



Nature Notes



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF DARKE COUNTY PARKS



September – November 2011

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OUR MISSION

The Mission of Darke County Park District is to acquire and preserve land areas possessing special natural and historical features and to manage and maintain these resources for the benefit of its residents through appropriate educational and passive recreational programs and activities.

PRAIRIE DAYS

Saturday, September 24, 10 - 4pm

Sunday, September 25, 12 - 4pm

Shawnee Prairie Preserve

You're invited to Prairie Days! Come enjoy a weekend celebrating prairies and the pioneer way of life! See apple butter being made over the fire, take a horse-drawn wagon ride, play children's pioneer games, compete in foot races and seed-spitting contests, view local artists' works, listen to and enjoy live music and entertainment. Enjoy the Truest Lies Ever

Told from a wandering Longhunter, a unique production by the Civic Theatre or just sit-a-spell with our 200-year-old pioneer volunteers in the Log House. Try your hand at candle-making, tinsmithing and more! Take a stroll through the 18th century encampment and watch a tomahawk & knife throwing competition. And what is a festival without food?! Participate in a pie-baking or pie-eating contest. Take a load off as you enjoy fresh produce from Downing's Fruit Farm. Try your luck at the annual basket raffle, and so much more! Admission and parking are FREE.



BUTTERFLY DAY

Saturday, September 3, 1 - 4pm

Shawnee Prairie Preserve



Learn about our local Lepidoptera! Flutter into the Nature Center and explore the numerous butterfly displays, exhibits, and activities. Make sure you check out our Butterfly Tent, housing many species for the afternoon. Discover hands-on butterfly activities and crafts for the kids! Join a tour of our gardens and learn which plants will attract more butterflies to your garden. Paint a flower pot and plant some milkweed to encourage butterflies to visit your backyard.

THE GREAT PUMPKIN HUNT

Saturday, October 22, 1-3pm

Shawnee Prairie Preserve

Pre-registration Required / Fee: \$6

Wander through the woods at Shawnee Prairie Preserve in search of October's most popular color: ORANGE! Enjoy this unique, fun-for-the-whole-family alternative to scary Halloween events. Spend the afternoon exploring the woods at Shawnee Prairie on a scavenger hunt filled with fall goodies. After the hunt, head inside to paint your pumpkin.

NEW* Hey Kids! Be sure to wear your BEST Costume *NEW



FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK...

Darke County Parks recently lost a true Friend of the Park District. John Ball was a shining example of what volunteerism is about. He understood how important it is, to not only the Park District but also to the personal satisfaction in the life of the volunteer. When I first arrived in Darke County in



December of 2002, John was one of the first volunteers to introduce himself and offer his assistance to help me become acquainted. John served on the Friends of the Darke County Parks Board of Trustees, the Endowment Committee, and was always available to volunteer and fill in where needed, even filling in at the front desk to answer the phone on an occasional Saturday afternoon. I remember John most vividly sitting in the shade with his hat on, welcoming people to the Darke County Parks Annual Prairie Days event as they would board the horse and wagon tour for a ride around Shawnee Prairie Preserve. He understood the people of Darke County and especially those families that would visit the Nature Center at Shawnee Prairie. He would comment on how important this facility was to the youth so that they were introduced to the precious natural and cultural treasures of Darke County. He called them our keepers and stewards of tomorrow. John's insight into life was always welcome. I was continually amazed at his calm demeanor and how infectious that calmness was to others. This was truly an asset to be noted. His humorous wit always showed when most needed, especially at long drawn out or contentious Friends of the Parks meetings, when he would shout "Motion to Adjourn" just at the right time.

As a personal note, on countless occasions John and I would have lunch together, usually on Thursdays, and at one of the diners in town that John liked to frequent. He always insisted that it was his turn to pick up the tab. I learned not argue that point. Our conversation was not always related to Park District business but on most occasions it was about leadership in life. His stories of serving in two wars were always inspiring and never without meaning. I will miss those lunches. If my memory serves me, John was a paratrooper and very proud of that fact. John has made that final "jump" and even though he is gone from amongst us, his teachings and camaraderie will linger for generations to come. I salute my friend for his service to Country and Community.

Roger M. Van Frank
Director

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KINDNESS...

