



# Heron Tracks

The Quarterly Newsletter of Seven Ponds Nature Center

VOLUME 56 NUMBER 1 • SPRING EDITION • MARCH—MAY 2023

## Communing with Nature through Art

Article and Artwork by Damian Goidich

I've lived most of my life in an urban setting, but I consider myself lucky to have spent my youth outdoors in the undeveloped woods surrounding the apartment complex I lived in. It was there that I felt the air and smelled the earth, listened to the trees, and watched the small birds and animals live their lives. That relationship to the environment gradually disappeared with age, until finally I was an adult in a city surrounded by concrete and asphalt, living in a box, breathing gasoline fumes and pollution. A two-week artist residency in Maine reconnected me with the land and inspired me to learn to draw from nature. But I should probably cover a few things first.

Many of you reading this are probably unaware that, before I came to Seven Ponds Nature Center, I was a professional artist for thirty years. Twelve of those years were spent as a commercial artist, and fifteen as a college art instructor. I'm primarily a figurative artist, so working with the natural world as subject matter is not a strength, but when I was given the opportunity to participate at the Golden Apple Studios residency in Harrington, Maine, I leapt at the chance. To be alone with my art and the Atlantic Coast as subject for two weeks would be an exciting new adventure.

Because of its numerous ecosystems, geology, and natural beauty, Maine holds a particular fascination for visual artists. Harrington is 'Down East' - as it's locally known - located on a small peninsula in the Jordan Basin of the Gulf of Maine, east of Bar Harbor. The residency sits on 85 acres of mixed pine and oak forests that slopes rapidly down to the rocky coast of the Atlantic Ocean. Here I discovered a personal way of looking at the natural world, and how I wished to depict it through my art.

Upon arrival, I was immediately taken with a powerful sensation of age. Maine is old; from the dilapidated and abandoned farmhouses down to the very soil and rock, the environment of the Atlantic coastline is in a constant state of formation and disintegration, of death and rebirth. Fallen trees weathered by wind and surf have new growth springing from them. Mossy boulders are covered in small pine saplings. The weather can change quickly, unexpectedly, ominously: one moment it is bright and serene, at another the sky grows dark, and terrific rain-soaked gales rumble through. It was a unique and powerful experience. I wanted my drawings to capture that aged and primeval quality. It brought to mind an intriguing

quote from the artist Andrew Wyeth, who described the state in a way that resonated with me:

"Maine to me is almost like going to the surface of the moon. I feel that things are just hanging on the surface and that it's all going to blow away. In Maine, everything seems to be dwindling at terrific speed. (...) Up in Maine I feel it's all dry bones and desiccated sinews."

Entering the woods was a sensory overload - so many gnarled and ancient living trees mingled with fallen dead ones in various stages of decomposition. The ground was carpeted in moss and lichens that climbed up and over everything in their path. Large glacial boulder deposits were strewn about at random - they too victims of the moss coverings, making them impossible to climb upon. Everywhere I felt the heavy dampness and humidity in the air. I spent those first days exploring the woodland interior and rock-lined coast, photographing and making notes of specific places I wanted to revisit. And I began drawing. I enjoyed the work more than I anticipated; I was drawing what I saw based on my photos, and made a good effort of it, but it felt lifeless and stale. Where was the sense of timelessness, the silence, the uneasy mystery of it all? If I was going to draw anything close to what I was experiencing internally, I needed to change my approach.

Drawing what you see and drawing what you feel are two very different concepts, and drawing from nature uses elements of both. Drawing what you see at its most basic level



## Reflections...

I'd like to share an experience I had while walking the prairie trail during a snowfall this past winter. Some folks had walked the trail a bit earlier in the day, leaving tracks behind to tell of their trek around the prairie. But as the snow fell, their tracks were filling with snow, soon be covered, leaving no trace of their hike.

This got me thinking about all the people over more than five decades who have left their tracks here at Seven Ponds. Not the physical tracks left on the trails - though there have been plenty of those - but rather the tracks left by their love, effort, dedication, and support of the nature center. The tracks that remain.

I thought about our four founders - Rip and Patty Schemm, and Bee and Don Naish - their vision, their determination, their steadfast commitment to make all this happen. They left their tracks.

I thought about former staff - the directors, naturalists, office staff, maintenance staff - all those who came to work every day, all those who's commitment to the mission made Seven Ponds what it is. They left their tracks.

I thought about all those who served on the board of directors, who's vision and resiliency managed the storms and challenges faced and helped push the nature center toward the future. They left their tracks.

