



# Heron Tracks

The Quarterly Newsletter of Seven Ponds Nature Center

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## Shadows of the Forest

Article by Madison Christol

Growing up in the North Georgia mountains it was understood that no matter where you hiked, camped, or picked berries, you were sharing those woods with black bears (*Ursus americanus*). While I definitely did not see one every time I was out and about, it was always an exciting possibility. One of my fondest hiking memories is from a class trip to Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee where we had the amazing opportunity to watch a mother bear escort her two cubs across the trail and up into a tree. Moments like that have only fed my respect and curiosity for these secretive creatures. The bear pictured below lives at Bear Hollow Zoo in Athens, Georgia, and was found with his two siblings as cubs where they were raised by humans and deemed unreleasable.

Bears have mystified people for as long as we have known about their existence. Sleeping Bear Dunes is a great example of this. The name comes from the Anishinaabe tale of a bear family that met their end in the area and now make up North Manitou Island, South Manitou Island, and the curving mainland shoreline. Many Native Americans, including the Anishinaabe, named the January moon the Bear Moon as that is when most bear cubs are born.

Black bears can be found throughout most of the eastern United States, as well as a few western states, Canada, and northern Mexico. They are the only bear species that calls Michigan home! While there are greater numbers in the Upper Peninsula, you can find them in the northern Lower Peninsula as well. Their perfect habitat includes a forest with trees to climb, water to cool off in, and plenty of berry bushes. But these bears are anything but picky eaters. Their omnivorous diet includes cattail roots, inner tree bark, small mammals, yellowjacket nests, berries, woodpecker eggs, and honey, of course. These bears have incredibly long, sticky, and flexible tongues that help them reach into small insect tunnels. Black bears are very solitary critters and if you see one the view will most likely be of its rump as it runs away. Researchers have found that while these bears are typically diurnal, those that live in more urban areas have shifted their schedules to be more active in the early hours of the morning and late hours of the evening so as to avoid humans.

You are even less likely to see a bear during the winter because they are super hibernators. Bears do not typically use a den site more than once, but optimal den sites may be used by a new bear each year. A den site can be a standing hollow tree, a large hole in the ground, or simply a flat spot tucked away from the wind and lined with evergreen branches. Bears typically only use one den site per year, but will relocate to a new one if disturbed. Now, a black bear in Michigan is likely to hibernate for a longer period of time than one in Georgia. Hibernation can be as little as one month or as long as seven months. Additionally, there is a system for bears entering and leaving their dens. Pregnant females will enter the earliest, followed closely by other females. Males tend to wait the latest to enter dens and are the first out in the spring. While in the dens, bears do not produce waste. Their urine is recycled back into their body and any solid matter clumps together to create a fecal plug that the bear passes as soon as it leaves the den. The location of the dropped fecal plug



## Reflections...

Being an executive director of a relatively small non-profit organization can be a daunting, sometimes frustrating job. While there's no denying that I get to work at a wonderful place in a beautiful setting, there are times when it's challenging, and sometimes downright scary. Being dependent on a flow of revenue that is by and large unpredictable, while still needing to develop a budget that pays all the bills, compensates the staff, and improves the building and grounds is no small feat. When the economy suffers, the concern increases - will our members and supporters be able to come through as they have in the past?

And there are always projects - now and on the horizon - that need funding. Our boardwalk on either side of the A-Frame Bridge is a prime example. We have known for years that the boardwalk was in rough shape, adversely affected by a water surge many years ago that left it unlevel, and sitting precariously on unsure footing. Furthermore, its close proximity to the water level left it prone to flooding each spring. This situation was especially frustrating because the A-Frame Bridge is essentially the centerpiece of our trail system - the place where many of our visitors go to enjoy the serene view.

We wrestled for the past few years about possible remedies. Could the existing boardwalk be repaired? Would we need an entirely new boardwalk? Contractors came in and gave estimates, mostly well beyond our ability to pay. Should we start a campaign to raise the necessary funds? How would that impact other fundraisers, such as our Holiday Auction and year-end Special Gifts Campaign? Were there any other options?

