich woods while learning about their natural history and conservation. Meet at Seven Ponds, but we will be driving separate due to COVID-19 precautions. Space will be limited. Please pre-register online.

### ***North-80 Hike***

SUNDAY, APRIL 4, 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Hike with a naturalist on some of our less used trails in the North-80. We will be looking for emerging plants, signs of animals and just enjoying the view! Please pre-register online.

### ***Morning Paddle at the Pond***

SUNDAY, APRIL 11, 9:00 AM

Early morning is one of the best times to view wildlife on the lakes. Dress for the weather. Fee: \$5.00 per person (\$3.00 for members) Minimum: 5 years old to ride and 10 years old to paddle. Please pre-register online by April 9th.

### ***Jonathan Woods Hike***

SATURDAY, APRIL 17, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Come explore the beautiful world of our Jonathan Woods property! Jonathan Woods is a diverse and healthy ecosystem, so let's see what wonderful things we can find. We will meet at the nature center and then drive over separately due to COVID-19 precautions. Space will be limited. Please pre-register online.

### **Demonstration Garden Work Day**

SUNDAY, APRIL 18, 2:00 - 4:00 PM

Want to help keep the nature center looking its best? Join our land steward in learning about the plants we have in our demonstration garden, the good and the bad. We will then remove the ones that are not supposed to be there. Tools will be provided. Bring gloves and water. Please pre-register.

### **Dog Walk on the Polly Ann Trail**

SATURDAY, APRIL 24, 11:00 AM

Seven Ponds Nature Center is partnering with the Polly Ann Trail to host an interpretive dog walk. Join a naturalist to explore the trail with your best friend. Dogs must be well behaved, socialized, and kept on a 6 ft. leash at all times. Meet at Memorial Park in downtown Dryden. Please pre-register.

## May

### **Frog and Toad Survey**

SATURDAY, MAY 1, 7:30 PM - 9:30 PM

Frog-tacular! Toadally Awesome! Come out for a night of surveying the Seven Ponds frog and toad species throughout different parts of the property. This survey will begin an hour before sunset and will end an hour after sunset. Please pre-register.

### **Morning Paddle on the Ponds**

SUNDAY, MAY 2, 9:00 - 11:00 AM

Early morning is one of the best times to view wildlife on the lakes. Dress for the weather. Fee: \$5.00 per person (\$3.00 for members) Minimum: 5 years old to ride and 10 years old to paddle. Please pre-register online by Friday, April 30th.

### **Budding Birders**

SATURDAY, MAY 8, 11:00 AM

This program is designed to get our young and budding birds to practice using binoculars and spot those birds as they flit from tree to tree. Space is limited so please pre-register. Ages 10 and up. Binoculars will be provided but feel free to bring your own if you have them.

### **EcoDay and Native Plant Sale**

SATURDAY, MAY 15 ~ Please see flyer for details.

### **Garlic Mustard Work Day**

SUNDAY, MAY 16, 2:00 - 4:00 PM

Have you ever wondered if you can cook with all of that garlic mustard you just pulled out of the ground? You can! Garlic mustard makes for a great pesto. Join our land steward for an afternoon of pulling garlic mustard and you will get to go home with a sample of some pesto and the recipe to try for yourself! Bring gloves and water. Please pre-register.

### **Evening Paddle on the Ponds**

FRIDAY, MAY 21, 7:00 PM

Evening and the twilight hours are some of the best times at Seven Ponds, and even better on the water. Many animals are active at these hours, and the sunsets can be spectacular, so be prepared for anything! Dress for the weather. Fee: \$5.00 per person (\$3.00 for members) Minimum: 5 years old to ride and 10 years old to paddle. Please register online by May 19th.

### **A Brush with Baby Wildlife**

SATURDAY, MAY 22, 2:00 PM

*Presented by Erica Zuhlke*

Encountering infant animals in the wild is a common occurrence in the Spring. From walks in the park to right in your own backyard, this presentation addresses the many myths about baby animals and provides insight on what to do when stumbling upon our wild neighbors—including how to determine if an animal truly needs human intervention and what steps should be taken thereafter. Please register online.

Erica Zuhlke is a licensed veterinary nurse and is currently an Animal Control Officer in Lapeer County. She is a Certified Wildlife Rehabilitator and licensed as such in the State of Michigan. In 2018 Erica founded *Critter Crossing Rehabilitation*, a local nonprofit organization focused on the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of native wildlife. Learn more at [crittercrossingrehab.com](http://crittercrossingrehab.com).

### **Wee Readers**

SUNDAY, MAY 23, 11:00 AM

Explore the world of a fawn through the story *Lost in the Woods* by, Carl R. Sams II and Jean Stoick. As we read the story we will meet some of the friends that help the little fawn find its way home. Please pre-register online as space is limited.

### **Tipsy Naturalist**

FRIDAY, MAY 28, 6:30 PM

Join us as we explore the world of botany and booze... as we'll learn every great drink starts with a great plant. We will spend the evening exploring the woods of Seven Ponds discussing the plants' botanical, medicinal, and culinary histories. We will use our new knowledge to make and sample botanical cocktails. All participants must be at least 21 years of age. Fee: \$22.00 (\$19.00 for members) includes drink samples, snacks, recipes, and a "Tipsy Naturalist" glass. Please sign up online by May 14.