Monetary Donations

Midwest Draft Horse & Mule Assoc. -Room Usage	Tom & Suzie Brown -Room Usage
Mote & Associates -Room Usage	Top Notch 4-H Club -Room Usage
John & Donna O'Brien -Room Usage	Family Health -Room Usage
Darke County Association of Realtors -Room Usage	Miami Valley Council #444 Boy Scouts -Room Usage
Greenville Area Dog Club -Room Usage	Ohio Auditor's Assoc. -Room Usage
Kent Peacock -Misc. Donation	S.I.G.N.S. -In Appreciation for Program Given
Darke Co. Steam Threshers Assoc. -Room Usage	Rebecca Reier -In Appreciation for Civil War Camp
	Tina White / Letterboxers Group -Room Usage

Memorials / Honorariums

"In Loving Memory" of John Ball

-Robert & Carol Preston, Steve & Eileen Litchfield, Jeff & Mandy Martin, Jean Smith, Joyce Mauro & Maria Wogoman, Virginia Stuckey, Becky Clifton, Stephen & Carole Schafer, Susan Gray, Eagle Print/Dennis Klausing, Deb Shiverdecker

Programming Materials

Divided trays for kitchen or crafts- <i>Alan Stansky</i>	Prairie Seed - <i>Tami Yount</i>
25lb bag of sugar for Hummingbirds- <i>John & Patti Clifford</i>	Material for Rugs - <i>Ed & Joan Leighner</i>
Tree Service at Winchester Ave - <i>Fitzwater Tree & Lawn Care</i>	2 Sheets of Plywood, Nylon Rope, 10 rolls of contractor's Paper for Prairie Days Crafts - <i>Lowes (Mike & Gina)</i>
Kitchen Aid Crock Pots & Coffee Maker - <i>Kitchen Aid</i>	Kitchen Silverware - <i>Paul & Nola Coning</i>
10 Cases of Water for Camps - <i>Sherry Marten</i>	Pioneer Dresses - <i>Haley Marker</i>
Bottled Water- <i>Bill and Cindy Ellis</i>	Beef Tongue for Programs - <i>Kim and Karen Droesch</i>

Donations for the Bike Trail Fund

Gettysburg Lions Club -
Bike Trail Donation

Grants

Darke County Endowment for the Arts -
Funding towards Elixir (band for Prairie Days 2011)

YOUR GUIDE TO GROUP PROGRAMS



NATURE'S CLASSROOM FIELDTRIPS

Our school field trip programs are designed to enhance and supplement Ohio's science curriculum. Each program topic addresses current ODOE Science Grade Level Indicators and the Science Benchmarks by Academic Content Standards. There is a fee of \$3 per student. For more details, please call 937.548.0165 and ask to speak with a Naturalist.

- K Making Sense of Nature
Exploring the natural world using the senses
- K What's Wild
Understanding *living* things and their basic needs
- 1 Resources; Naturally
Defining natural resources and conservation
- 1-2 A Look at Habitats
Ohio's animals and their basic needs
- 2 Through the Seasons
Seasonal changes and weather influences
- 3 Life Cycles
Understanding plant and animal birth, life, growth and survival

- 3 Our Active Earth
Investigating the processes that shape the Earth
- 4 Positively Plants
Plant structure, function and life cycles are explored
- 4 The Wonders of Weather
Predicting and measuring the components of weather
- 5 It's All Connected
Tracing the flow of energy through natural systems
- 4-6 Wading Into Wetlands
The function, value and biotic diversity of wetlands

NATURALIST IN THE CLASSROOM

Schools participating in the Nature's Classroom program are invited to schedule a visit to your class by a Parks' Naturalist. Topics include a number of natural history themes focused on native wildlife. Classroom programs are normally one class period in length and may include hands-on activities, live animals, a power point program, and other visual aids. There is a fee of \$2 per student if your class hasn't participated in a Nature's Classroom Fieldtrip during the school year.

- K-3 Beautiful Bees & Butterflies
Learn insect anatomy, life cycle & insects' importance to plants.
- K-3 Birds, Birds, Birds
Get hands on with beaks, feathers, and bird food.
- K-3 Ready for Winter?
How Ohio's wildlife spend their winter.

- 4-6 Let's Hear it for Herps
The difference between reptiles and amphibians. (includes live animals)
- 4-6 All About Owls
Ohio's owls and their role in the food chain.
- 4-6 Get to Know Mammals
Discover the skulls, furs, and scat of Ohio's mammals.

SCOUTS AND OTHER GROUPS

Darke County Parks' Naturalists are available for weekday, evening and weekend programs for your group. We will work with you to adapt any one of our public or school programs for your group's needs, whether it is a badge requirement, meeting entertainment, or a recruitment event. Programs are usually 1 hour in length and are held at the Nature Center. Some programs are subject to materials fees. For further details, please call 937.548.0165 and ask to speak with a Naturalist.

YOUR GUIDE TO CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

PARENT & PRESCHOOLER ADVENTURES

Parent and Preschooler Adventures is a series of monthly, hour-long programs designed to give parents and their preschoolers an opportunity to investigate nature through hands-on activities, hikes, stories, songs and take-home projects. The "Little Explorers" Wednesday classes are for 2-3 year olds, and the "Seedlings" Thursday classes are for 4-5 year olds. **Pre-registration is required** and each class has a fee of \$2.00.

