



# Heron Tracks

The Quarterly Newsletter of Seven Ponds Nature Center

VOLUME 57 NUMBER 4 • WINTER EDITION • DECEMBER 2024—FEBRUARY 2025

## A Peaceful Grove

Article by Madison Christol

Imagine you are walking through a forest. You come upon a shady spot to rest and take a seat against the rough bark of a tall tree. A fast-moving stream provides a soft soundtrack as it flows over and around rocks, making its winding way through the woods. A snake slithers along the stream bank, right past your foot, surely looking for a tasty meal. Fish swim in a small but deep pool surrounded by moss-covered boulders and scatter when your shadow falls over them. You look up and notice the sun's rays shining gently through deep green needles. Birds are calling from within the branches. A spooked deer turns and runs into the forest, its bright white tail raised as it disappears from view. You've found yourself in a grove of eastern hemlock trees (*Tsuga canadensis*). Take a minute to look at them. Their needles reach out in all directions. You notice they're short and flat with a little stem attaching them to the branch. If you take a closer look you'll see that they have two parallel white stripes on the underside. The trees stretch above you, the largest among them reaching seventy feet into the sky. Cones hang down from their branches and you reach out to touch one. A papery texture meets your skin and you notice how small they are. Eastern hemlocks are long-lived and slow-growing trees. These very trees have been here for hundreds of years. The oldest of them could be celebrating its 800th birthday soon. They've seen many things over the years: the stream changing course, countless generations of squirrels and turkeys growing up in and under their branches, and humans with tools creating a trail to this very spot. What a wondrous place nature is!

The scene I have described to you is one I found myself in many times as I grew up. Eastern hemlocks stretch all the way from northern Georgia to southern Canada. Their other common names include Canada hemlock and hemlock spruce. These trees are part of the pine family. They grow all throughout the Great Lakes region, though not as abundantly as maples or pines. Imagine my surprise when I stumbled upon a patch of them in Seven Ponds Nature Center's very own Jonathan Woods. These trees prefer acidic, well-draining soils. Saplings can survive in near constant shade for years until they grow

tall enough to breach the understory. The best place to look for them is often on north-facing slopes that lead down to waterways.

Eastern hemlocks are stream protectors. Their roots stabilize soil and fortify stream banks. These roots also act as a filter for runoff and their presence has been linked to improved water quality downstream. Their long branches and flat needles provide shade that lower stream temperatures which is beneficial for trout, aquatic insects, and the elusive eastern hellbender. The National Wildlife Federation says eastern hemlocks provide habitat for over 120 different species of fish, mammals, birds, insects, reptiles, and amphibians. During the winter, they keep their needles which makes them the perfect place for a bobcat to take shelter from a snowstorm. Black bears use their grand trunks and root balls as hibernation hideaways. Pileated woodpeckers make their homes in the soft wood. Goldfinches build nests and lay their eggs on steady branches. Other trees like white



## Reflections...

Looking at our roster of members, I see that we have reached the one-thousand-member mark. As a recipient of this newsletter, you are one of them – thank you!

There are many benefits you may enjoy as a member. Let's take a look:

*Members are welcome to explore the grounds from dawn to dusk every day of the year, even when we're closed on Mondays and holidays.*

*Members may launch their canoe, kayak, or stand-up paddleboard from our Treetop Pond dock.*

*Members receive a 10% discount on most items in the Rookery Gift Shop.*

*Members receive a discounted price on many programs and classes.*

*Members receive the Heron Tracks newsletter quarterly.*

*Members enjoy book loan privileges in our nature library.*

*Members have facility rental opportunities.*

*Members may register for field tours in advance of the non-member general public.*

*Members receive an invitation to our annual members-only Holiday Auction & Christmas Party.*

*Members have access to dozens of other nature centers around Michigan and the U.S. through a reciprocal benefits program.*

Beyond all of these wonderful benefits, members have the satisfaction of knowing that their membership dues help support a high-quality non-profit organization that has served its community for more than 55 years. And we thank you! Hopefully, when your membership expiration date comes around, you'll take a minute to renew. There are so many good reasons to do so.

We love our members!

