



# Heron Tracks

The Quarterly Newsletter of Seven Ponds Nature Center

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## BATS!

Article by Madison Christol

As many of you may know, I'm not from around here. In fact, earlier this year I went on a 700-mile road trip from Georgia to Michigan. This move got me thinking: What other animals travel great distances? Many birds, of course, fly down South for the winter, but what about bats? I'd honestly never put much thought into what the only flying mammal did when it got chilly outside.

First, let's talk a bit about the bats that call Michigan home. I picked up *Bats of Michigan* by Allen Kurta to broaden my knowledge of these somewhat elusive critters. There are nine species of bats that can be found in the Great Lakes State. The largest is the hoary bat, *Lasiurus cinereus*, which can have a wingspan of over a foot long. While they have quite a large range and can be found throughout North America, they are one of the rarer bats in Michigan. The best time to look for them is during their migration in the fall. The smallest is the tri-colored bat, *Perimyotis subflavus*, which weighs about the same as a quarter. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, there is a recent 2022 proposal to list this species as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. This bat favors the western side of the state, especially in the Upper Peninsula. Another notable species is the Indiana bat, *Myotis sodalis*, which is federally endangered. It flies no further north than southern Michigan, and individuals are often seen together. Additionally, we have both the little brown bat, *Myotis lucifugus*, and the big brown bat, *Eptesicus fuscus*, which are easily distinguishable by the size difference between the two. If you see a bat flying around, it is mostly likely one of these two species as they are the most common throughout all parts of the state. The evening bat, *Nycticeius humeralis*, is the only Michigan bat species with one pair of incisors located in their top jaw. Like the Indiana bat, the evening bat is only found at the very southern end of the state. Next, the northern long-eared bat, *Myotis septentrionalis*, can be found in the Lower Peninsula, but most prefer the western side of the Upper Peninsula. *Septentrionalis* comes from Latin and when translated ties into the Big Dipper asterism which is always seen in the Northern Hemisphere. The silver-haired bat, *Lasionycteris*

*noctivagus*, has an interesting tail with the top half covered in hair and the bottom completely hairless. They have a patchy distribution, but are found in all parts of the state. Last but not least, we have the eastern red bat, *Lasiurus borealis*. So named for the red hue of their fur, they are easiest to find throughout southern and middle Michigan, but have been seen in the northern Lower Peninsula and Upper Peninsula in much smaller numbers. Some of these bats call Michigan home for the entire year, while others find somewhere else once the heat of summer gives way to the chill of fall.

But where do they go? They go lots of places! *Bats of Michigan* tells us that the only species that does not undertake any sort of migration is the big brown bat. The others will fly anywhere from 60 miles to 600 miles. This movement can be in any direction. It simply depends on what conditions the bats need to survive the winter. Some head to the warmer Southern states, while others head to the Upper Peninsula and surrounding states to take advantage of their underground hiding spaces. These bats face many challenges on their trip. First, the Great Lakes are difficult to cross due to their sheer size. Kurta explains that bats will often forgo this challenge



Hoary Bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*) specimen

## Reflections...

As I write this, the leaves on the ground now outnumber those still clinging to their branches, holdouts from this autumn's incredible blaze of color. By the time this edition of *Heron Tracks* reaches you, the yellow, orange, and red of fall will be but a memory. But what a fall color treat we enjoyed, didn't we?

Alas, the changing of the seasons is inevitable here in Michigan. The colorful palette of October forests becomes the barren trees of November, and crisp autumn mornings eventually give way to winter's chill. Soon the landscape will be covered in a blanket of white. Such is life in the Mitten State, and we accept our fate, even if we don't embrace it. Days grow shorter, nights grow longer, and the entire landscape seems to enter a state of dormancy.

But that is not really the case at all, is it? Birds all around us continue to go about their daily routine of finding food. Mammals such as squirrels, rabbits, and deer remain active throughout the winter. Under the ice of lakes and ponds, though activity has slowed, life marches on. Some birds migrate, and some other animals enter a state of dormancy such as hibernation. However, there are many creatures throughout the forests, fields, neighborhoods, and waterways that have adapted to the changing seasons and remain active throughout winter, and we should as well.