SEPTEMBER - OH DEER!

Wednesday, September 7 & 14 (2-3 yr. olds); 10-11am

Thursday, September 8 (4-5 yr. olds); 10-11am

Shawnee Prairie Preserve

Let's talk about the white-tailed deer. We will get to feel a deer's coat and antlers. During our hike we'll see if we can see a deer or at least some tracks!



OCTOBER - "A" IS FOR APPLE

Wednesday, October 12 & 26 (2-3 yr. olds); 10-11am

Thursday, October 13 (4-5 yr. olds); 10-11am

Shawnee Prairie Preserve

Spend a crisp fall day outside with your preschooler as we explore under the apple tree. We will talk about different types of apples, how apples grow and of course do an apple craft! We will finish up with some juicy apple treats!



NOVEMBER - TALKIN' TURKEYS

Wednesday, November 9 & 16 (2-3 yr. olds); 10-11am

Thursday, November 10 (4-5 yr. olds); 10-11am

Shawnee Prairie Preserve

We are going to hike the trails and see if we are lucky enough to get a glimpse of a wild turkey! We will talk all about turkeys, from their calls to where they may be hiding in the woods. Come learn about this large and intelligent bird!



PARK P.A.L.S.

Park P.A.L.S. is a series of monthly programs designed for 6-9 year olds interested in nature. P.A.L.S. stands for Practicing And Learning Stewardship. The program's mission is to develop future earth stewards through meaningful educational opportunities and hands-on experiences in the natural world. Programs are usually the second Saturday of every month, and are supervised by staff & adult volunteers. A materials fee of \$3.00 is charged for each program, and pre-registration is required.

SEPTEMBER - A HONEY OF A BEE

Saturday, September 10, 9:30 -12pm; Shawnee Prairie Preserve

"Buzz... Buzz... Buzz...!" What is all that buzzing we hear in the observation hive? We'll spend time exploring the life cycle, functions and the benefits of our local honeybees! We will even get a taste of the sweet honey!



OCTOBER - FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF THE PARK DISTRICT DAY!

Saturday, October 8, 9:30am-12pm; Bridge Street in Gettysburg

PALS, Family and Friends, bring your bike or your walking shoes and join us at the entrance of the bike trail for a fun-filled day! Along the way we'll stop and enjoy several different activities and games! We'll wrap up the day with the yearly awards and grill out!



NOVEMBER - SPIDER STALKING

Saturday, November 5, 9:30 -12pm; Shawnee Prairie Preserve

Join us today and we'll take a closer look at our 8-legged arachnid friends! We'll practice using our spider senses, try not to get caught in a web, and discover the many different ways these amazing predators catch their prey. You will receive a spider field guide to take home!



JUNIOR NATURALISTS

Jr. Naturalists is a series of monthly, two and a half-hour long programs designed to give 10-12 year olds a hands-on introduction to natural resource management. Hikes, work projects, and independent study are all part of this fun-filled nature study club. Programs are held the third or fourth Saturday of every month, and are supervised by staff & adult volunteers. A materials fee of \$4.00 is charged for each program, and pre-registration is **4 required.**

SEPTEMBER - DRAGONS & DAMSELS

Saturday, September 17, 10am-12:30pm; Shawnee Prairie Preserve

We'll spend the morning learning about the fascinating world of Odonata. We'll learn about the most common Dragonflies & Damselflies and then head out to the field to try and locate some for up-close inspection!



OCTOBER - FASCINATING FUNGUS

Saturday, October 22, 10am-12:30pm; Routzong Preserve

Mushrooms! Meet us at Routzong for a hike searching for the colorful world of fungus and mushrooms. We'll search for puffballs, slimes, jellies and shelf mushrooms. Bring a magnifying glass for some up-close views!



NOVEMBER - TRACKING HIGH AND LOW

Saturday, November 12, 10am-12:30pm; Worth Family Preserve

We'll practice our tracking skills as we learn how animals walk and leave signs behind them. After that, we'll head out on the trails searching for clues on who visited the previous night.



YOUR GUIDE TO OUTDOOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

OUTDOOR SKILLS

Have you ever wanted to learn about an outdoor activity, only to realize you did not have the right equipment or someone to help you get started? Here is an easy way to join other outdoor enthusiasts and learn skills that will be yours for a lifetime of fun and enjoyment. These programs put you under the guidance of local experts and put the right equipment in your hands.

Woodland Survival Series

Part One: Firestarting

Thursday, Nov. 3, 6:30pm / Pre-registration required

Fee: \$15 per person / Limit: 12

Not long ago, people knew what to do when an impromptu overnight in the wilderness occurred. Today, these basic skills are lost to much of society. Join us for part one of the series: re-learning firestarting (without matches). This program will be heavily hands-on and will take place rain or shine. Call to reserve your spot today.