I thought about the countless volunteers who have contributed their time to this place. So much would have never happened had it not been for those amazing volunteers. They left their tracks.

I thought about all the members and supporters through the years who faithfully renewed their annual membership and supported the fundraisers, who sent in a special gift at the end of the year, or made the ultimate gift by remembering Seven Ponds in their final will. They left their tracks.

And, of course, I thought about all the current people committed to the nature center - our staff, our board, our volunteers, our members and supporters. They're here today, doing the work, making things happen. They are leaving their tracks.

Thanks to all those who came before us, leaving tracks for us to follow. Thanks to all those here now, making tracks. And thanks to all those who will come after us, following our tracks and leaving their own.

Daryl Bernard  
Executive Director



## CORKS & CAPS 2023

Our seventh annual Corks & Caps Fundraiser will be held Friday, June 9 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.

Plans are underway to make this the best Corks & Caps to date, and we'd love to see you there, supporting Seven Ponds Nature Center.

Individual registration for the event is forthcoming - check our website for up-to-date information. 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, 8 passes to Seven Ponds

### Gold \$750

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

### Silver \$500

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

### Bronze \$250

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

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## Heron Tracks

is published quarterly by Seven Ponds Nature Center  
a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation  
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.*

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**Director of Environmental Education:**  
**Office Manager/Gift Shop Manager:**  
**Naturalists:**  
**Weekend Receptionist:**  
**Weekday Receptionist:**  
**Maintenance - Buildings & Grounds:**

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**Carrie Spencer**  
**Diane Rankin**  
**Katie McKiernan, Madison Christol**  
**Damian Goidich**  
**Gina Stoldt**  
**Mike Grappin**



is just that: you draw what you see, attempting to replicate your reference as closely as possible. These days it's often done from photographs, though drawing what's physically in front of you is the traditional method. The advantages of this approach are simple and are used by professional artists to create a sense of realism and a visual documentation of the subject being drawn or painted. Beginning artists use this method to develop their ability to interpret their subject, as well as their skill with various materials: how to use the pencil to draw contour lines, how to shade, how to maintain the subject in correct proportion, and so on.

Drawing what you feel can do these things too, but adds an extra ingredient to the mix by bringing one's unique inner sensibilities into play. Not only are you visually documenting what you see, but also interpreting what you see based on your emotional reaction, or perhaps an activated memory; to dig deep within yourself and respond to the visual stimulation honestly. This can take the form of drawing a tree with sharp edges to emphasize its rough bark, or painting the cast shadows on snow in a winter scene using purples and blues to emphasize the illusion of coldness. It can also take the form of modifying what you're seeing to better suit the feel of your work – adding a tree here, removing a house there, etc. It's not easy tapping into your inner creative self, but learning how to close your thoughts, open your mind, and commune with the natural world can bring surprisingly positive results.

Physical stillness and quietness of mind are essential to immersing oneself in the immediate environment. Hunters understand this, as it is an important skill used for masking their presence. For the artist, it allows one to become 'synchronous' with their surroundings and experience a deeper sensation of what lies below the surface. Quieting the mind opens up the senses, heightening the range of sounds, the sense of smell, and visual depth perception. It allows you to exist in the moment; to be a part of it and in harmony with it.

Over the next several days I pushed further into areas of isolated forest and less hospitable shoreline, this time bringing my sketchbook. Instead of drawing immediately, I chose to be still for several minutes, whether I was standing in the woods or perched atop a boulder along the coast. I closed my eyes and allowed my mind to run through all its thoughts. Slowly, the thoughts began to quiet and dissipate. I became very aware of the sounds around me, each bringing a different interpretive sensation. In the woods I heard the whistle of the breeze blowing through the pines, a soft, continuous hum I hadn't noticed before. I could smell the dampness of the earth mixed with the sharp musk of swamp and wet bark. The rustling of forest underbrush some distance away. After several minutes, I opened my eyes and peered directly ahead of me, focusing and un-focusing on individual trees and boulders. My vision gradually began to widen and intensify, and I was able to bring into focus objects at a great distance, which before would have only registered as indistinct masses. As I stood there in stillness, the rustling I had heard earlier resumed, now much closer. From around a nearby tree came a ruffed grouse, darting here and there, foraging as it moved. It came within twelve feet of me, and I was able to study its markings as it worked its way around my vicinity. Several minutes later, it finally took notice of me, thrummed, and darted off into the woods. I grabbed my sketchbook and

quickly sketched my impressions without worrying about accuracy or realism, concentrating on what I felt during that moment of clarity.