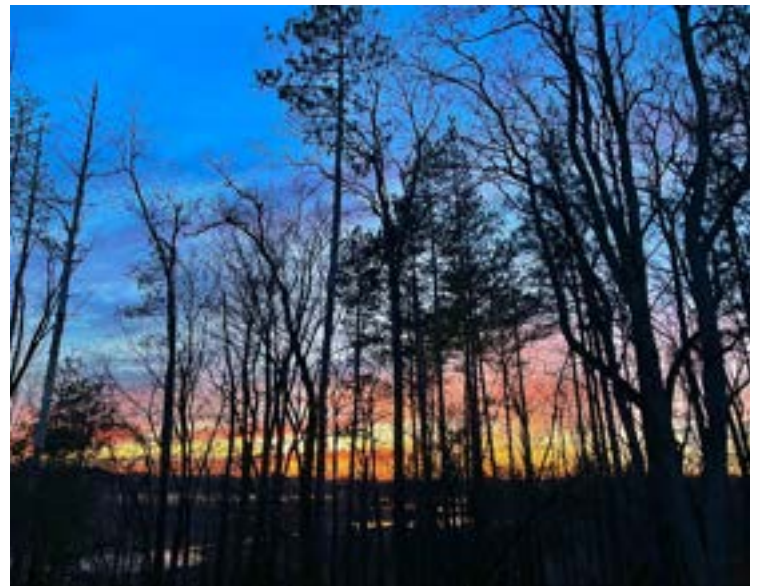
Daryl Bernard  
Executive Director

## 2024 Year-end Special Gifts Campaign

Recently you received our 2024 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.



## *Heron Tracks*

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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:**

**Naturalists:**

**Weekday Receptionist & Gift Shop Manager:**

**Weekend Receptionist:**

**Maintenance - Buildings & Grounds:**

**Daryl Bernard**

**Carrie Spencer**

**Amy Sadler**

**Adrianna Allen, Madison Christol**

**Gina Stoldt**

**Damian Goidich**

**Del Hunsinger**

pine, sugar maple, red oak, and yellow birch grow in the same soil.

These trees have a variety of uses for human life as well. According to the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, Native Americans use the cambium (the growing part of a tree trunk) in soups and other foods. The needles make a tea that is high in vitamin C. Settlers used the tannins in the tree to soften leather. Today, we use the tree for pulp to be turned into paper. Their groves provide a haven for hikers, anglers, and hunters alike. White-tailed deer, ruffed grouse, brook trout, rainbow trout, and brown trout tempt those looking to walk away with a meal. Trails that wind through hemlock stands are less susceptible to erosion than those that follow empty riparian corridors. Hikers and backpackers often find themselves seeking shade during hot summer days, or watching snowflakes blanket branches during winter months.

Eastern hemlocks are facing a worrying threat all throughout their range. Hemlock woolly adelgid (*Adelges tsugae*) is a non-native invasive species that spells big trouble for forests. It was first found in the United States nearly 80 years ago in Virginia. These aphid-like insects appear as small, white balls at the base of the needles. The actual insect resides inside the fluffy coating and uses it as a means of protection. They infest hemlock trees and cause severe canopy damage, usually leading to the death of the tree within a decade. What are they after? The sap that hemlocks produce. Hemlock woolly adelgids feed on the tree's sap at the base of the flat needles, which causes them to gray and detach from the branch. Without its needles the tree

cannot survive. This photo, taken by the Hemlock Restoration Initiative, shows what an infested branch looks like up close. Unfortunately, outbreaks of hemlock woolly adelgid have been found in several Michigan counties. They are most common in the southwest portion of the state, but have spread to a few northern and eastern counties as well. According to the State of Michigan, infestations can be moved to nearby stands by wildlife, wind, and humans (clothing, vehicles, backpacking gear, transporting firewood, and improper disposal of tree trimmings). If you find hemlock woolly adelgid on your property or on public land, please report it to the Midwest Invasive Species Information Network online.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park, an International Biosphere Reserve, boasts the greatest number of eastern hemlock trees of any national park. However, it is not immune to the effects of the hemlock woolly adelgid. Park scientists are at the forefront of solving this problem by testing several different control methods including insecticidal soap, injecting insecticide directly into the soil around the base of the tree, and introducing predatory beetles that only feed on the non-native, invasive species. With so many ways to treat the adelgids, scientists remain optimistic for the future.