And there is much to see if we do – if we dare to venture out and explore during the winter months. Unless you migrate like some birds, I encourage you to get out this winter – don't seek dormancy! Take a hike in your neighborhood or a nearby park. Or – better still – visit the nature center to see how the wild creatures around us adapt and carry on. I promise this: the closer you look, the more you'll see.



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## **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. *Heron Tracks* is now 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.

Next time you renew your membership you will have the opportunity to choose to continue receiving the print version or go paperless. Going paperless will save both printing and mailing costs, allowing us to make your membership dollars go further. We'll also 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.



## ***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:**  
**Director of Environmental Education:**  
**Office Manager/Gift Shop Manager:**  
**Naturalists:**  
**Weekday Receptionist:**  
**Weekend Receptionist:**  
**Maintenance - Buildings & Grounds:**  
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altogether and instead take less direct routes over land where there are plenty of opportunities to stop and rest. Another issue for migrating bats is predation. Their normal nocturnal lifestyle can be disturbed when they fly these distances. If there is no safe space to land they may need to continue flying past sunrise, which makes them vulnerable to birds of prey. According to the Michigan Wildlife Council, another thing that poses a threat to bats is wind farms. Large wind turbines can seem like an appealing place for bats to roost due to their height and production of heat. However, when they get too close they often cannot escape the spinning blades. Luckily, there are a few options to lower the potential risk. As they do not like to fly when wind speeds are up, wind farmers can set their turbines to only rotate when there is enough wind to generate energy and not all of the time. Additionally, researchers are looking into ways to repel bats using acoustic deterrents targeting their echolocation ability.

How do scientists track bat movements? Through a lot of trial and error! According to an article written in the *Journal of Mammalogy*, ("Bat wing biometrics: using collagen-elastin bundles in bat wings as a unique individual identifier") in the beginning researchers used aluminum bands attached at either the leg or forearm of the wing. However, this not only provided a small sample with less than 1% of banded bats being recaptured, it also injured many of the individuals and led to population decline in several species. They also tried tattooing the bats, but found that this was too time consuming. A few other methods were tested out, but none proved to be both effective and safe. While searching for a solution, scientists discovered that the membranous portion of the bat's wing is similar to a human fingerprint. The collagen-elastin bundles make patterns in the wings that scientist can photograph and compare to any pictures already on file to look for a match.

While some fly away when the weather starts to turn, others choose to cozy up until spring. Since bats are small, they can fit themselves into a lot of different places. These can include caves, mines, trees, house and barn roofs, and abandoned buildings. Most bats choose to spend their winter in the Upper Peninsula where they will hibernate in groups of hundreds or thousands. As with other mammals, bats need to store fat prior to beginning their hibernation. They fill up on insects and can double their weight before settling down for the winter. While they can still be active during this time, it is usually only for a short period during which they will move around their preferred hibernation area to find a spot with better temperature and expel guano. Bats can hibernate for up to nine months in Michigan.

A major factor effecting bats all over the United States right now is White Nose Syndrome (WNS). According to [whitenosesyndrome.org](http://whitenosesyndrome.org), this disease was first found in a cave in New York in 2007, but could have been there as early as a year before. The fungi's distinct look makes it easy to identify for field biologists and cavers alike. WNS appears as a bright white powdery substance on the bat's nose. This fungus, *Pseudogym-*

*noascus destructans*, spreads rapidly through bat colonies and often means a death sentence for the entire colony. The hardest hit species include three Michigan natives: the northern long-eared bat, the little brown bat, and the tri-colored bat. WNS inflicts damage by "waking" bats up during their hibernation and causing them to become active. This unanticipated activity depletes needed fat resources and raises their body temperature prematurely.

WNS has been found in other regions of the world such as Asia and Europe, but these bats have a much milder reaction to the fungus. Presently, there is no cure for the disease, however there are signs that some bats may be resistant to the fungus. A University of Michigan study found that differences in the genetic makeup of individuals can affect their chances of survival, if infected. Those that survived had put on more weight and slept longer than those who did not. The researchers, Giorgia Auteria and Lacey Knowles, are confident that their findings are an example of natural selection at work within bat colonies.