This kind of encounter continued throughout my stay. Perched on top of a coastal boulder one calm, foggy morning, I was able to see deep within the spaces between boulders and discovered a fox skull covered in lichen. Towards sunset on a warm evening, I was sitting close to the water's edge. As the tide came in, hundreds of small crabs came ashore and scabbled about me, searching the crevices of stone and rock to bed down for the night. These and other experiences would most likely not have occurred if I didn't take the time to quiet my mind and open myself to where I was, in the moment.

I continued this practice of being silent and quieting my mind, then sketching from observation. I found the drawings immediately had a different feel to them, a more probing, honest feel. I was projecting more of my own observations into the work rather than attempting purely objective documentation - or worse - attempting a preconceived idea of what I thought the natural world was supposed to look like. The drawings became looser, more earnest and spontaneous in their execution. And they felt a lot more real to me, and much closer to the idea of the dual nature of the Maine ecosystems I wanted to project: ideas of natural cycles and rhythms, of dissipation and rejuvenation, of the wonder of it all.



## Wandering with the Birds

By Daryl Bernard

I'll admit it – most of the traveling I do is for the birds. Literally. Of course, I enjoy seeing the regulars around home. They're like my friends, always there, dependable. But when the opportunity arises to travel elsewhere...well, I just can't pass up the chance to enjoy birds of a different feather.

The Midwest holds most of the same birds we find here in Michigan. Similarly, the east coast is still much of the same, except for some coastal and seabirds we don't see here in Michigan. South Florida, while harboring many familiar species, hosts a wonderful slate of birds not found anywhere else on the continent, and most ardent birders eventually find their way to the Miami region and then down into the Florida Keys.

With that said, if eastern birders really want to add to their North American Life List (note: a Life List is a list that birders keep of all the bird species they've personally seen and identified), there is really just one thing to do: Go West!

Almost any place west of the Mississippi River will offer dozens of bird species not found in the eastern half of the continent, but there are some places that hold more reverence with birders than others. Texas – especially the Lower Rio Grande Valley and southwest Texas – is a prime destination with numerous birds that just barely cross the Mexico-USA border, such as Green Jay, Plain Chachalaca, Great Kiskadee, Colima Warbler, and many more. Southeast Arizona is considered a birding mecca, offering more than a dozen hummingbird species as well as other exotic-sounding birds including Elegant Trogan, Buff-collared Nightjar, Montezuma Quail, and Blue-throated Mountain-gem, just to name a few. Colorado presents an amazing diversity of habitats, from grasslands to mountains to deserts, with an equally diverse array of birds, among them more than ten species of "chicken" birds such as Greater Prairie-Chicken, Greater Sage-Grouse, White-tailed Ptarmigan, Scaled Quail, and more. The Pacific Northwest states of Oregon and Washington offer an equally diverse landscape, with the addition of the seacoast and all the wonderful shorebirds, waterfowl, and seabirds found there. And then there is California, where an astonishing 681 birds are on the official state checklist.

Yes, heading west offers eastern birders an opportunity to double their Life List, and the allure of that possibility is too strong for many of us to resist. If you're a birder, and you've never ventured west for birds, I highly encourage you to do so. You just never know what you might find, when you're out west, wandering with the birds!



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## Around the Center

### Naturescape Open for Exploration

Our big project took longer than anticipated last summer, but the new Seven Ponds Naturescape is now open for exploration! The area provides children of all ages with opportunities for play, creativity, imagination, exploration, and age-appropriate risk. Parents can sit on one of the many benches while children run, jump, climb, crawl, balance, and create. Come out and let your children and grandchildren enjoy this area throughout the seasons.

### Holiday Auction & Christmas Party Returns!

It had been three years since our last gathering of the season occurred in December, 2019. Forced to cancel the 2020 and 2021 events due to the pandemic and concern for the health of our staff, volunteers, and members, we were eager to once again host the event and gather with our most valued people. With the help of the Stingers and a number of other volunteers, the event was a smashing success. Over 160 people attended - our biggest turnout in years. Food and drink was enjoyed by all. The silent auction saw fierce competition and various bidding strategies employed. The live auction, hosted once again by local auctioneer Brian Rowley, produced great fun and big funds. In total, the nature center benefitted with a net proceed of more than \$16,000 for the evening. And we were able to celebrate another year of success with our friends. Thanks to all!