Just when it seemed we were at an impasse, the unimaginable happened: a long-time supporter and former board member contacted me regarding a large donation she was planning on making, and inquired as to whether there were any projects for which her donation may be utilized. Why, yes - yes, indeed. As a matter of fact, we have just such a project in mind. And fortuitously, the amount she donated fully covered the cost of a complete rebuild of our boardwalk. Wow. Just, wow.

So, while there are times when my job can be daunting, frustrating, challenging, and even a bit scary, there are also times when I am completely overwhelmed by the generosity of those who have come to love Seven Ponds Nature Center and demonstrate that love through their incredible support.

Thank you - all of you - who love and support this place.  
Daryl Bernard, Executive Director



### *Is this your final HERON TRACKS by mail?*

**As previously noted, we are transitioning to our digital version of *Heron Tracks* - which means that every member will receive a digital copy of our newsletter via email (with color photos!).**

**If you prefer to also receive a mailed version and have not yet contacted us, please do so (call 810-796-3200 or email [spnc@sevenponds.org](mailto:spnc@sevenponds.org)). This is the final edition that will be mailed out en masse.**

**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.**

**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 paper waste. It's a win-win!**

## *Heron Tracks*

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[www.sevenponds.org](http://www.sevenponds.org) 810-796-3200

*The mission of Seven Ponds Nature Center is to conserve its natural environment as a sanctuary for native plants and animals and to serve as a community resource for environmental education that fosters an understanding, appreciation, and stewardship for our natural world.*

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

**Daryl Bernard**  
**Carrie Spencer**  
**Diane Rankin**  
**Madison Christol, Katie McKiernan**  
**Gina Stoldt**  
**Damian Goidich**  
**Del Hunsinger**

helps ursinologists (bear biologists) locate den entrances. This is also the time of year where they shed and regrow their paw pads. Bear researcher Dr. Paul Iaizzo found that during hibernation these bears have a heart rate of only five beats per minute compared to 50 beats per minute during more active times of the year. Unlike true hibernators bears do not greatly lower their body temperature. This is important because it means they can wake up rapidly to defend themselves or feed their young.

You see, black bear cubs are born during winter, usually in January or February, while the mother bear is still in the den. A litter consists of around three to four cubs that are born completely defenseless. The first few weeks are spent in the relative safety of the den. Safety is the number one priority when stepping out of the home, as well. Cubs are taught to climb trees in case of danger as soon as they are old enough. Mother bears will often leave young in the branches or at the base of “babysitter trees”, trees with low branches and textured bark that is easy for their small claws to dig into. Cubs stay with their mother for a little over one year which means they spend their first full hibernation together in a den. Once the bears are of age and ready to take on the world without their mother they must find their own territory to roam. Males will leave the area completely in their search, but females actually take over a bit of the mother’s home range. Home ranges come in all shapes and sizes and mainly depend on the abundance of food resources. Males are typically more spread out and can claim spaces of up to 80 square miles while females may use 20 square miles. However, when enough food is present these ranges can shrink to about 2 square miles. After being on their own for a couple years most bears will participate in their first breeding season. Mating usually occurs during the summer with mature males following the scent of mature females for several days before courting begins. If a bear still has cubs with her, she will not participate in that year’s mating season. Researchers from Northern Michigan University studied a population of black bears in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula and found that the females with cubs did not alter their movement to avoid breeding age males.

While you don’t have to worry about it in Michigan, let’s say you take a trip to Montana and find yourself gazing (from a safe

distance of at least 300 ft away according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) at a dark colored bear. Is it a grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*) or a black bear? Grizzly bears have a hump to their shoulder that is absent in black bears. Additionally, you can use your eyes to trace the outline of the head. If it’s a straight line then you are looking at a black bear, but if the outline dips towards the top of the nose then you are looking at a grizzly bear. Habitat also plays a role in identification. While not always the case, you are more likely to see a black bear in the forest in areas with grizzlies or wolves. These other carnivores pose a threat to black bears, so they use the trees as cover. Contrary to the name, black bear’s fur can be brown, grey, and blond. *Ursus americanus kermodeii* is a subspecies, nicknamed the Spirit Bear, which has pure white fur and primarily lives on the islands of British Columbia. They are not just albino black bears, but instead possess a mutant gene which gives them their light fur while still producing melanin. Scientists believe there are less than 500 of these bears in the wild. Tracks and signs can also tell you who you are sharing the forest with. It is difficult to find bear tracks because they walk on the soles of their foot pads. The best place to look is fresh snow or muddy areas. They have five toe pads on both their front and hind paws with short claws attached to each. The front paw looks like an oval with one side wider than the other while the back paw has a similar shape to a human foot with a wide front and slimmer end. When viewing a walking path you may notice the back foot indent appears in front of the front foot indent because of their over-step walking pattern. In areas of deep snow, they will place their back paw into the indent left by their front paw to save energy. Black bear scat is tubular and left in a pile. It will usually contain berry seeds, small parts of vegetation, woody debris, and occasionally fur from small mammals.