Some of my fondest memories have taken place in the North Georgia mountains under the watchful presence of giant eastern hemlocks. I hope that the next time you find yourself among these complex trees, whether it be the first time or the one hundredth time, you allow yourself a moment to take in their majesty and grandeur.



# Volunteer News

## On the Trail

We want to extend many thanks to our wonderful and dedicated volunteers who helped with a variety of tasks in and around the nature center this past fall:

- **Claudine Zach** – for taking exceptional care of the critters
- **Marianna Fitzgerald** and **Bruce Childs** – for their continued dedication to the library project
- **Mark McBride** – for assisting with periodic computer tech support
- **Chris Fillmore** – for tackling several grounds and building maintenance projects
- **Travis Christy** – for helping out during Invasive Species Work Day
- **Bob Albrecht** – for cleaning and maintaining the fish tank in Critter Corner
- **ASNATS Kathy Cole, Nancy Kautz** and **Marianna Fitzgerald** – for helping with our school groups
- **Michelle Maust** – for running the Pint-Sized Explorers program
- **Madison Amy & Meryl Johnson** – for coming out to plant trees with Daryl
- **The Stingers** – for holding their Annual Bake Sale and a Free Book “Sale” during *Party at the Ponds!*
- **Ron Schank, Nancy Kautz, Kathy Cole, Marianna Fitzgerald, Jeanette Farley, Ron Kyle** and **Paul Luontonen** – for their help during *Party at the Ponds!*

We want to thank everyone who came out and helped at this year’s *Enchanted Woodland* event. The perfect autumn weather set the tone and our hard-working volunteers pulled it all together. We could not hold this popular event without you!

- **Miranda Stoldt** and **Kat Stoldt** - as characters and carving pumpkins
- **Kathy Cole, Jayme Fields** and **Cynthia Stroebel** - as characters
- **Marianna Fitzgerald, Nancy Kautz, Michele McLean-Rose, Paula LaFountain, Bruce Young, Polly Young** and **Karen Blaszyk** - as fireflies, guiding the groups along the lighted path
- **Anita Spencer** - as greeter/tokens and carving pumpkins
- **Julia Raymond** and **Chris Baker** - for serving cider and donuts
- **Allen Rosenbalm** and **Tammy Kalish** - for helping with crafts and carving pumpkins
- **Melissa Spencer Feehan** - for face-painting

## 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 Amy Sadler at 810-796-3200 or [asadler@sevenponds.org](mailto:asadler@sevenponds.org).

### DECEMBER

*No class this month*

Enjoy the holiday season!

### JANUARY 16

*Trivia Day & Potluck*

Put your thinking cap on and join us for a round of nature trivia.

### FEBRUARY 20

*Winter Buds*

It can be challenging to identify plants during the winter months, so we’ll teach you how.

If you have a heart for service and community, we are always looking for volunteers like you! Please reach out to Amy Sadler at [asadler@sevenponds.org](mailto:asadler@sevenponds.org), fill out the Volunteer Interest form on our website, or call the nature center at 810-796-3200.

## 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 Mike Champagne***

- Alex & Catherine Champagne
- Gayle, Alex, & Catherine Champagne
- Yolanda & Charlie Turner
- Janet Bauer

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

- Dave Osmer

## ***In memory of William Keller***

- Lori Nowicki

## ***In memory of Bonnie Eckersley***

- Steve & Carol Larzelere-Kellermann

## ***Buy-a-Tree in memory of Mike Champagne***

- Kathy Cole

## ***Buy-a-Tree in memory of Marjorie Steiner***

- DAR - Nipissing Chapter

## ***Buy-a-Tree in memory of Edward Loyal Cantarella***

- Sigrid L. Grace



## **Wandering with the Birds**

*By Daryl Bernard*

I recently attended the *Yellow Rails and Rice Festival* in southwest Louisiana. Rails are small birds that inhabit marshes, and there are seven species in the United States (Sora, Virginia Rail, Clapper Rail, King Rail, Ridgway's Rail, Yellow Rail, and Black Rail). Most populations of this family are declining due to loss of wetland habitat, and all rails are secretive, elusive, and challenging to see.

The festival provides an opportunity to view rails during the harvesting of rice, as three species (Sora, Virginia Rail, and Yellow Rail) utilize the wet rice fields prior to harvesting. As the combine works the field, rails flush and fly to other fields or nearby marshes, providing birders with a rare opportunity to see these reluctant fliers take flight.