### New Life Vests

New life vests await participants in our canoeing programs. At our Holiday Auction we asked our members to "buy a PFD" for the nature center with a \$25 bid. Our members showed strong support for this endeavor, allowing us to purchase 45 new life vests, with sizes ranging from small children to large adults. These replace the old orange "Titanic" around-the-neck life preservers we had been using for years. We're looking forward to safely getting on the water in comfort and style! Thanks to all who supported this effort at our Holiday Auction.

### 2022 Special Gifts Report

Seven Ponds members and supporters came through in typically strong fashion once again during our year-end Special Gifts campaign. A total of \$42,552.86 was raised during the campaign. These donations provide important operation funds which help ensure our ability to continue offering high quality environmental education programs and conducting critical land stewardship. Thanks to all!

# Seven Ponds Tributes

Memorials, Buy-a-Tree, In Honor

## *In memory of Rita Dowling*

- Dianne Bishop

## *In memory of Doreen M. Hill*

- Judy Locke

## *In memory of Herman Houser*

- Diane Bishop

## *In memory of Shirley Ann Hudson (Ridley)*

- Armen and Belinda Kabodian

## *In memory of Ray and Ruth Johnson*

- Ann Lynne Eicher

## *In memory of Georgia*

- Marianne Bohm Neumann

## *In memory of Holst Neumann*

- Marianne Bohm Neumann

## *In memory of Jean Louise Madsen Casey*

- Ken Casey

## *In memory of Mike Mercier*

- John Whipple

## *In memory of David Sherman*

- Your Swiss Farms Family
- Fred Gabriel

## *In memory of Hentry Shonka*

- Pat and Dianne Norton

## *Buy-a-Tree in memory of Ray & Ruth Johnson*

- Ann Lynne Eicher

## *Buy-a-Tree in memory of Dwayne Whitted*

- Argie, Emily, and Alyssa Renieri

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## Here and There...

Thanks to arborist **Joe Drinkhorn** for donating their services to remove a large dead tree posing a risk to our Tree-top Pond Dock.

Thanks to arborist **Joe Drinkhorn** and his crew for once again volunteering their time and skills to help us clean out all the Wood Duck nest boxes on our property. They have assisted with this mid-winter project for several years now.

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 auctioneer-extraordinaire **Brian Rowley** of **Rowley's Auction Services** (Attica) for once again donating his services during our live auction at our Holiday Auction & Christmas Party.

Thanks to the **Seven Ponds Photography Club**, the **Seven Ponds Astronomy Club**, and the **Seven Ponds Beekeeping Club** for their generous Special Gifts donations.

Thanks to our **Stingers (Friends of Seven Ponds)** for all their work preparing for and helping at our Holiday Auction & Christmas Party.

Thanks to all our **members and supporters** for their donations of items for our silent auction and live auction at our Holiday Auction & Christmas Party. You helped us raise a lot of dollars!

Thanks to **Rowley's Grocery** (Attica) for loaning us a keg tap for use at our Holiday Auction & Christmas Party.

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.



# Volunteer News

## On the Trail

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

Thanks to **Claudine Zach** for coming in to take care of our animals. She is fantastic with our critters!

Thanks to **Don Dukelow** for all the volunteer work he does around the nature center.

We want to thank everyone who came out and helped with our annual Winterfest event. The wonderful winter weather made for a great day, and our volunteers made it all possible. Thank you to **Marianna Fitzgerald, Nancy Kautz, Vickie Simek, Karen Blaszyk, Kathy Cole, Penelope Spencer, Jackson Spencer, and John Ohab** for helping make Winterfest a success!

## Volunteer Opportunities

Call us at 810-796-3200 or contact Katie McKiernan at [kmckiernan@sevenponds.org](mailto:kmckiernan@sevenponds.org) if you are interested in volunteering at Seven Ponds. You can also fill out the volunteer interest form located on our website at [sevenponds.org](http://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](mailto:kmckiernan@sevenponds.org).

### **Voles, Moles, and other Tiny Mammals**

THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 3:00 PM

### **April Showers bring May Flowers**

THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 3:00 PM

### **Interpretive Techniques - Group Management**

THURSDAY, MAY 18, 3:00 PM

## Seven Ponds Clubs!

**Astronomy Club**  
**Beekeeping Club**  
**Birding Club**  
**Photography Club**  
**Friends of Herbs**  
**Butterfly Gardeners**  
**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](http://sevenponds.org).

## Stingers Rummage Sale and Resale Shoppe Reminder

The **Stingers' Annual Rummage Sale** will be held Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, June 15-17 at the nature center. A special "member's only" pre-sale will take place June 10. **ITEMS ARE NEEDED!** The Stingers will be accepting items for the sale from March 1 to June 11, including clean clothing, household goods, toys, tools, and other items. We cannot accept appliances, television sets, computer equipment or building materials.