Next time you find yourself in black bear territory, look around for these clues that a bear has been through the area, and if you ever find yourself lucky enough to share space with one, take a second to appreciate the wonder that is the shadow of the forest. To learn more about black bears check out *Behavior of North American Mammals* (Mark Elbroch and Kurt Rinehart), the North American Bear Center (website), or the Ursinology episode of the Ologies podcast.



# Volunteer News

## On the Trail

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

- **Claudine Zach** for feeding and providing care for the animals in Critter Corner every week.
- **Mike Grappin** for helping with various tasks around the center.
- **Marianna Fitzgerald** for her work organizing the library and cataloging all our volumes. Thanks also to **Jessica Bostian, Dr. Joan Beaudoin, Madaleine Wesol,** and **Griffin Barkdoll**, who have assisted with our library project.
- **Marianna Fitzgerald, Nancy Kautz,** and **Kathy Cole** for their help on the trail with class field trips.
- **Catherine Downey, Marianna Fitzgerald, Allen Rosenbalm, Anita Spencer, Chris Baker, Penelope Spencer, Alan Rifenkark, Kathy Cole, Karen Blaszyk, Miranda Stoldt, Cynthia Stroebel, Nancy Kautz, Julie Markgraf, Darya Markgraf, Julie Raymond, Joanne Wood, Beth Piatkowski, Anne Melnik,** and **Laura Bernard** for all their amazing work and help with *Enchanted Woodland*. We could not put on this event without so many dedicated volunteers.
- **Karen Blaszyk** and **Kathy Cole** for their help with *Party at The Ponds*.

**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 in helping educate and inform visitors of the nature center, 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

**Soil**

It is one of the most important things in our world and we often don't think about it. Learn why soil is so vital.

### FEBRUARY

**Invasive Species**

Plants and animals from other places that take over our precious native diversity. We will learn about their life cycles and what makes them so good at taking over.

## 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)



# Seven Ponds Tributes

Memorials, Buy-a-Tree, In Honor

## ***In memory of Tom Osmer***

- Dave Osmer

## ***In honor of Cynthia Stroebel***

- Marianne Bohm

## ***In memory of Jocelyn Scofield***

- Susan Ruvido

## ***Buy-a-Tree in memory of Jocelyn Scofield***

- Caroline Lovell



## **Jocelyn Scofield, 1939-2023**

All of us at Seven Ponds were greatly saddened with the news that our wonderful friend and steadfast supporter Jocelyn Scofield passed away in September at her beloved farm home near Metamora, with family and friends by her side.

Jocelyn joined the board of directors many years ago, where her sage wisdom and keen sense of humor always contributed to any discussion or decision. She was utterly dedicated to working toward the betterment of the nature center, and contributed in many areas throughout the years, lending her time and talents in ways that will be impossible to replace.

As a founding member of Seven Ponds' Development Committee, Jocelyn was a driving force for that group's fundraising efforts, including playing a key role in establishing and improving the Corks & Caps fundraising event (originally called the Wine Tasting Event), which has grown into the nature center's biggest fundraiser – in large part due to Jocelyn's significant efforts.

While Jocelyn is certainly irreplaceable, we can only hope that her example of selflessness and devotion will inspire others to pick up the torch and carry it forward on behalf of Seven Ponds. There could be no better way to honor her.