During the festival, I had the unique opportunity to participate in a survey for Black Rails – considered one of the most elusive birds in the world. During the winter, Black Rails inhabit coastal marshes in the southeast United States. Due to many factors, Black Rail populations have declined severely over the past century, and although it's difficult to know precisely how many Black Rails remain, their total population is considered to be about 3,000.

We met with researchers near the marsh after dark, donned our headlamps, and forged into the darkness armed with hand nets and spotlights. Working as a unit, the eight of us dragged a line weighted with milk jugs containing rocks, one person on each end of the rope and the rest of us following closely behind, hoping to spot one of the small birds fleeing from the dragline. If we were to spot a rail, we would close in on it and (hopefully) capture it in our nets. Measurements and other data would then be taken, and the bird banded prior to releasing.

It was a hot, sweaty job, with hordes of insects encircling our faces as we moved slowly through the challenging terrain of the marsh. After over two hours, our considerable effort produced a single Yellow Rail and no Black Rails. Surveys in nearby marshes on two other nights did successfully capture and band a total of four Black Rails, but it's clear that the number of these endangered rails in Louisiana is very low.

While it was a privilege to participate in this important research program, it was also disheartening to know that such an amazing bird is in such a precipitous decline. Sometimes you don't find what you're looking for when you're out there, wandering with the birds.

## Dispatches from the Field

Three field tours were recently led by Seven Ponds staff.

In May, a group of birders ventured to the **Black Hills and Badlands** region of western South Dakota. Exploring the area, the group enjoyed encounters with over 100 species of birds as well as many of the mammals that make this area their home, including bison, mule deer, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, coyotes, badgers, and prairie dogs. A day trip to Devils Tower National Monument in neighboring Wyoming was an added bonus on this very scenic birding tour.

In June, Seven Ponds led a group to the far reaches of northern Michigan for a natural history field tour, where they explored the tip of the Keweenaw Peninsula around **Copper Harbor** and spent several days at **Isle Royale National Park**. Majestic wolves were heard, massive moose were seen, rugged trails were hiked, and Superior waters were paddled. On Isle Royale, the group stayed at the Rock Harbor Lodge, which provided convenient access to daily adventures afield.

More recently, in late September, a group of birders gathered in **Cape May, New Jersey** – a legendary birding location famous for its congregation of migrating songbirds, shorebirds, and raptors. We spent time on the Cape May Hawkwatch platform, the Morning Flight deck, and the Avalon Seawatch, as well as many other local Cape May hotspots. One morning the group boarded the Osprey to enjoy a saltmarsh safari by boat. During five full days of birding, we tallied a total of 170 species of birds.

Seven Ponds Nature Center has organized birding and natural history field tours to destinations throughout North America and beyond for more than three decades. These field tours generate important revenue for the nature center which supports our educational programs and land stewardship. The impact of field tours goes far beyond revenue, however. Participants are immersed in amazing natural landscapes where nature is experienced close-up and first-hand. Relationships are forged, and many tour participants come home lifelong friends, nature being the common bond. Non-members become members, and many tour veterans become some of the nature center's most devout supporters.

See the program flier in this edition of *Heron Tracks* and check the nature center's website for details about upcoming birding and natural history field tours in 2025. We have three birding field tours and one natural history field tour planned for the coming year.

Come and travel with us!



# Around the Center

## **Tree Planted in Memory of Mike Champagne**

On a beautiful October day more than sixty friends gathered at Seven Ponds to remember Mike Champagne, executive director at Seven Ponds from 1992 to 2017. People shared fun stories, favorite memories, and the many things they learned from Mike during their adventures with him. We then planted a nice beech tree (Mike's favorite!) in the nature center's front yard. It was a simple but fitting way for Mike's Seven Ponds family to remember this special person and all that he gave to the nature center.

## **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 413 miles, smashing our previous staff record of 308 miles, set in 2023. We also led Tuesday and Thursday treks around the trails at Seven Ponds, where visitors joined us and 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!

## **Corks & Caps 2025 - Save the Date!**

The 2025 edition of our annual Corks & Caps Fundraiser will be held **Saturday, July 12** 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 helps make everything we do possible. Be sure to mark your 2025 calendars now so you won't miss this exciting event.