If this article sparked your curiosity of bats, there are many ways you can learn more about them and be a bat advocate. The Seven Ponds Nature Center library has several bat books for different ages and there are many websites such as [batcon.org](http://batcon.org), [whitenosesyndrome.org](http://whitenosesyndrome.org), and more. Have some extra wood just lying around or want a fun and easy craft project? Bat houses are a great way you can welcome bats onto your property. You can find different types online with easy instructions to follow. Consider getting the whole family involved and making several! If you do not want to build new homes for bats, you can always use what you have. Dead trees provide great places for bats to live, so consider keeping them up if they are not a safety hazard. Additionally, *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* can travel with humans on clothing and shoes, so ensuring that you are clean while going into caves can help stop the spread. Lastly, while having a bat end up in your home is never a fun occurrence, it should not be a death sentence for the bat. There are many ways to safely and humanely remove these critters and many professionals who can help. So, go forth and be kind to bats!



Bat houses donated by Girl Scouts from Troop 71406

# Volunteer News

## On the Trail

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

- **Claudine Zach** for feeding the animals in Critter Corner every week.
- **Don Dukelow** for completing various tasks around the center, and helping with the pavilion build.
- **Joey Janicki** for help with animal care, and cleaning turtle tanks.
- **Chas Miller** for helping with building the new pavilion.
- **Nancy Kautz, Kathy Cole, Marianne Fitzgerald, and Lori Schafer** for their help on the trails and offering their teaching skills to school groups.
- **Elijah Hartwick** for trimming some trails.
- A special thank you to **Catherine Downey, Marianne Fitzgerald, Allen Rosenbalm, Anita Spencer, Bruce and Polly Young, Chris Baker, Penelope Spencer, Nathan Spencer, Jackson Spencer, Alan Rifenkark, Karen Blaszyk, Kathy Cole, John Ohab, Cynthia Stroebel, Nancy Kautz, Paula LaFountain, Lilah Pratt, Julie Markgraf, Darya Markgraf, Anne Melnik, Hope Wilcox, and Joanne Wood** for helping with Enchanted Woodland. This event is very volunteer based, and we simply could not run it without all the dedication shown by everyone who volunteers.
- Also a thank you to **Almont Girl Scout Troop 71406 (Amy Gucciardi, Natalie Collins, Haylie Lester, and leader Rebecca Gucciardi)** for educating our guests at Enchanted Woodland about bats!

**If you are interested in volunteering at Seven Ponds, contact Katie McKiernan at [kmckiernan@sevenponds.org](mailto:kmckiernan@sevenponds.org), call us at 810-796-3200, or complete the volunteer interest form 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).

### DECEMBER

**No class this month**

Enjoy the holiday season!

### JANUARY

**Animals Under the Snow**

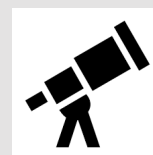
We will discuss what is happening with the animals and life that live under the snow. Let's explore the subnivean zone!

### FEBRUARY

**Michigan Geology**

Formed by time, glaciers, ancient volcanoes, and coral reefs, Michigan is home to some interesting geology. Let's dig in!

## 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](http://sevenponds.org)

## Wandering with the Birds *By Daryl Bernard*

Winter is coming soon, and with it there is a changing of the guard in terms of the birds we see in our neighborhood. Gone are the warblers, vireos, flycatchers, hummingbirds, swallows, and swifts. At the same time, we see an uptick in the birds such as Dark-eyed Junco, American Tree Sparrow, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Purple Finch, which all arrive in greater numbers once the snow starts swirling. If we're lucky, we'll see an influx of "winter finches" such as Pine Siskin, Common Redpoll, Evening Grosbeak, Pine Grosbeak, and maybe even Red or White-winged crossbills. And, of course, we can always depend on our year-round regulars: Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Cardinal, Blue Jay, and a few others.