CANOEING AND KAYAKING ADVENTURES

While some floats are ideal for beginners, others are more suited to those with experience. Kayak & canoe outings are weather dependent and adjustments may be necessary because of stream conditions. All equipment is provided. Canoe paddlers should register with a partner if possible. Darke County Parks' staff are certified instructors.



ANNUAL FALL COLORS FLOAT

Saturday, October 8, 2pm

Pre-registration required; Fee: \$10 per person

Our last float of the year is always a favorite. Crisp air, islands to explore, the beginnings of changing leaf colors and a great afternoon on Lake Loramie... what more could you ask for?! Call to reserve a canoe for two or solo a kayak (previous kayak experience required). We'll all meet at the Nature Center and carpool to the Lake.

STAYING FIT AND HEALTHY

We all want to lead healthier lives, but sometimes life just gets in the way! Use these programs as an "excuse" to schedule yourself (and family) some outdoor exercise time. Each of these programs focus more on fitness than nature, with everyone moving at their own pace.

HIKE TO HEALTH

Thursday, Sept. 1:

7pm @ Worth Family Nature Preserve

Thursday, Oct. 6:

6pm @ Eidson Woods Preserve

Saturday, Nov. 5:

2pm @ Turkeyfoot Preserve

The weather is beginning to cool off and the bugs aren't bugging us anymore. Join a naturalist and other hikers as we hike at a brisk pace through each park. Enjoy the changing scenery and beautiful colors before winter hits, all while getting a work-out.

Meet at the designated park for each session. For more information or directions, call the Nature Center.



New Paved Trail:

Stay tuned for upcoming bike rides (horse rides adjacent to the pavement) along the paved trail. Currently running from Bradford to Bears Mill Rd., with plans to continue on towards Greenville. Watch the website for the "Name the Trail" Contest!

CANDLELIGHT DINNERS ON THE PRAIRIE

Friday, October 28th, 6pm
Saturday, October 29th, 6pm

Pre-registration Required
Fee: \$30/person or \$50/couple
Fees due: October 21

Step back in time to the 18th Century, for a Candlelight Dinner on the Prairie. This recreation of a late 1700's Log House dinner will allow participants an experience like none other as you are served a home-style meal by our pioneer Log House residents. Sit back and relax as the first course is served. Listen to tales as told by a travelling visitor passing through the Fort Greene Ville area. Assist with the final preparations of the meal as it is prepared and placed over the hearth to bake. Look no further for a unique historic event! Space is limited, please call early.



ART SHOW

Wednesday, September 21 to Saturday, October 1
Shawnee Prairie Preserve

The Greenville Art Guild's 36th annual art show will be held at the Nature Center. The exhibit features local artists' original works in many categories. The exhibit will be on display during Nature Center hours. During Prairie Days, the Art Guild will be offering a children's craft to explore your child's artistic talent.

FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT

Friday, November 18th, 7pm
Pre-registration Required


Join the Darke County Parks family as we present a screening of the movie Earth, a DisneyNature film. This epic and entertaining movie follows families of Polar Bears, African Elephants, and Humpback whales for an entire year, highlighting their harrowing fight for survival as well as their exhilarating triumphs. So grab the kids (or kids, grab Mom and Dad!) and head out to Shawnee Prairie Preserve for Movie Night! Please call and let us know how many to expect so we have enough popcorn! Bring a blanket or comfy folding chair.