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## **Wandering with the Birds**

*By Daryl Bernard*

It's always fun to see a new bird - a Life Bird! During a recent trip to Arizona, I had such an opportunity - if fortune would favor me. A few days before arriving in the Phoenix area, a local birder found what she thought was a Northern Jacana (*Jacana spinosa*), an unusual shorebird that acts like a marsh bird, described in a field guide as a "fancy-looking, vaguely chicken-like bird of freshwater marshes..." This bird makes its home in wetlands throughout much of central and southern Mexico, but every once in a while one shows up in Arizona or Texas.

Sure enough, she had found a Northern Jacana, and the following day dozens of birders flocked to the site to see the unique visitor. The jacana has incredibly long toes, which allows it to seemingly walk on water. It entertained onlookers throughout the day by prancing among the pennywort, a dense wetland plant, dashing along the edge of the water, with occasional frantic wing flapping as it moved to a better position. The next day many other birders arrived, hoping to catch a glimpse, but the bird was a no-show the entire day.

I arrived the following morning, my hopes somewhat tempered by the absence of the bird the previous day. Still, I set up the scope next to the marsh shortly after 7:00 AM and began my vigil, scanning the dense pennywort repeatedly with binoculars and scope. Another birder was there as well, hoping to get

some photos with her long-lensed camera. After more than 30 minutes, she decided to move on down the trail to look for other birds. Less than a minute after she left...

The bird suddenly appeared! There it was! A Northern Jacana in the scope! LIFE BIRD!!! I watched it for a few seconds, soaking up the view, then ran down the trail in search of the woman who had just left. I spotted her and shouted, "It's here! The bird is here!" She came running back and saw the jacana as well. It put on quite a show for us, staying in sight and working the marsh for nearly an hour before I finally decided to move on to other birds. But, what a morning! After my re-discovery, many other birders showed up to see the re-found jacana.

You never know just what you might see, when you're out there, wandering with the birds!



Juvenile Northern Jacana foraging among the pennywort in Phoenix, Arizona

# UPCOMING SEVEN PONDS FIELD TOURS

Join Seven Ponds staff for an adventure of a lifetime on one of our birding or natural history field tours. Seven Ponds has been offering high-quality field tours for over thirty years, providing countless participants with amazing experiences in nature throughout North America and beyond. In 2024 we are offering two exciting tours. Registration for these tours opens January 2nd. Additional information, including complete itinerary, tour details, registration info, and cost can be found on our website at [sevenponds.org](https://sevenponds.org).

## BLACK HILLS and BADLANDS BIRDING

*A birding field tour with Seven Ponds Nature Center and Rocky Mountain Birding*

**May 24-30, 2024**

South Dakota's incredible geology and scenic landscape will provide a fantastic backdrop to our week of birding the Black Hills and Badlands (and beyond!). A wide diversity of habitats awaits, from the deep canyon rivers and forested rolling topography of the Black Hills to the windswept shortgrass prairie of northwestern South Dakota; from the stark rocky landscape of the Badlands to the impressive butte called Devils Tower. These varied habitats will give us a chance to see a large variety of birds during our tour of this scenic region.

## COPPER HARBOR & ISLE ROYALE ADVENTURE

*A natural history field tour with Seven Ponds Nature Center*

**June 16-22, 2024**

Isle Royale National Park and Copper Harbor in the Keweenaw Peninsula, are spectacular, mirror images separated by the deep, blue waters of the world's largest inland lake, Lake Superior. We will experience this time-worn landscape by trail and boat, and see high ridges of sugar maples, hiking trails carpeted with sphagnum moss, abundant wildflowers, and hear the songs of the birds of the north.



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## 2023 Year-end Special Gifts Campaign

Recently you received our 2023 Special Gifts Campaign appeal letter from Seven Ponds board chairperson Joanna Pease. If you've already mailed in a donation - thank you! Otherwise, we hope you are considering a gift to Seven Ponds Nature Center during this giving season. Our Special Gifts Campaign is the only regular giving campaign we conduct, and it helps us plan for the upcoming year, providing critical operational funding. This funding allows us to continue offering high-quality environmental education programming to schools, children, families, and adults. It also helps us maintain and improve the building and grounds, including important land stewardship projects as we care for nearly 500 acres of woods, prairie, fields, wetlands, and our beautiful lakes.