But, what about those robins? Every winter people are surprised to see American Robins and ask what the heck they are doing here. Don't they head south for the winter? Perplexing, indeed!

The truth is that, while some robins do migrate south, many remain in our region year-round. American Robins are reported on nearly every Christmas Bird Count throughout Michigan and have been since the inception of these counts more than a century ago. While more common in winter in the southern part of our state due to greater availability of food, robins have been sighted in every county in Michigan during the winter – even in the Upper Peninsula, where winters are long and severe.

The reason many people don't regularly see robins during the winter is because the birds change their habits and their diet. In the spring and summer, robins hang out in pairs in backyards, defending their breeding territory and feeding on worms and other invertebrates. But in autumn robins gather in large flocks that may number in the dozens, and instead of an invertebrate diet, robins begin feeding almost exclusively on fruits – including crabapples and the berries of hawthorns, holly, juniper, and others. This leads to a nomadic lifestyle as flocks of robins roam through forests and neighborhoods, exhausting the supply of fruit, then moving on. This is when you might see them.

In the spring, mating instincts take over and mated pairs once again show up in our yards, staking out breeding territories and causing us to declare that spring has arrived! And, indeed, when the robins come to your yard and begin foraging on worms, spring is certainly in the air. Just don't be fooled by that flock of robins feeding on the crabapples in your backyard in January – spring is most definitely still several months away, despite the presence of robins.

Oh, the things you notice when you're out there, wandering with the birds!

# Seven Ponds Tributes

Memorials, Buy-a-Tree, In Honor

*In memory of Tom Osmer*

• Dave Osmer

## ANNIE'S BIG NATURE LESSON at Seven Ponds

Over the past five decades more than 700,000 area students have participated in programs at Seven Ponds Nature Center, including school field trips, scout programs, homeschool programs, Camp Seven Ponds, and more. One of the most impactful programs students can take part in is Annie's BIG Nature Lesson. This program is intended for elementary-aged students, and is an immersive study week in nature. Students and their teachers spend the entire school day at Seven Ponds for a full week.

This past fall 46 second grade students from Schickler Elementary School had the opportunity to participate in ABNL. Each day included school lessons, hands-on investigations, nature journaling, and outdoor learning. Teachers coordinated with nature center naturalists to provide learning opportunities for each student. Parent chaperones were also involved each day.

Annie's BIG Nature Lesson has many benefits for students, but those benefits come at a cost - bussing the students to and from Seven Ponds each day is a costly affair, and one that schools struggle to pay. Fortunately, the Lapeer County Community Foundation stepped up and covered the cost of transportation and program fees, making this week of environmental education possible for these students. A full week at Seven Ponds is an experience that is sure to have long-term impact on these students.



Second grade students and teachers from Schickler Elementary School at Annie's Big Nature Lesson

## FIELD TOUR RECAP 2022

Since the early 1990's Seven Ponds staff have organized and led natural history and birding field tours to destinations throughout North American and beyond. Hundreds of participants have enjoyed amazing experiences in nature as a result of these tours, which are led by expert naturalists and guides. During this past year the nature center held three tours which took our participants to locations that spanned the continent. Let's enjoy a brief recap of those experiences.

### Colorado Spring Chickens ~ April 1-11, 2022

~ with Carl Bendorf of *Colorado Birding Adventures*

A "chicken tour" of Colorado is on the bucket list of many North American birders. The chickens of Colorado include a dozen members of the galliformes order - ground feeding birds such as grouse, quail, pheasants, and turkeys. Specifically, our tour would be targeting several key members of this group, including Greater Prairie-Chicken, Lesser Prairie-Chicken, Dusky Grouse, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Greater Sage-Grouse, Gunnison Sage-Grouse, Scaled Quail, Gambel's Quail, White-tailed Ptarmigan, and Chukar. Each of these species has specialized habitat requirements, and to see all of them requires significant effort, considerable travel, and very early mornings. In fact, our group stayed in different lodging each of the ten nights of the tour and covered nearly 3,000 miles in our trusty rental van, and we were successful in tracking down most of our chicken targets. In total our group tallied 123 birds species along with an incredible 17 mammal species. We enjoyed mountains, grasslands, desert scrub, and sagebrush shrubland. It was an exhausting but rewarding and memorable trip for everybody.