3 Months At A Glance

YOUR GUIDE TO WHAT'S HAPPENING IN DARKE COUNTY PARKS

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
September			Unless indicated, all programs begin at Shawnee Prairie Preserve.		Programs marked with an (*) require pre-registration.	
<div> <div>○ - Full Moon</div> <div>● - New Moon</div> <div>◐ - Last Quarter</div> <div>◑ - First Quarter</div> </div>				<div> <div>Hike to Health 7pm@ Worth</div> <div>Canoe & Kayak Meeting 7pm</div> </div>	<div> <div>Butterfly Monitoring 2pm</div> </div>	<div> <div>Butterfly Day 1 - 4pm</div> <div>Log House Open 1-4pm</div> </div>
<div> <div>4 Nature Center & Park Office -Closed -</div> <div>Canoe & Kayak Trip</div> </div>	<div> <div>5 -Labor Day- Nature Center & Park Office -Closed -</div> <div>Canoe & Kayak Trip</div> <div>Birders Trip</div> </div>	<div> <div>6 Early Morning Discovery Hike 8am</div> <div>Friends of DCP Meeting 7pm</div> </div>	<div> <div>7 Little Explorers Preschool 10am*</div> </div>	<div> <div>8 Seedlings Preschool 10am*</div> <div>DCP Board Meeting 5:30pm</div> </div>	<div> <div>9 Butterfly Monitoring 2pm</div> </div>	<div> <div>10 Park PALS 9:30am* Friends' Highway Cleanup 1pm</div> <div>Log House Open 1-4pm</div> <div>Birders Trip</div> </div>
<div> <div>11 Nature Center & Park Office -Closed -</div> </div>	<div> <div>12 Howl at the Moon: A Dog's Hike 8:30pm</div> </div>	<div> <div>13 Early Morning Discovery Hike 8am</div> <div>Old Thyme Gardeners Meeting 12pm</div> </div>	<div> <div>14 Little Explorers Preschool 10am*</div> </div>	<div> <div>15</div> </div>	<div> <div>16 Butterfly Monitoring 2pm</div> </div>	<div> <div>17 Jr. Naturalist 10am*</div> <div>Prairie Days Open House Training 1pm*</div> <div>Log House Open 1-4pm</div> </div>
<div> <div>18 Nature Center & Park Office -Closed -</div> <div>Birders Trip</div> </div>	<div> <div>19 Friends Trustees Meeting - 6pm</div> <div>Prairie Days Open House Training 5pm*</div> </div>	<div> <div>20 Early Morning Discovery Hike 8am</div> <div>Photo Club Meeting 7pm</div> </div>	<div> <div>21</div> </div>	<div> <div>22</div> </div>	<div> <div>23 Butterfly Monitoring 2pm</div> </div>	<div> <div>24 Prairie Days 10am-4pm</div> <div>Gourd Show</div> </div>
<div> <div>25 Prairie Days 12 - 4pm</div> </div>	<div> <div>26</div> </div>	<div> <div>27 Early Morning Discovery Hike 8am</div> <div>Birders Meeting 7pm</div> </div>	<div> <div>28</div> </div>	<div> <div>29 Prairie Closed</div> <div>Gentian Hike 5:30pm</div> </div>	<div> <div>30 Butterfly Monitoring 2pm</div> </div>	
<div> <div>Greenville Art Guild Exhibit</div> </div>						
<div> <div>6 Gourd Show</div> </div>						

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
October		Programs marked with an (*) require pre-registration.	Unless indicated, all programs begin at Shawnee Prairie Preserve.			1 Art Guild Exhibit
2 Nature Center & Park Office -Closed -	3	4 Early Morning Discovery Hike 8am Friends of DCP Meeting 7pm	5	6 Hike to Health 6pm@ Eidson Woods Canoe & Kayak Meeting 7pm	7	8 Park PALS 9:30am* Fall Colors Float 2pm* Birders Trip
9 Nature Center & Park Office -Closed -	10	11 Early Morning Discovery Hike 8am Old Thyme Gardeners Meeting 12pm	12 Little Explorers Preschool 10am*	13 Seedlings Preschool 10am* More than Great Legs 6pm* DCP Board Meeting 5:30p	14	15 Old Thyme Gardeners Seminar 9am*
16 Nature Center & Park Office -Closed -	17 Friends Trustees Meeting - 6pm	18 Early Morning Discovery Hike 8am Photo Club Meeting 7pm	19	20	21	22 Jr. Naturalist 10am* Fascinating Fungus 10am @ Routzong Great Pumpkin Hunt 1pm* Birders Trip
23 Nature Center -Closed - Nature Center -Closed -	24 Canoe & Kayak Trip	25 Early Morning Discovery Hike 8am Birders Meeting 7pm	26 Little Explorers Preschool 10am*	27	28 Candlelight Dinner on the Prairie 6pm*	29 Candlelight Dinner on the Prairie 6pm*
30	31					


Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
November						
Nature Center & Park Office -Closed -		1 Early Morning Discovery Hike 8am Friends of DCP Meeting 7pm	2	3 Survival Series: Firestarting 6:30pm* Canoe & Kayak Meeting 7pm	4	5 Park PALS 9:30am* Hike to Health 2pm@ Turkeyfoot Birders Trip
6 Nature Center & Park Office -Closed - Daylight Savings Time Ends	7 Volunteer Appreciation 6pm*	8 Early Morning Discovery Hike 8am Old Thyme Gardeners Meeting 12pm	9 Little Explorers Preschool 10am*	10 Seedlings Preschool 10am* DCP Board Meeting 5:30pm	11	12 Jr. Naturalist 10am* Tan Yer Hide 1pm*
13 Nature Center & Park Office -Closed -	14	15 Early Morning Discovery Hike 8am Project FeederWatch - 9:30a-11:30a Photo Club Meeting 7pm	16 Little Explorers Preschool 10am*	17	18 Family Movie Night 7pm*	19
20 Nature Center & Park Office -Closed - Birders Trip	21 Friends Trustees Meeting - 6pm	22 Early Morning Discovery Hike 8am Project FeederWatch - 9:30a-11:30a Birders Meeting 7pm	23	24 NATURE CENTER CLOSED	25 NATURE CENTER CLOSED	26
27 Nature Center & Park Office -Closed -	28	29 Early Morning Discovery Hike 8am Project FeederWatch - 9:30a-11:30a	30	 thanksgiving		



Mark Your Calendars!