Additionally, the Stingers will be accepting items for their **Resale Shoppe** May 2-10, such as handmade items or other unique, high-end items that would be better suited for their sale in the big room that takes place a couple times each year.

## Winterfest 2023

### A Day of Winter Fun!

Winterfest 2023 has come and gone, but what a nice day it turned out to be! It was cold but not bitterly cold like last year. While we didn't have enough time for the lake ice to finally freeze to a safe thickness, we DID get a good layer of snow! That meant the snowshoe walks could take place and the snowmen could be built. The new pavilion provided a place for bundled up friends and family to enjoy a fire-roasted hotdog or s'more. New this year was a bird feeder making station which was thoroughly visited. The smell of peanut butter permeated the back room and the hands of all the kids who rolled the goo in a pile of seeds to take home. Finally, you could take your picture at the new photo booth station and strike a funny pose to remember the day. We hope to see everyone out again next year for another fun-filled day in Michigan winter.

### Grants & Gifts

Seven Ponds Nature Center was the recipient of two gifts that will benefit area school children by providing the funding necessary to support a trip to Seven Ponds. The **Lapeer Optimists** came through once again with a check in the amount of \$3,000 for Lapeer area students. The **Tau Beta Association** of Greater Detroit presented the nature center with a \$1,000 grant for environmental education. Thank you to each of these organizations for supporting area students.

### Seven Ponds for the WIN!

The Lapeer County Community Foundation held its annual Giving Tuesday Challenge, and Seven Ponds supporters were up to the task. The nature center had the opportunity to compete in multiple categories, and although we could only win one, we took top honors in both Most New Donors and Most Overall Donors, with the LCCF Seven Ponds endowment fund growing by \$13,520 and Seven Ponds taking home the top prize of \$2,500. Thanks LCCF and thanks to our amazing Seven Ponds supporters!

### 2023 Field Tours

Seven Ponds Nature Center has offered high-quality, multi-day field tours to unique destinations throughout North America since 1992. Join nature center staff as they lead you in exploring these amazing natural areas. Natural history field tours focus on flora, fauna, and geology, while birding field tours seek out the avian life of the region. The nature center will once again offer exciting birding and natural history field tours this year. For the most up-to-date field tour information, check our website for tour itineraries and registration information.

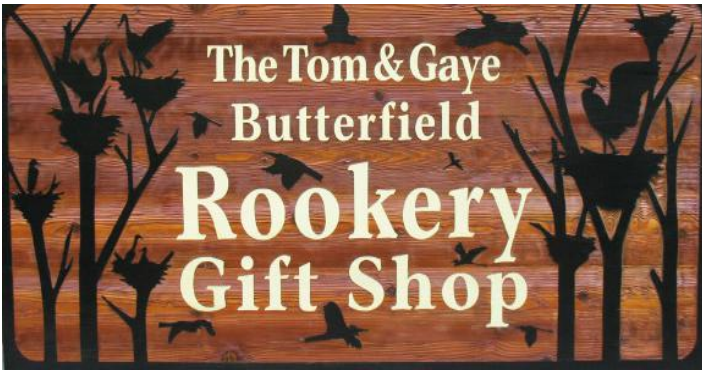
## Farewell, Mike

Mike Grappin, our maintenance guy, will be retiring from Seven Ponds in May. Mike began his post at Seven Ponds in April of 2014. Prior to joining the staff at the nature center Mike worked as a custodian in Imlay City schools and held positions at Sea Ray Boats and other companies in the area before that. But, Mike's connection to Seven Ponds Nature Center predates those other work experiences. As a teenager from Dryden High School, Mike worked at the nature center back in the mid-1970s under naturalist Earl Neeb, performing all manner of tasks that required sweat and effort. When he first started his job back then, Earl told him to go out and learn the trails, as he'd be no use to the nature center until he knew all the trails. During his current tenure, Mike has been a jack-of-all-trades. Whether it be tuning the lawn tractor, placing sign posts, performing boardwalk mends, fulfilling project construction requests of various staff, keeping the nature center clean, mowing the lawn, wood-chipping the trails, or clearing downed trees, Mike has been our guy. His favorite task, he would probably admit, is plowing the driveway and parking lot after a big snow. Major projects completed under Mike's time here include the Treetop Pond dock, our new pavilion, and the Naturescape, along with many other smaller projects. Never one to shy away from a task in which he lacks experience, his usual comment is, "How hard can it be?" We thank Mike for his service to Seven Ponds, and wish him all the best in his retirement. Well done, and well earned!