When sending your gift, you can send a check using the return envelope provided, or you may visit our website and use the link on our front page. It only takes a few seconds to donate, but the impact you make is far-reaching.

We truly appreciate any gift you are able to make, and pledge to do our very best in utilizing your donation to its fullest.

# Around the Center

## **Boardwalk Rebuild**

The boardwalk leading to and beyond the A-Frame Bridge, along with the spur to Little Pond, has been in need of repair or replacement for some time. Due to a generous donation from long-time supporter Phyllis Schroeder, we were able to make that happen this fall. Foundation Authority and Kyle Builders, Inc. completed the project in November. The new boardwalk sits higher than our previous boardwalk, which will prevent flooding over the boardwalk when water levels rise in the spring. Check out the new boardwalk on your next visit to Seven Ponds!

## **Trek the Trails Recap**

Research shows that walking in nature improves both mental and physical health. In October the staff challenged themselves and anybody else who wanted to participate to "Trek the Trails" both at the nature center and elsewhere. This year the Seven Ponds staff trekked a total of 308 miles, easily topping our 2022 total of 224 miles. We also led Tuesday and Thursday treks around the trails at Seven Ponds, where a total of 20 people put in many healthy, nature-inspired miles throughout the month. Keep on trekking out there, and join us again next October for Trek the Trails!

## **Forest of the Future**

Our fall tree planting is complete. This year we planted 35 native trees and shrubs, with our focus on planting trees and shrubs that will produce berries for birds and other wildlife. We planted alternate-leaf dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*), Michigan Holly (*Ilex verticillata*), American hazelnut (*Corylus americana*), choke cherry (*Prunus virginiana*), fragrant sumac (*Rhus aromatica*), American elder (*Sambucus canadensis*), and red-berried elder (*Sambucus racemose*). All were planted in the old wildlife orchard in the North-80 and encircled with protective fencing to ward off browsing deer. These plantings were all made possible through our "buy-a-tree" program.

## **Pollination Nation**

"Where have the bees gone?" We get that question a lot. Over the past several years we have been unable to keep the observation hive of honey bees alive for more than a couple months. That meant an empty (and quite frankly, gross) exhibit. We decided to permanently decommission the hive and install a new colorful, interpretive exhibit about our native pollinators. It is nearing completion at the time of writing this newsletter. We only await the arrival of the interpretive signage. The next time you are in the nature center please check out the new and improved corner in the Discovery Room.

## **Corks & Caps 2024 - Save the Date!**

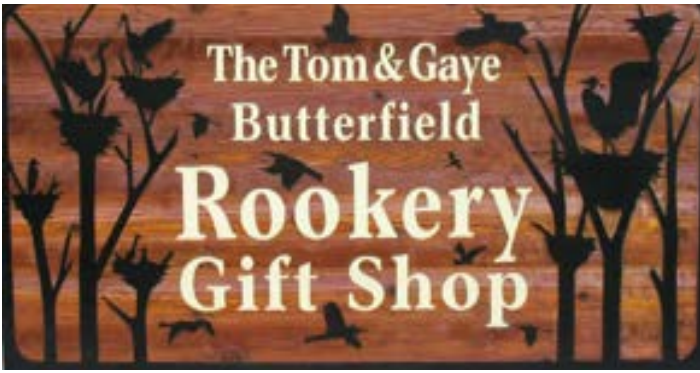
The 2024 edition of our annual Corks & Caps Fundraiser will be held **Saturday, August 17** at the Metamora Golf & Country Club. This fun event is one of our most important fundraisers of the year and we hope you will be able to attend and support the nature center. Corks & Caps keeps getting better year after year, and the revenue generated during the event help make everything we do possible. Be sure to mark your 2024 calendars now so you won't miss this exciting event.