Walkin' in a Winter Wonderland
Holiday Luminary Event
December 3rd, 2011 - 6pm-8:30pm

Music
Food
Fun



7

YOUR GUIDE TO NATURAL HISTORY PROGRAMS

HOWL AT THE MOON: A DOG'S HIKE

Monday, September 12, 8:30pm
Shawnee Prairie Preserve

Grab "Fido's" leash and head out to Shawnee Prairie as we hike the trails by the light of the full moon! We'll meet at the Nature Center and then head out for our hike along the various trails and habitats of Shawnee Prairie. Please be sure to keep the leash short and bring bags to pick up any "deposits" Fido may leave behind. In the event of poor weather, call the Nature Center for more info.



PRAIRIE CLOSED GENTIAN HIKE

Thursday, September 29, 5:30pm
Shawnee Prairie Preserve

The Closed Gentian is one of the last wildflowers of the year to bloom. These unique flowers never "open" and rely on bumble bees to pry the petals open in order for pollination to occur. Come join a Park Naturalist on this fun wildflower hunt where we will be searching for this interesting native wildflower deep within the Prairie. Dress for the weather and hiking off trail.



MORE THAN JUST GREAT LEGS!

Thursday, October 13, 6pm
Shawnee Prairie Preserve / Pre-registration Required

We all know the nursery rhyme, but what else do we know about the tiny spiders? Did you know that they make silk stronger than steel, can jump 20 times their body length and they can fly thousands of miles in the air? We'll learn all about the common spiders in our area and hit the trails to see what we can discover.



FASCINATING FUNGUS

Saturday, October 22, 10am
Routzong Preserve

Reds, browns, yellows, oranges and purples... all of these colors and more can be found within the fascinating world of mushrooms! We'll hike the trails searching for as many species as we can locate and marvel at their other-worldly appearances. Dress for the weather and meet at Routzong Preserve on Routzong Road, just off of OH-571 east.



EARLY MORNING DISCOVERY HIKES

Tuesdays at 8am
Shawnee Prairie Preserve



Crisp mornings and low humidity make this a great time to enjoy nature. Early Morning Discovery Hikes focus on bird watching, tree, fungi ID and more. Bring binoculars if you have a pair; otherwise some are available for loan.

BUTTERFLY MONITORING

Every Friday through September 30 @ 2pm
Shawnee Prairie Preserve



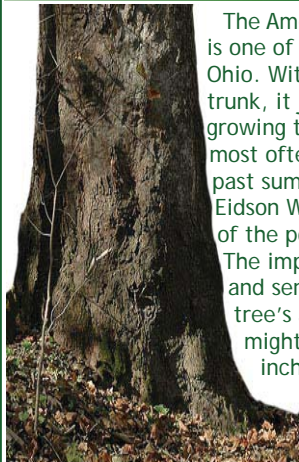
Join us as we record the butterfly population of Shawnee Prairie. We'll hike a preset route and record all butterflies seen. Field guides will be provided to help the "experts" and beginners alike! All are welcome.



Naturalist Corner



HARDWOOD HISTORY



The American Sycamore tree (*Platanus occidentalis*) is one of the most easily recognizable trees here in Ohio. With distinctive white, blotchy bark on its tall trunk, it just catches your eye. This relatively fast growing tree prefers moist, well-drained soils and is most often found along streams and river banks. This past summer I got the chance to explore the trails of Eidson Woods Preserve where I ran into a rare example of the potentially giant size a Sycamore can obtain. The impressive size of the tree stirred my curiosity and sent me searching for a chart to estimate a tree's age. When the measurement was taken, the mighty Sycamore's circumference came to 206 inches, that's over 17ft! With a diameter of 65.6 inches, the tree's estimated age was over 260 years old. To put that into perspective, our Sycamore tree was well past its teens when the Declaration of Independence was signed.