Greater Prairie-Chicken photo by Carl Bendorf



Atlantic Puffins photo by Sue Keener

### New England Birding - Mountains to Coast ~ June 30-July 9, 2022

~ with David Hof of *New England Bird Tours*

This birding tour found us enjoying the incredible scenery and amazing birds of Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. Besides the opportunity to see dozens of familiar songbirds in their breeding habitat, we were also hoping to see several regional specialties, including Bicknell's Thrush in the mountains of Vermont and New Hampshire, Saltmarsh Sparrow in the coastal saltwater marshes of Maine, and seabirds such as Atlantic Puffins, Black Guillemot, Razorbill, Least Tern, Roseate Tern, Northern Gannet, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, and Great Cormorant - none of which are found in Michigan. We enjoyed beautiful weather, stunning vistas, and two great offshore boat trips. By the end of the tour our group had tallied 153 species of birds, including numerous Life Birds for all.

### Fall in the Little Smokies ~ October 16-21, 2022

Fall in the foothills of southern Ohio was on full display during our time there. Old growth trees greeted us on our hikes around ancient geological formations as we made our way down into gorges and up on top foothills. Pawpaw trees offered up some fruit for tasting, as we stopped in one of the Arc of Appalachia's many reserves. Serpents Mound, an ancient Native American effigy, showed us a glimpse back in time to the first people of the area and the sacred places of the world. Species of asters, goldenrods, and stiff gentian framed our path as we wound around rock and tree. Our trip together ended with a stunning sunset view of the foothills, atop the Copperhead Lookout Tower. It was a wonder to be so close to home, but yet a world away in the Little Smokies.



Dolomite outcropping photo by Katie

# Around the Center

## Pavilion on the Premises

Our new pavilion is finally up and running. This structure will allow us to have many more outside activities rain or shine. School groups and guests alike will be able to enjoy programs and picnics in any weather.



## Trek the Trails Recap

In October the staff challenged themselves and anybody else who wanted to participate to "Trek the Trails" both at the nature center and elsewhere. Pledges and donations were sought, and the Seven Ponds staff trekked a total of 224 miles, raising funds for the nature center. We hope to expand this effort in 2023 and encourage more of our friends and supporters to participate. Thanks to all who contributed to this endeavor.

## Forest of the Future

Our fall tree planting is complete. This year we planted 36 native shrubs, including red-osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*), Michigan Holly (*Ilex verticillata*), and American hazelnut (*Corylus americana*). These shrubs produce fruits (dogwood and holly) or nuts (hazelnut) that provide an important food source for many birds and other wildlife. All were planted in Paul's Woods and encircled with protective fencing to ward off browsing deer. These plantings were all made possible through our "buy-a-tree" program.

## Corks & Caps 2023 - Save the Date!

The 2023 edition of our annual Corks & Caps Fundraiser will be held Friday, June 9 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. Corks & Caps keeps getting better year after year, and the revenue generated during the event help make everything we do possible. Be sure to mark your 2023 calendars now so you won't miss this exciting event.

## Critters in the Corner 2.0

Just before the fall weather set in we acquired a new eastern gray tree frog (*Hyla versicolor*) for Critter Corner. We now have ten different native Michigan species for you to learn about next time you visit the nature center. These ambassador animals allow people a glimpse into their lives and have enchanted visitors for years. Many of these amazing animals even go to schools to teach kids in their classrooms - because it's an awesome day when a turtle visits your class!