### "Just the Maintenance Guy"

by Mike Grappin

I want to say a special thanks to some folks at Seven Ponds Nature Center. Whenever saying thanks in a situation like this there is always the risk of forgetting someone, but I am going to try my best not to let that happen. First, thanks to everyone who finds value in Seven Ponds - you are the people who make this place possible. Thanks to our volunteers - you are the people who keep us moving forward. Thanks to the amazing staff at Seven Ponds - you are the people who keep this place relevant. Thanks to the board of directors - these folks are the ones who have a vision of the future, and have worked hard to improve employee finances. Last, but certainly not least, thanks to our Secret Santa, who for years has given gift cards to the Country Smokehouse or dinners at the White Horse Inn to the staff. And to all our not-so-secret Santas who give us chocolate or fruit or cookies or baked goods, you are the people who motivated me to write this. Genuinely, thank you to all.



### **THINK GLOBALLY, SHOP LOCALLY**

Thank you to everyone who did some shopping at the Rookery Gift Shop for Christmas and over the winter months. We had a record breaking season, and it is all because of your love and support of Seven Ponds.

Coming in May - just in time for Mother's Day and Father's Day, we will be getting new Seven Ponds t-shirts! We will also be restocking some of your favorite Earth-friendly items for EcoDay that we had last year: SWEDEdishcloths, Beeswax wraps, Bubbe clips, bamboo utensils, Chico water bottle slings and tote bags, BlueQ bags - and there will be a few new items in the works as well.

### **Seven Ponds Nature Center**

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

*Address Service Requested*

If you like stickers/decals as much as some of our staff, you'll be excited to hear we have some new stickers you might like to add to your collection. They look great on laptops, bumpers, notebooks, water bottles, and more.... Did you notice I mentioned water bottles? Hint Hint – coming soon!

Our locally made products are always great to pick up while you are visiting the nature center. We have a full stock of teas, soup mix, and sniffle bags from our Friends of Herbs group, local honey and maple syrup, wool socks, natural handmade soap, shampoo bars, lotion bars, lip balm, Bug Off! spray, and body powder.

### **Some other items you might be interested in:**

- Nature-inspired greeting cards
- Walking sticks
- Michigan book section
- Vortex binoculars
- Seven Ponds branded items, including patches, pins, walking stick medallions, and greeting cards

*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!*

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Dryden, MI  
48428



# Spring Programs

March - April - May  
2023

Spring has arrived! As the ponds thaw and the forest wakes 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. **Space is limited, and all programs require advance registration through our website.** Programs are \$3.00 for members and \$5 for non-members unless otherwise noted. **Please register online for all programs at [sevenponds.org](http://sevenponds.org).**

## March

### ***Pint-sized Explorers - Sensory Exploration***

Thursday, March 2, 9:30-10:15 aM

Saturday, March 4, 2:00-2:45 PM

Pint-Sized Explorers (1-3 year olds) will have fun exploring nature with their adults. During this special time, toddlers and their adults will explore nature with the help of stories, songs, activities, and nature discovery. Fee: \$7.00 (\$6.00 for Seven Ponds members). Limited space. Please make arrangements for your other children. Choose ONE session.

### ***Tracks and Signs***

Saturday, March 4, 10:00 aM

First, we'll learn all about the things animals leave behind when they pass through like tracks, scat, paths, feathers, and more. Then, we'll take a hike around the center and see what we can find and try to figure out who's been out and about.

### ***Sunday Walk***

Sunday, March 5, 2:00 PM

On this hike let's embrace the unpredictability of nature and let our curiosity take over. We'll plot our course based on the sights and sounds of the day!

### ***Critters in the Corner***

Saturday, March 11, 11:00 aM

We will spend the first part of the program meeting some of our ambassador animals in Critter Corner. The second part will take us outside for a hike to see what animals we can find on the trails.

### ***Nature Sketching***

Sunday, March 12, 12:00 PM

All supplies will be provided on this reflection hike around Paul's Woods for some nature sketching. Prompts and a naturalist will guide you to reflect on what you see and hear as you sketch in your journal.

### ***Goodbye Winter, Hello Spring***

Sunday, March 19, 2:00 PM

Join one of our naturalists for a hike as we reminisce on winter and look forward to spring. We'll talk about what this new season means for the plants and animals around the nature center and beyond.

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

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

Thursdays, March 23 and March 30, 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 \$15.00 or \$50.00 for the 4-Week Series (March - April).