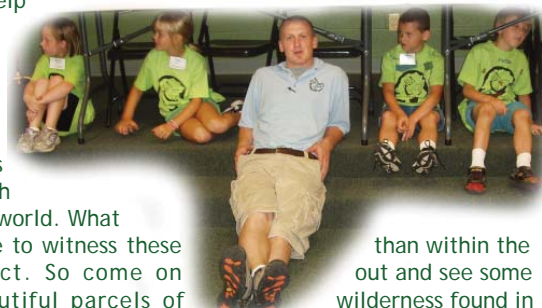
However impressive this particular tree may be though, it is far from a record. The state of Ohio is actually home to the National Champion Sycamore. This true giant has a circumference of 588 inches (49ft), which makes our 'little' tree look downright petite in comparison. Even so, to find a tree of that age in an area of the state that has been extensively farmed for so long is a unique glimpse into the natural history of the region. As Sycamores prefer moist, well drained soils, this tells us that even in 1750 there was an easily obtainable water source on site, most likely a younger Kraut Creek. This in turn offers a possible explanation as to why the tree was never cleared for agriculture: the soil stayed too wet to farm. Even more information could be gathered from the trees growth rings if a cross-section of the trunk or bore sample were taken. Besides the exact age, climatic conditions for the past 200 years could be determined by an examination of the width of the individual growth rings. Wider rings would determine years where optimal weather conditions permitted more rapid growth, and more narrow rings indicate the inverse. A specialist could certainly gather more information but this is just one example of how something as common place as a Sycamore tree has a story as unique and valuable as any found in nature. So next time you're out for a walk on one of the trails, take your time to observe some of the marvelous pieces of natural history that are being preserved here. Who knows what story they might have to tell.

As the summer intern here with Darke County Parks, I am looking forward to working with all the great people that can be found within the many facets of the Park District. My name is Aaron Coons and I was born and raised here in Darke County, graduating from Versailles High School. Next spring I will be graduating with an Associate's Degree in Wildlife Sciences from Hocking College before continuing my education towards a Bachelor's Degree in Biological Sciences.

My time here with the Naturalist staff will be spent helping with the many youth summer camps the Parks host, as well as some involvement in specific evening programs. In addition, I will be cataloging the flora and fauna within the parks to help the District gain a better insight into the biological makeup of each Park, keeping a special eye out for any unique, rare, or invasive species. Through this cataloging the Park District will be able to better monitor the succession of the Parks and any new plant or animal arrivals that may be of importance.

By spending the summer here I hope to both refine and enhance my understanding of the flora and fauna commonly found in the area. I also look forward to working more directly with the public, be it through educational evening programs or the youth summer camps, to help the average person see more clearly the

relationships we have with the natural world. What better place to witness these Park District. So come on of the beautiful parcels of Darke County. See you then!



-Aaron Coons, Naturalist Intern

YOUR GUIDE TO PIONEER LIVING PROGRAMS

Log House Open
Saturdays in September, 1-4pm
Shawnee Prairie Preserve

It's time to visit the Log House to see what you have been missing! Bring the entire family for a time-warped back to the early 1800's and visit our period-dressed volunteers as they explain their way of life while going about their day-to-day chores. If



you are lucky you may be just in time to play a game of marbles or enjoy a hearth cooked snack! Mark your calendars for Saturday afternoons and "sit a spell"!

Tan Yer Hides

Saturday, November 12, 1pm
Pre-registration Required / \$5 per person



Join a couple of wandering Longhunters as they go through the pioneer method of brain-tanning a hide. We will first flesh a hide, and then mix up the brain-solution that will tan the hide. This will be a hands-on (a bit messy!) program that will get you the experience you need to tan your own hides! The program will take place in and outside the Log House, so dress for the weather as there is no internal heating. Call to pre-register and with any questions.

A MESSAGE FROM THE FRIENDS

I hope that everyone had a fun and safe summer, and now that fall is all around us, preparations have begun for Prairie Days. Each year we strive to make Prairie Days larger and more historical event. Once again this year we will be having our Pie Baking Contest on Saturday. Come and visit our new schoolhouse and see what it would have been like to attend school between 1780-1810. There will be kids crafts to try out and competition games to participate in. Try your hand at our new spelling bee and see if you have what it takes to spell your way to the top. Visit our Log House and meet some settlers while they work at our newly restored loom or work around the hearth. While winding your way through our festival, stop by our new non-profit vendors who will be selling a variety of food. We also have ice-cream and funnel cakes. Stop by Downing's Fruit Farm, or buy a jar of our own apple butter. While enjoying your food, sit and listen to the music of the Dayton Dulcimer Society or Elixir; an American Folk Band. Don't forget to stop by the 18th century encampment and see what it took to start Greenville. There is something for everyone this year so stop by and enjoy.



After all that hard work in September, we will turn our attention to our Candlelight Dinners in October. Experience a dinner cooked on an open hearth like our forefathers would have. Relax and spend time with family and friends as you sit around enjoying your meal and visit with our re-enactors, who will be serving you dinner in the Log House. Make sure to reserve your spot now for dinner before it fills up.