## **2024 Nest Box Report**

Here at Seven Ponds we have some amazing volunteers who perform nest box monitoring on our 88 different nest boxes each year. The volunteers are given their own section of boxes to monitor once a week from April through early August. Once the nesting season has come to a close those volunteers return their data sheets to the nature center and we enter the data into Nest Watch. Nest Watch is The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's citizen science network for nest monitoring. All the data that is collected and submitted to Cornell helps scientists gain a better understanding of nesting patterns and how birds are doing collectively. Our nests are primarily inhabited by Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*), Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*), and Northern House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*). Overall this year our data shows a little over 200 birds fledged from the nest boxes, which is an excellent total! If you are interested in becoming a Citizen Scientist or would like to know how to add nest boxes to your own property, feel free to call the nature center at 810-796-3200.

## **Forest of the Future**

Our fall tree planting is complete. This year we planted 25 native trees - all tamaracks (*Larix laricina*). All were planted in the wet lowlands that border Treetop Pond and Little Pond near the A-Frame Bridge boardwalk, with each tree encircled with protective fencing to ward off browsing deer. These plantings were all made possible through our "buy-a-tree" program. Special thanks to volunteers Madison Amy, Meryl Johnson, and the sixth graders from Dryden Elementary School for helping with the planting.

## **Eagle Scout Project Completed**

Dryden resident Cooper Schatman, a senior at Almont High School, recently completed his Eagle Scout project at Seven Ponds. Cooper, from Troop 130, replaced an old bridge in Paul's Woods. The former bridge was in need of replacement, and Cooper's bridge is wider, with ramps on either end and siderails. In addition to being a much nicer bridge for our visitors, this wider bridge will allow us to drive a utility vehicle closer to the A-Frame Bridge so we can more efficiently deliver wood chips to the wet trail in that section of Paul's Woods. We truly appreciate the effort of Cooper and his fellow scouts for completing this project at Seven Ponds. Be sure to check out the new bridge next time you're hiking at Seven Ponds!

## **Holiday Giving Tree**

Don't forget to stop by the holiday giving tree for the Critter Corner! The nature center houses live reptile, amphibian, and fish species that call Michigan home. These critters play an essential role, providing both children and adults with an opportunity to learn first-hand about our fellow animals that live in the wetlands, forests, and prairies of Seven Ponds. We love our ambassador animals, so we strive to give them the best possible care. That's where you come in! The holiday giving tree will have tags with suggested donation amounts to help buy food, equipment, and supplies for our animal friends. Grab a tag and see Gina or Damian at the front desk to make a donation. "Ggriiiiihhllll!" (That's tree frog for "Thank you!")





We carry a nice selection of puzzles and games which make a great gift for the whole family. Another wonderful family gift is a membership to Seven Ponds! Family memberships are \$50.00 and are good for a whole year of outdoor fun. Stop in and ask about how you can purchase a Gift Membership.

Come on in and see all the other gift options, from jewelry to books and so much more! The gift shop is open 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM Tuesday through Sunday for your shopping pleasure.

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

The Rookery Gift Shop is the perfect place to finish up your holiday shopping. You are sure to find something for everyone while avoiding all the crowds and traffic you would find at the mall!

A pair of Vortex binoculars is a gift that will be appreciated year after year. We offer options from the Bantam 6.5 X 32, which is a great starter pair for the young naturalist in your life, to the Diamondback 8 x 42 for the serious outdoor enthusiast. Vortex binoculars are excellent and they come with a lifetime warranty.



### **Seven Ponds Nature Center**

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



# Winter Programs

December 2024 -  
February 2025

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 (non-members \$5.00). **Please register online.**

### ***Reptiles from Around the World***

Tim Muxlow - Muxlow Exotics

SUNDAY, JANUARY 26TH, 2:00 PM

Join Muxlow Exotics as they take us on an adventure around the world to learn about “creepy” and “crawly” reptiles. We will experience the extraordinary during this interactive, live animal program. Don't be afraid, but do prepare to have fun!