### ***Scouting Saturday - My Tiger Jungle***

Saturday, March 25, 10:00 aM

We will see what it takes to be prepared for a hike, learn about the Outdoor Code and Leave No Trace for Kids, identify animals and plants. Includes building a birdhouse. Fee \$14.00 per person.

### ***Sunday Stroll***

Sunday, March 26, 3:00 PM

Looking for something relaxing to do on your Sunday afternoon? This leisurely stroll around some of our trails might be the thing. Along with a naturalist, you will see what nature has to offer before April comes.

# April

## ***Nature's Tricksters***

Saturday, April 1, 10:00 aM

On this April Fool's Day, let's learn about the tricksters of the natural world. Animals and plants use tricks like camouflage and mimicry to help them survive. For this program, we'll look at examples of this in the plants and animals that call Michigan home, and then take a hike to see if we can spot any trickery on our own trails.

## ***A Walk in Paul's Woods***

Sunday, April 2, 2:00 PM

Spend the afternoon among the trees as we take a walk along the boardwalk and into Paul's Woods. We'll cross the A-Frame Bridge and follow the boardwalk all the way into this beautiful beech-maple forest.

## ***Pint-sized Explorers - Signs of Spring***

Thursday, April 6, 9:30-10:15 aM

Saturday, April 8, 2:00-2:45 PM

Pint-Sized Explorers (1-3 year olds) will have fun exploring nature with their adults. During this special time, toddlers and their adults will explore nature with the help of stories, songs, activities, and nature discovery. Fee: \$7.00 (\$6.00 for Seven Ponds members). Limited space. Please make arrangements for your other children. Choose ONE session.

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

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

Thursdays, April 6 and 13, 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 \$15.00 or \$50.00 for the 4-Week Series.

## ***Phone Photography 101***

Saturday, April 8, 3:00-4:00 PM

Last time was such a hit we are doing it again! Have you ever wanted to take better pictures with your phone but you don't know how? Do you want to know where your camera on your phone even is? We can help! Hit the trails with a naturalist and learn tips and tricks to make your images pop.

## ***Spring Craft Day***

Sunday, April 9, 1:00 PM

A selection of fun spring crafts will be waiting for you! Celebrate the season and get crafty.

## ***Search for Salamanders***

Saturday, April 15, 1:00 PM

It's the perfect time of year to look for salamanders! Join us as we look for and learn about some of Michigan's most interesting amphibians. We'll meet at the nature center and carpool over to Jonathan Woods. Space is limited.

## ***Invasive Species Work Day***

Sunday April 16, 2:00 PM

Join our Land Steward for an afternoon of working on non-native invasive plants around the center. Bring your own work gloves and water. We will provide all necessary tools.

## ***Pond Dipping Day***

Saturday, April 22, 11:00 aM

What lies below the waters of Seven Ponds? We will use nets and buckets to look for aquatic insects that call the waters home.

## ***April Showers Scavenger Hunt***

Sunday, April 23, 1:00 PM

Can you find these springtime clues along the trails?! Look high and look low for what you need to complete this scavenger hunt. Show up anytime between 1:00-4:00 p.m.

## ***Scouting Saturday***

Saturday, April 29, 10:00 aM - 12:00 PM

Three Cheers for Animals: Daisies will earn their Birdbath, Red Robin, and Tula Awards as we learn all about animals.

## ***North-80 Exploration***

Sunday, April 30, 2:00 PM

Why did the hikers cross the road? To get to the North-80 of course! On this hike we'll climb a tower, cross bridges, find an old orchard, look for wildlife, and more.



# May

## ***Pint-sized Explorers - Pond Life***

Thursday, May 4, 9:30-10:15 aM

Saturday, May 6, 2:00-2:45 PM

Pint-Sized Explorers (1-3 year olds) will have fun exploring nature with their adults. During this special time, toddlers and their adults will explore nature with the help of stories, songs, activities, and nature discovery. Fee: \$7.00 (\$6.00 for Seven Ponds members). Limited space. Please make arrangements for your other children. Choose ONE session.

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

Saturday, May 6, 9:30 aM

Let's start the month of May off with a peaceful paddle around ponds. We will enjoy the morning by listening, reflecting, and simply just enjoying a morning on the water. Come dressed for the weather. Fee: \$5.00 per person (\$3.00 for members) Minimum: 5 years old to ride and 10 years old to paddle. Space is limited; please register by Friday, May 5th.

## ***North-80 Trek***

Sunday, May 7, 1:00 PM

Explore some of our more unused trails as we venture to the back of the North-80.