## Upcoming Birding Field Tour

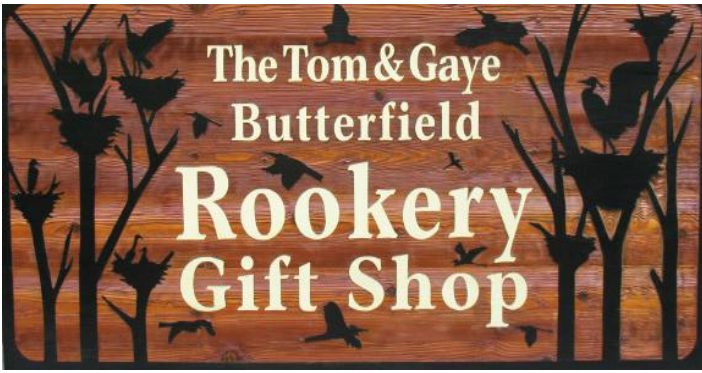
Join us for a spring birding adventure to southwest Texas, April 26-May 4, 2023. We'll start our tour in the scenic Hill Country of the Edwards Plateau, with its limestone hills, spring wildflowers, and ancient oaks. At the Rio Bat Cave we'll witness 10-12 million Mexican Free-tailed Bats emerge from the cave entrance for the night. We'll head 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 during our trip. Online registration for this tour opens Tuesday, January 3rd at 9:00 AM for Seven Ponds members. Check our website for a full itinerary and registration information.

## Grants & Gifts

Seven Ponds was the recipient of several grants and donations over the past year. Some of these gifts have a specific purpose, while others are donations intended for general use. Many thanks to the following:

- **Lapeer County Community Foundation** \$10,000 to be used for the naturescape for children.
- **Lapeer County Community Foundation** \$2,079.80 to be used for 2nd grade students from Schickler Elementary School (Lapeer) to attend a full week of Annie's Big Nature Lesson at Seven Ponds.
- **Rochester Garden Club** \$125 to be used in support of the *Forest of the Future* program.
- **Franklin Branch WNF&GA** \$300 to be used in support of environmental education programs.





ornaments to go with their gift packet.

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!*

**THINK GLOBALLY, SHOP LOCALLY**

The holidays are here! For all of the holidays you celebrate, we hope you will keep the Rookery Gift Shop at the top of your list of stores to visit for your holiday shopping.

We have been getting holiday shipments in for weeks. There are many items we have never carried before, and we have brought back some favorites that we haven't had in a long time like Brazzo Walking Sticks. Check out the new Seven Ponds medallions for your new stick!

For your "hard-to-buy-for" friends and family (yes, we all have them...) a gift membership could be the perfect gift. This is the gift that gives back for a full year and includes 10% off in the gift shop with their membership. You could even pick up our new custom made Seven Ponds wooden



**VORTEX BINOCULARS NOW IN STOCK!**

Seven Ponds Nature Center is now an authorized dealer of Vortex Optics. Stop in to check out our line-up of binoculars that will truly change the way you view nature. We are committed to offering the lowest price possible for these models. *(Member/Volunteer discount not available)*

**Seven Ponds Nature Center**

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# Winter Programs

December 2022 -  
February 2023

Exploring the winter world can be a wondrous experience with endless possibilities for adventure. Look over this winter's offerings of activities and make plans to join us as we explore winter's nature. Seven Ponds offers something for everyone, from pre-schoolers and families to adults. Mark your calendar for some programs in our Winter Series, seasonal activities, or WinterFest. 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](http://sevenponds.org) to register.

## The Winter Series from Seven Ponds

Each winter Seven Ponds sponsors the Winter Series, a series of Sunday afternoon programs highlighted by noted naturalists and photographers, live animals, fascinating natural history, and enjoyment for all ages. Come out for one or all of these programs. Sessions are open to everyone, **but pre-registration is required**. Seating is limited and these programs often fill quickly. Fee: \$3.00. **Please register online.**

### **Animals from Around the World**

Wildlife Safari

SUNDAY, JANUARY 29, 2:00 PM

Are you looking for an awesome wildlife experience? Look no farther, Wildlife Safari will share with us live animals from around the world! This hands-on program is sure to entertain, and also educate us about the amazing wild animals we share this planet with. This is a family-friendly program, and is for all ages.