### ***Manoomin: The Story of Wild Rice in Michigan***

Barbara J. Barton - Author

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2ND, 2:00 PM

Barbara Barton will take us on a journey through the rich history and tradition of wild rice in Michigan, and its importance to the Anishinaabek people who live here. She will focus on the history, culture, biology, economics, and spirituality surrounding this sacred plant. This story weaves between the worlds of the Anishinaabek and the European colonizers, contrasting their different perspectives and divergent relationships with Manoomin.

### ***A Year in the Life of the Chickadee***

Adrianna Allen - Seven Ponds Naturalist

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9TH, 2:00 PM

Come join our banditry! In this program we'll follow the seasonal adventures of our backyard friends, the Black-capped Chickadee. Don't underestimate these common birds; their brains and bravery will surprise you!

### ***Fungi of Michigan***

Lorenzo Lo Piccolo - 20+ Year Fungi Enthusiast

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16TH, 2:00 PM

Did you know that fungi have a kingdom of their own? Come and learn about these intriguing organisms. The program will cover topics such as: introduction into the fungi kingdom, foraging tips and sustainability, fungi identification and safety, and discussions about Michigan specific species. Lorenzo will have fungi samples to aid with the 90-minute presentation.

### ***Raptors of Michigan***

Wildlife Recovery Association

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23RD, 2:00 PM

Hawks, owls, eagles, oh my! Do you want to learn all about the raptors that make Michigan their home? Join us as Wildlife Recovery gives us a chance to see these amazing birds up close and personal.



# December

## ***First Day of Winter Walk***

Saturday, December 21st, 2:00 PM

Let's hit the trails and welcome this new season with open arms. We'll take a relaxing stroll and talk about all things winter. Drop-ins are welcome.

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

Saturday, December 28th, 8:00 AM

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

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

Sunday, December 29th, 2:00 PM

Come along on a stroll! We'd love to celebrate another year of stewardship, conservation, and community with you at Seven Ponds. Drop-ins are welcome.

## ***Holiday Closures***

Tuesday, December 24 - Wednesday, December 25

Tuesday, December 31 - Wednesday, January 1

# January

## ***Explore the Collections***

Saturday, January 4th, 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!

## ***Winter Craft Hour***

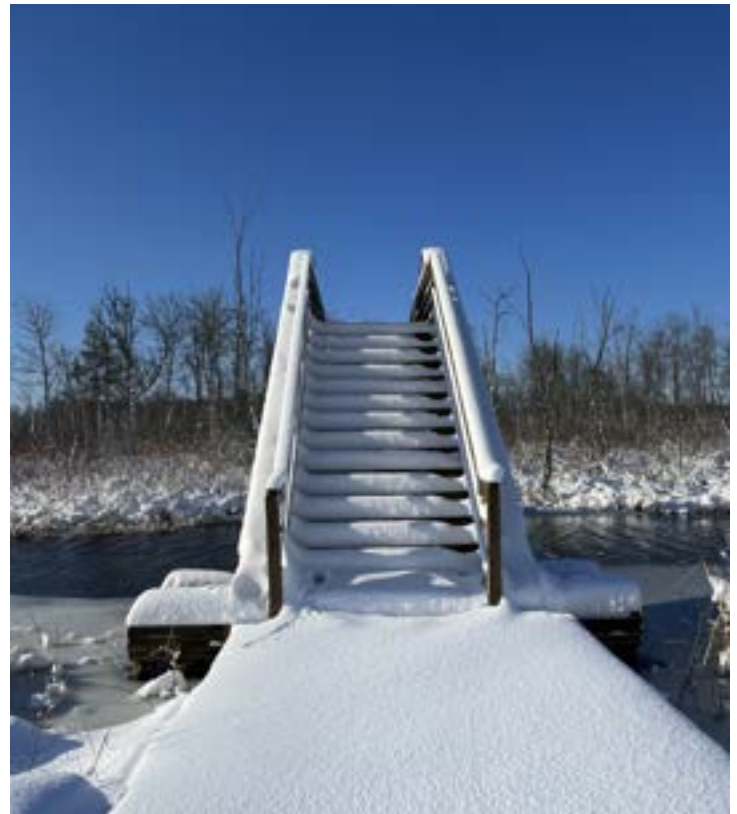
Sunday, January 19th, 2:00 PM

Is being more crafty one of your resolutions for the new year? Come out and make some fun nature crafts! This program is best for participants over the age of 7. Registration for this program closes on Wednesday, January 15th.