## **Grants & Gifts**

Seven Ponds was the recipient of several grants and donations from organizations 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 Wildflower Branch of the WNF&GA** \$100 for general use.
- **Rochester Garden Club** \$405 in support of our new pollinator exhibit.
- **Troy Garden Club Branch of the WNF&GA** \$300 in support of our Forest of the Future endeavor.
- **Lapeer County Chapter - Michigan Association of Retired School Personnel** \$100 for general use.
- **Thomas and Carol Cracchiolo Foundation** \$1,000 in support of Corks & Caps.
- **Lapeer County Community Foundation** \$2,500 in support of Lapeer County student programs.
- **Kiwanis of Lapeer** \$3,500 in support of Lapeer Area Schools 4th grade students.
- **Lapeer Optimist Club** \$4,000 in support of Lapeer Area Schools 2nd grade students.





Did we mention we ordered some books? Two big shipments of books for all ages. Plus nature posters and much, much more!

Don't forget the gift that keeps on giving for a year full of fun and adventure – a Seven Ponds gift membership. Call or stop by the nature center and we can give you a gift membership packet, so you have something special to put under the tree.

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



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

Are you as excited about the holidays as we are this year? Everyone just seems happier this time of year and full of the spirit of giving. We have worked hard to find some unique and fun gifts for all the loved ones on your list.

We have new puzzles, mini bird houses for decoration inside or outside, birdseed houses that are great gifts for bird lovers or that someone who has everything.

There are fun socks, key chains, and trinket trays. A couple of the things we are hoping you love are the new nature-themed games for kids and super cute flower presses.

### **Seven Ponds Nature Center**

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

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# Winter Programs

December 2023 -  
February 2024

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 and cultural 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.**

### ***Bugs on Wheels***

Nadia Greely aka "The Bug Lady"

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28TH, 2:00 PM

This afternoon Nadia will shed some light on the "less-loved" creatures of our planet: bugs! This family program will be a mix of education and entertainment to help us understand and appreciate how amazing, important, and not-so-scary these creatures really are. Get ready for a fun hands-on experience.

### ***Illuminating the Shoreline: The Influence of Light Pollution on Freshwater Ecosystems***

Lizz Parkinson - PhD Student - Biology - Aquatic Ecology  
Oakland University

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4TH, 2:00 PM

As human habitation, and illumination, of freshwater coastlines worldwide continues to grow, the importance of understanding the implications of these changes for freshwater ecosystems grows with it, especially here in Michigan. This program will discuss some of the research being done on the impacts of light pollution on insects that play a crucial role in freshwater food webs and why we should be concerned.

### ***History, Mystery, and...Murder? The Story of Train Robberies of Michigan***

Dean Pyers - Executive Director

Steam Railroading Institute - Owosso, MI

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11TH, 2:00 PM

Michigan's railroading past is full of high adventure and daring crimes, and Dean Pyers will be our guide this afternoon. In the mid- to late 1800's, train robberies were a frequent occurrence, and later became a staple of popular entertainment. This program will dive into an interesting part of Michigan's history.

### ***Michigan 337 - The Biggest Year in Michigan Birding History***

Daniel Bernard - Avid Birding Enthusiast

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18TH, 2:00 PM

Join birder Danny Bernard as he shares his story of battling a limited budget and the time constraint of a full-time job on his initially unplanned journey to break the Michigan Big Year record. Danny met dozens of new people and learned loads about birding, himself, and life in general as he traveled over 45,000 miles and spent nearly every waking minute of 2022 on his quest to see more birds in a single year than anyone in Michigan history.

### ***Nature Play***

Carrie Spencer - Director of Environmental Education  
Seven Ponds Nature Center

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25TH, 2:00 PM

Children are spending less time outside, but there is no evidence to suggest that kids enjoy outdoor play less than previous generations; today's children have more obstacles that were not present in the past. During this program, we discover what some of those obstacles are, and how we can help create places and experiences for our kids to get outside.



# December

## ***Winter Wanderings***

Sunday, December 3rd, 2:00 PM

Fall is soon to come to a close and the winter months take hold. We will wander the trails of the center and look for signs of animals preparing for the long haul towards spring. Hopefully the first bouts of snow will provide a glistening view.

## ***Canidae: Wild Dogs of Michigan***

Saturday, December 9th, 11:00 AM

Learn about the wild dogs that call Michigan home. From wolves to coyotes to foxes we'll talk all about their incredible lives.

## ***Meet the Critters***

Sunday, December 10th, 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.