### **Great Lakes Beach Rocks Basic Identification -Plus Identification of Man-Made Imposters**

Randy Kursinsky

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2:00 PM

If you spend your time combing the beaches for rocks, this program is for you! Join Randy Kursinsky, vice-president of the Mid-Michigan Rock Club and an amateur rock and fossil collector, as he gives the basics to help identify the majority of rocks, fossils, and man-made rock-like items found along our Great Lakes shorelines.

### **Lost in Michigan**

Mike Sonnenberg

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2:00 PM

Mike Sonnenberg, the author of *Lost In Michigan: History and Travel Stories From An Endless Road Trip* series, showcases interesting and historic locations from around Michigan and tells fascinating stories about them. Mike will be showing some of the photographs he has taken and talking about his travels around the Great Lakes State. Sonnenberg's work has been featured in the *Detroit Free Press* and he is considered a "Michigan Expert" by *USA Today*.

### **Backpacking the Entire Appalachian Trail at Age 60 During COVID**

Melanie Kursinsky

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2:00 PM

Join Melanie Kursinsky as she describes her first-person account of hiking the Appalachian Trail in 2020/2021 as a female solo hiker. Melanie will share her awesome adventure through discussion, video presentations, and by displaying the gear she used while hiking. Melanie's story is incredible and should not be missed.

### **Beekeeping 101**

Preston Zale

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2:00 PM

Join your local beekeeper, Preston Zale, as he introduces us to honeybees, teaches us how to keep them, and their importance to our food chain. We'll discuss what you will need (and spend) to have your own hive(s), and what activities you'll be doing during the beekeeping season in Michigan. We'll also talk about the rewards of beekeeping, not just the honey, but better garden harvests, and other products from the hive that are fun and healthy.



# December

## **Sunday Walk**

Sunday, December 4th, 2:00 PM

Winter is almost here, and what better way to see the ending of fall than by hiking some trails with a naturalist. Join us as we explore the unique areas of the nature center.

## **Winter Stargazing and Stories**

Saturday, December 10th, 7:00 PM

Come see the stars! Join us for an evening of hot chocolate and constellation stories. We will also talk about other interesting nighttime sky phenomena.

## **Natural Ornament Making**

Sunday, December 18, 2:00 PM

Get ready for the holiday season by making your own natural ornament to help decorate your home. Supplies will be provided. Fee: \$4.00 (members \$2.00).

## **Holiday Closures**

Saturday, December 24 - Sunday, December 25

Saturday, December 31 - Sunday, January 1

The nature center Interpretive Building will be closed on these dates so that staff may enjoy time with their families during the holiday season. As always, the trails are open for our members from dawn to dusk, every day of the year. Come out and explore the trails during this magical time.

# January

## **Sunday Walk**

Sunday, January 8th, 2:00 PM

Come join the first naturalist-led walk of the year. See how nature is welcoming the New Year. We will explore wherever the trail leads us!

## **World Snow Day!**

Sunday, January 15, 2:00 PM

Celebrate World Snow Day with Seven Ponds by participating in all kinds of snow activities and experiments. Bring your snow gear!

## **Michigan Outdoors Trivia Night**

Saturday, January 21st, 6:00 PM

Looking for an opportunity to show off your nature knowledge? This is the place! You are welcome to play alone, or as a team of no more than three people. All questions will be related to the plants, animals, and natural wonders that call Michigan home!

## **Explore the Collections**

Sunday, January 22nd, 2:00 PM

Ever wonder what's in those big cabinets in the back room? What makes a good specimen? Join one of our naturalists as we look through some of the interesting animal and nature items in our extensive collections!

## **Winterfest**

Saturday, January 28, 10:00 AM-3:00 PM

See Winterfest event flier, page 4

# February

## **Meet the Critters**

Sunday, February 5th, 2:00 PM

This program focuses entirely on the animals that call Critter Corner home! Come and learn about the animals, how we take care of them, and how you can help wildlife.

## **Scouting Saturday**

Saturday, February 11, 10:00 AM-12:00 PM

Into the Woods: Learn about trees and the important role they play in nature. This badge day is open to any scout! \$4.00 per scout.