## ***Winterfest***

Saturday, January 25, 10:00 AM-3:00 PM

See Winterfest event flier for details (insert)



# February

## ***Environmental Science Merit Badge Day***

Saturday, February 1st, 10:00 AM-3:30 PM

Scouts will learn about environmental science through observation and hands-on activities. They will leave having completed all of the requirements to earn their Environmental Science Merit Badge. Scouts will be given a 30 minute break for lunch. **Scouts must complete requirements 1, 2, and 6 prior to the program.**

## ***Winter Story Hour***

Wednesday, February 5th, 10:00 AM

Isn't winter the best time to curl up with a good book? Join us for a cozy winter-themed story and crafts! This program is best for children from 3 years old to 6 years old.

## ***Citizen Science Saturday***

Saturday, February 8th, 1:00 PM

Would you like to be a scientist? We will discuss how you can participate in winter citizen science projects.

## ***Winter Woody Plant ID***

Saturday, February 22nd, 1:00 PM

Have you ever wondered how to identify trees and shrubs in the winter? Join our naturalist for a hike as we talk bark and buds!

# 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).

## THINK LIKE A SCIENTIST

Wednesday, December 18th, 1:00-3:00 pm

Grades K-2 and Grades 3-6

Homeschoolers will “think like a scientist” during this program by problem-solving some of nature’s mysteries. To help us gather data and problem solve, we will use many different science tools like: microscopes, hand lens, measuring tapes, thermometers, stopwatches, and more.

## COLORS OF NATURE

Wednesday, January 15th, 1:00-3:00 pm

Grades K-2 and Grades 3-6

During this time of the year many think Michigan is very plain with only black, gray, or white colors in nature, but color is all around us, even in winter. Through observational activities and hands-on learning we will discover where all the color is, and how color is important to the natural world.

## ASTRONOMY

Wednesday, February 19th, 1:00-3:00 pm

Grades K-2 and Grades 3-6

Throughout history, humans have used the night sky to help them understand the world, and also as entertainment. Today we will learn all about the stars, planets, and moon through storytelling and activities.

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## Knee-high Naturalists

**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!**

**Temperature** ~ December 20

**Hibernation** ~ January 17

**Food** ~ February 21

## Pint-sized Explorers

**Wednesdays 10:00 - 10:45 am**

**Fee: \$7.00 per child**

Pint-sized Explorers (1-2 years old) will have fun exploring nature with their adults. During this special time, toddlers and their adults will be outside exploring nature with the help of stories, songs, activities, and nature discovery. Please make arrangements for your other children.

**Space limited. Online registration required.  
Please dress for the weather!**

**Evergreen Trees** ~ December 11

**Animal Tracks** ~ January 8

**Ice** ~ February 12

# \*\*\*2025 SEVEN PONDS FIELD TOURS\*\*\*

## **North Georgia: Waterfalls & Wildflowers**

**April 6-11, 2025**

*A natural history tour with Seven Ponds Nature Center*

Explore the amazing landscapes of north Georgia with Seven Ponds naturalists!

## **Alabama & Mississippi Gulf Coast Migration Mania**

**April 24-May 1, 2025**

*A birding tour with Seven Ponds Nature Center and Nature Travel Specialists*

Daughin Island, Mobile Bay Delta, Gulf Coast wildlife refuges, and more!

## **Mountain West "Most Wanted" Birding Field Tour**

**July 13-20, 2025**

*A birding tour with Seven Ponds Nature Center and Pitta Nature Tours*

Utah, Wyoming, Nevada, and Idaho for birds such as Flammulated Owl, Black Swift, Himalayan Snowcock, Cassia Crossbill, Calliope Hummingbird, and more!

## **Oregon Birding Adventure**

**September 15-22, 2025**

*A birding tour with Seven Ponds Nature Center and Paradise Birding*

Explore the beautiful Pacific coast, the lush temperate rain forest, the stunning Cascade Mountains, and the wide-open Juniper-Sage habitat!

Join Seven Ponds staff as we explore beautiful wild places. Let us do all the planning and take care of the trip logistics while you come along for a grand adventure!

Registration for both April field tours opens Tuesday, January 7, 2025.

Space is limited and tours often fill quickly.

Visit the nature center's website for full field tour itineraries and registration information.