## ***Yoga at the Ponds with Peaceful Moon Yoga Beginners/Basic Yoga Class***

Thursdays, May 4, 11, 18, 25, 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 \$15.00 or \$50.00 for the 4-Week Series (March - April).

## ***Self-care Sunday Walk***

Sunday, May 14, 2:00 PM

Come spend a peaceful afternoon at the nature center. We will take in the sights and sounds as we amble along the trail and talk about how nature can help us relax and recharge.

## ***Birding for Beginners***

Saturday, May 20, 2:00 PM

Look! Up in the sky! It's a bird, it's a plane, it's a...oh wait, it is a bird after all. Have you ever wondered about the birds in your backyard? This may be the walk for you. Together we will practice our observation skills through a set of binoculars on our quest to spot the birds of Seven Ponds. No experience necessary. This is an introductory walk to those wishing to start their birding experience.

## ***Spring Wildflower Walk***

Sunday, May 21, 2:00 PM

Do you love native wildflowers and want to learn more about them? During this program we will walk the trails and go into our Woodland Wildflower Area looking for some of the different wildflowers that we have here at the Nature Center.

## ***Morning Paddle***

Saturday, May 27, 10:00 aM

What better way to spend a morning than on the water? Join this naturalist-led canoe paddle to explore the ponds. Dress for the weather. Minimum: 5 years old to ride and 10 years old to paddle. Space is limited.

## ***Invasive Species Work Day***

Saturday, May 27, 2:00 PM

Join our Land Steward for an afternoon of working on non-native invasive plants around the center. Bring your own work gloves and water. We will provide all necessary tools.

## ***Prairie Play***

Sunday, May 28, 2:00 PM

For this program we'll take a journey into the prairie. We'll play games, use magnifying glasses to investigate our surroundings, and learn how prairies are different from forests and fields!

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## SPRING BIRD WALKS

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 ten (10) participants. Meet at Seven Ponds Nature Center.

**Spring Bird Walk #1 – April 19, 7:00 am**

SUTHERLAND NATURE SANCTUARY

**Spring Bird Walk #2 – May 10, 7:00 am**

SEVEN PONDS NATURE CENTER

**Spring Bird Walk #3 – May 24, 7:00 am**

JOHNATHAN WOODS NATURE PRESERVE



## 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 8, 1:00 - 3:00 PM**

**ANIMALS WITH BACKBONES** ~ Grades K-2 and Grades 3-6  
We will explore the world of vertebrates and their fascinating characteristics. We will use different animals' characteristics to figure out what group of vertebrates they belong to, and how they use those characteristics to survive.

### **Wednesday, April 19, 1:00 - 3:00 PM**

**LIFE IN A BOX** ~ Grades K-2

*Concept: Interdependent relationships in ecosystems: animals, plants, and their environment*

Kindergarteners will become biologists as they study animals and their needs. Focusing on a nesting box, your biologists will discover who could live there, and why they would use the nesting box as part of their home. Through hands-on activities and exploration, inside and outside the nature center, Kindergarten biologists will understand what animals need to live and how we, as humans, can help.

### **Wednesday, April 19, 1:00 - 3:00 PM**

**AMAZING ANIMALS** ~ Grades 3-4

*Concept: Physical adaptations and body systems*

Fourth graders will become wildlife biologists as they discover how the animals in Michigan survive our seasonal changes. Students will explore Seven Ponds and learn the many ways animals become linked to their environment through discussion, exploration, and hands-on activities along the trails.

### **Wednesday, April 19, 1:00 - 3:00 PM**

**A SCURRY OF GRAY SQUIRRELS** ~ Grades 5-6

*Concept: Growth, development, and reproduction of organisms*

Middle schoolers will step into the shoes of wildlife biologists as they explore the world of gray squirrels. Using many different tools; like Punnett squares, field guides, range maps, students will study Seven Ponds' gray squirrels' behaviors, and make predictions about future gray squirrel populations at Seven Ponds. Please note students must have had some experience with Punnett squares.

### **Wednesday, May 17, 1:00 - 3:00 PM**

**EXPLORING POND LIFE** ~ Grades K-2 and Grades 3-6

Homeschoolers will spend the afternoon exploring the watery world many animals call home. From the macroinvertebrates to the "giant" mammals, we will discover how the animals make the ponds and lakes their homes. Young learners will focus on life cycles and older learners will focus on adaptations.



## 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.**

**Nature Music**

MARCH 24, 2023

**Toads and Frogs**

APRIL 21, 2023

**Plants**

MAY 26, 2023