## **Snowshoeing**

Saturday, February 11, 2:00 PM

Dashing through the snow on your own pair of snowshoes sounds like a fun way to spend an afternoon! Old-fashioned snowshoes will be provided for you on this guided hike. In the event of no snow, there will still be an interpretive walk.

## **Land Steward 101**

Saturday, February 18th, 11:00 AM

Join our Land Steward as we look forward to spring! Learn about invasive, non-native plant species in Michigan, and how to best manage them on your own property.

## **Winter Story Hour**

Sunday, February 19th, 2:00 PM

Isn't winter the best time to curl up with a good book? Join us for a cozy winter-themed story and crafts!

## **End of Winter Scavenger Hunt**

Saturday, February 25th, 2:00-4:00 PM

The end of winter is on the horizon....even if it doesn't feel like it. Nature always knows. Grab your family and a scavenger hunt list from the front desk and hit the trails to find clues of the season changes! Prizes for completing the hunt. \$4.00 per person, \$3.00 for members.

# WINTER BIRD TRIPS

This winter we will offer two birding trips. Our bird trips 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 - which might be severe this time of year. These bird trips are \$3 for Seven Ponds members and \$5 for non-members. Online pre-registration is required, and bird trips 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!

## Winter Bird Trip #1 - Waterfowl Wonders

Wednesday, February 1, 8:00 AM

Port Huron area (St. Clair County)

Mid-winter can be a great time to check the waters at the southern tip of Lake Huron as well as the St. Clair River for large flocks of congregating diving ducks, such as Red-heads, Canvasbacks, Common and Red-breasted mergansers, Greater and Lesser scaup, and Long-tailed Ducks. A variety of gulls can sometimes be found here during winter as well, and we'll certainly search for the Peregrine Falcons which make the bridge area their home. Be sure to dress for the weather conditions, as it is often very cold and windy near the water. This bird trip will include several stops and will conclude with an early afternoon lunch at a local restaurant (optional). This is a car pool trip – meet at the nature center.

## WINTER BIRD TRIP #2 - Snowy Owl Prowl

Wednesday, February 22, 8:00 AM

Fish Point area (Tuscola & Huron counties)

Our birding today will find us heading north into the Thumb region as we search the open farmland for Snowy Owls. We'll continue on to Fish Point State Wildlife Area to see if the late winter influx of Tundra Swans, Canada Geese, and (possibly) Snow Geese has begun. Other possible birds of the open "tundra" of this area include Northern Shrike, Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Harrier, Merlin, Snow Bunting, and Horned Lark. Be sure to dress for the weather. We'll plan on having lunch in the Thumb before returning to the nature center, so pack your own or come prepared to purchase a lunch. This is a car pool trip – meet at the nature center.

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## 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](http://sevenponds.org).

### ANIMAL WINTER SURVIVAL

Wednesday, January 18, 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Grades K-2 and Grades 3-6

We will spend the afternoon learning how Michigan's amazing animals survive the winter. Looking at different groups of animals like insects, fish, mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians, we will discover their incredible abilities for surviving cold, harsh weather.

### BIZARRE NATURE

Wednesday, February 15, 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Grades K-2 and Grades 3-6

Nature can be bizarre! We will look at the icky, weird, and interesting facts of animals in nature. Through their different abilities, cool colors, or strange body parts, we will explore how these animals survive in their environments. We will also look at some of the nature center's "bizarre" specimens!

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## 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.**

**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

# Winterfest!

Saturday, January 28<sup>th</sup> 2023

10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Join us for our annual winter fun day!

There will be a s'mores bar and hot dogs for roasting over a fire, pond dipping, lawn games, ice cutting, ice skating, a snowman building competition, a bake sale, and interpretive walks outside.

In the event there is not sufficient snow or ice alternative activities will be provided.

Fee: \$3.00 per person. Please pre-register for this event online. Visit [sevenponds.org](http://sevenponds.org) to reserve your spot.

Seven Ponds Nature Center  
3854 Crawford Rd  
Dryden, MI 48428



You otter be there!