## ***Natural Ornament Making***

Saturday, December 16th, 1:00 PM

Get ready for the holiday season by making your own natural ornament to help decorate your home. Supplies will be provided. Fee: \$5.00 (members \$3.00).

## ***Lapeer County Christmas Bird Count at Seven Ponds***

Saturday, December 16th, 8:00 AM

Join in on this nationwide National Audubon Society bird survey by helping count birds at Seven Ponds.

## ***Rabbits of the World***

Sunday, December 17th, 1:00 PM

Sit in on this adult lecture on the rabbits of the world! We will focus mainly on rabbits/hares found in Michigan and then branch out into species and rabbit legends from around the world.

## ***End of the Year Walk***

Saturday, December 23rd, 10:00 AM

Let's take a walk before the end of the year and say goodbye to 2023 in the best way... by marveling at nature!

## ***New Year Hike***

Saturday, December 30th, 2:00 PM

Time to welcome 2024! What better way to celebrate another year than taking a brisk walk through nature.

## ***Holiday Closures***

Sunday, December 24 - Monday, December 25

Sunday, December 31 - Monday, January 1

# January

## ***Nature Journaling: Collections***

Saturday, January 6th, 1:00 PM

Journaling is a great way to relax and be creative. For this program we will explore our extensive collections. Bring your favorite journal and curiosity. We will provide the art supplies.

## ***Tower Tour***

Sunday, January 7th, 2:00 PM

Let's go climb every tower at Seven Ponds! For this program we'll explore Paul's Woods, Earl's Prairie, and the North 80.

## ***Winter Survival***

Saturday, January 13th, 10:00 AM

Have you ever wondered what you would do if you found yourself lost in the woods in the middle of winter? What would you do to survive until help arrived? Come test your skills and learn some tips and tricks to survive the harsh winter days and nights.

## ***Snowshoeing***

Sunday, January 14th, 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.

## ***Tracks and Signs***

Saturday, January 20th, 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.

## ***Winter Story Hour***

Sunday, January 21st, 2:00 PM

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

## ***Winterfest***

Saturday, January 27, 10:00 AM-3:00 PM

See Winterfest event flier, page 4



# February

## **Explore the Collections**

Saturday, February 3rd, 2:00 PM

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



## **Family Trivia**

Saturday, February 17th, 2:00 PM

Looking for an opportunity to show off your nature knowledge? Grab your family and head to the nature center! Teams can be no more than 4 people (if you have more than that consider splitting into two teams for some friendly competition) and prizes will be provided for our Top 3 teams!

## **Winter Scavenger Hunt**

Saturday, February 24th, 1:00-4:00 PM

Look high and look low. There is much to find at Seven Ponds in the snow. Grab your family and/or friends and see if you can find everything on the list.

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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).

### **LIFE UNDERGROUND**

Wednesday, January 17th, 1:00-3:00 pm

Grades K-2 and Grades 3-6

There is a whole world under our feet! This world is full of giant and microscopic critters, plants, rocks, water, fungus, and more. We will spend the afternoon investigating this world; figuring out what soil is, who lives there and how, and how it all works together. This will be a hands-on lesson inside the nature center, and will include using many science tools like magnifying glasses and microscopes.

### **SOLAR SCIENCE**

Wednesday, February 21st, 1:00-3:00 pm

Grades K-2 and Grades 3-6

Our sun is an amazing star, and our planet depends on the sun's light and heat to make our world work. Through investigations and experiments, learners will explore what the sun is, how we depend on it, and how it is used by us and the wild animals and plants.

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## **Knee-High Naturalist Classes**

### **Fridays**

**10:00 - 11:30 am**

**Fee: \$7.00 per child**

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.**

**Please dress for the weather!**

**Winter** ~ December 15

**Nighttime** ~ January 19

**Tracks** ~ February 16

**Spring** ~ March 22

**Fish** ~ April 19

**Baby Animals** ~ May 17

# Winterfest!

Saturday, January 27<sup>th</sup> 2024

10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Join us for our annual winter fun day!

There will be hotdogs for roasting over a fire, lawn games, ice cutting, ice skating, a snowman building competition, crafts, and interpretive walks outside. There will also be gingerbread with lemon sauce and brownies available for purchase.

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



It's gonna be a hoot!