## JUNE PROGRAM PREVIEW!

### **Moth Exploration**

SATURDAY, JUNE 5, 9:00 PM

Check online for more information.

## SEVEN PONDS NATURE CENTER SPRING BIRD WALKS

Spring is a great time of year to get out and enjoy the birds! Resident birds are establishing territories and migratory birds from the south are moving through our area on the way to their northern breeding grounds. This spring we will offer bird walks on ten Wednesday mornings from late-March through May. Highlighting numerous local natural areas, all walks take place at nearby parks and preserves, generally under 30 minutes driving time from Seven Ponds Nature Center. Our bird walks are open to birders of all skill and experience levels, and beginners are always welcome. Bring your binoculars, your enthusiasm, and if you have a favorite field guide, bring that along as well. Be sure to dress for the weather and wear boots or shoes appropriate for wet, muddy conditions. These bird walks are free for Seven Ponds members and \$5 for non-members. Online pre-registration is required, and bird walks are limited to ten (10) participants. Each spring bird walk will begin promptly at 8:00 AM at the trailhead of the destination park or preserve (addresses can be found on our website). Please arrive on time and ready to go birding!

**Spring Bird Walk #1 – March 24 @ Holloway Reservoir & Columbiaville area**

**Spring Bird Walk #2 – March 31 @ Metamora-Hadley Recreation Area & Nepessing Lake**

**Spring Bird Walk #3 – April 7 @ Sutherland Nature Sanctuary**

**Spring Bird Walk #4 – April 14 @ General Squier Memorial Park**

**Spring Bird Walk #5 – April 21 @ Seven Ponds Nature Center**

**Spring Bird Walk #6 – April 28 @ Bear Creek Nature Park**

**Spring Bird Walk #7 – May 5 @ Cranberry Lake Park & Lost Lake Nature Preserve**

**Spring Bird Walk #8 – May 12 @ Draper Twin Lake Park & Lakeville Swamp Sanctuary**

**Spring Bird Walk #9 – May 19 @ Charles Ilsley Park**

**Spring Bird Walk #10 – May 25 @ Lapeer State Game Area ~ Snow Den Trail/Northwest Unit**

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## Seven Ponds Nature Center Adult Learner Classes May 2021

**These classes are intended for our older, more mature nature lovers. If you are 55 years or older, join us for these fun and informative classes.**

**Fee: \$3.00 per person (Seven Ponds Members FREE)**

**Please register online at [sevenponds.org](http://sevenponds.org)**

### **Seven Ponds Then and Now**

Tuesday, May 4

10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Do you ever wonder what the history of Seven Ponds Nature Center is? This is the class for you! We will walk through the nature center's history and learn about how we started, what we looked like and where we are today.

### **Wildflower Lore**

Tuesday, May 11

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Have you ever wanted to see a diverse wildflower population but didn't know where to look? Look no further than Seven Ponds. Walk with a naturalist through the different habitats of Seven Ponds in the search for spring's beauties and learn some lore along the way.

### **Nature Detectives**

Tuesday, May 18

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Another name for "naturalist" should be "nature detective." More often than not, we don't see the animals, but the clues they have left behind with a mystery for us to solve. We will spend our time looking for those clues, adding tools to our tool belt to problem solve those clues, and making peace with the idea that some mysteries will remain a mystery.



# Seven Ponds Nature Center Knee-High Naturalist Classes

For preschool children around 3 or 4 years old

**Fridays**

**10:00 – 11:30 AM**

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

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

**Online registration required.**

**Special provisions in place due to COVID-19:**

- One adult per child.
- Only bring the child enrolled in the class - no siblings.
- All adults are required to wear a mask.

**The Hike**

MARCH 12, 2021

**The Lorax**

APRIL 16, 2021

**Bees**

MAY 21, 2021

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## ASSISTANT NATURALIST CLASSES

These classes are open to Assistant Naturalists only. We will start each class at 12:00 PM by having lunch (please bring your own) and then proceed to the day's lesson. If you would like to become a part of this fine program, contact naturalist Katie McKiernan at 810-796-3200 or [kmckiernan@sevenponds.org](mailto:kmckiernan@sevenponds.org).

### **Landscaping for Nature**

SATURDAY, MARCH 20, 12:00 PM

Have you ever wanted to learn how to landscape for nature? Are you interested in attracting pollinators to your yard? This will be the class for you! Learn what to plant and what not to plant to gain biodiversity right at home.

### **Kindergarten and 1st Grade Programs**

SATURDAY, APRIL 10, 12:00 PM

We are redoing our programs to fit in with Next Generation Science Standards. Learn how to teach our new programs and draw new connections with participants in the youngest age groups.

### **Second Grade Programs**

SATURDAY, MAY 1, 12:00 PM

Second grade is the next group of programs we will teach you about. You will learn what has changed and what has stayed the same. How can you inspire a love of nature in 2nd graders? Come find out!