All of these activities and more take place because of Friends like you. Your membership to our Friends is very important. By buying a membership to the Friends of the Darke County Parks you are helping us get grant money to continue supporting programs like Prairie Days and Candlelight Dinners. Without your support and membership we would not be able to expand each year. Please support us and attend our upcoming meetings on September 6, October 4, and November 1 at 6:30pm to see how you can help!

I look forward to working with you on Prairie Days this year and cannot wait to meet all of you. Have a wonderful fall.

Kris Supinger, President

::Reminders:: Meetings: Sept. 6th; Oct. 4; Nov. 1 / Highway CleanUp: Sept. 10 @ 1pm (meet at Nature Center) ::Reminders::

DARKE COUNTY PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB

The Darke County Photography Club's purpose is to promote photography in and around Darke County. Anyone is invited to attend the monthly meetings held at 7p.m. on the third Tuesday of each month at the Nature Center. The club also conducts Monthly Themed Mini-competitions and Quarterly Themed Competitions. Whether you are a beginner, advanced or just someone interested in photography, everyone is invited to attend the monthly meetings! Visit our webpage at www.darkecountyphotoclub.com for member galleries and more!

Photo Show

"A Moment of Time"

September 9-11

*620 South Broadway
Greenville, OH*

Themes

September (monthly):
Deep Depth of Field/Infinity

October (quarterly):
Trees

November (monthly):
Anything Goes with a Caption

The Olde Thyme Gardeners

The Olde Thyme Gardeners have a strong interest in heritage and pioneer gardening techniques used in the 19th century. They also maintain the heirloom garden adjacent to the Log House at Shawnee Prairie Preserve. No special training is necessary to become a member; the only requirement is an interest in gardening practices of 1800-1820 and a love of growing things. Meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at 12pm. For more information, please check the website: www.oldethymegardeners.org



Meetings

September 13
October 11
November 8



Fall Gardening Seminar: Fresh Herbs for the Winter

Saturday, October 15

Session 1: 9-11:30am / Session 2: 1-4pm

Pre-registration Required: See below

Fee: \$10/session (checks payable to Olde Thyme Gardeners)

This autumn's topic will be **Fresh Herbs for the Winter** and will offer participants many insights on the growing and harvesting of herbs throughout the winter months. Space is limited, so be sure to register early!

To register, contact Marilyn at 937-678-6870 or email at msblb2@centurylink.net

DARKE COUNTY CANOE & KAYAK CLUB

The Darke County Canoe and Kayak Club was organized to promote canoeing and kayaking. In non-paddling months, we enjoy hiking. The club is open to all experienced paddlers. Beginning paddlers can learn through the parks' instructional canoeing and kayaking programs. During the paddling season, our meetings are held the first Thursday of the month at 7pm in the Nature Center. For updates and to reserve space on a trip call Carol Hathaway, at 937.547.0220.



Meetings

September 1
October 6
November 3

Hiking & Paddling Trips

September 5-8:
Clifty Falls Campout

October 31st:
Hike Highbanks MetroPark
in Columbus

This Fall's Volunteer in the Spotlight is awarded to a youth volunteer, Masen Rich. Masen has grown up with the Park District as his surrogate backyard. Whether it was attending monthly programs and camps or volunteering on a weekly basis at the Nature Center, Masen has been a part of it all!

In the past seven years, Masen has assisted with many different tasks, filling bird feeders and hummingbird feeders, ensuring the Live Classroom critters are fed and assisting with clearing trails for new parks! He has also been a HUGE help when it comes to special events such as, The Great Pumpkin Hunt, Maple Syrup Festival, Prairie Days, and the Walkin' in a Winter Wonderland. He is always willing to volunteer. While not at the Parks, Masen enjoys playing basketball and hanging out with friends and of course there is that "school" thing that keeps him busy too!

Masen would love to see the Park District continue to expand and grow in the near future as it has since he started coming to the Park District. Thank you, Masen!

VOLUNTEER IN THE SPOTLIGHT



"THOSE WHO CAN, DO.
THOSE WHO CAN DO MORE, VOLUNTEER."

A huge THANKS goes out to ALL the Park District volunteers for all you complete and assist with. It is greatly appreciated; remember we can't do this without you! Thank you for all being so dedicated, willing, and eager to accomplish the tasks that may arise day by day! Thank you for your help at the Reception Desk, assisting with summer camps, assisting with maintenance tasks and ensuring the Parks are shining brighter and brighter each day!

As the summer comes to an end, remember to mark your calendars for our Prairie Days Festival on September 24 and 25. Once again this year we have an opportunity for all to assist, whether it would be assisting with children's crafts, making apple butter/ apple cider, or being a 200-year-old volunteer in the Log House!

If you are interested in volunteering at the Parks, please contact me at the Nature Center at 937-548-0165.

~Laura Schwieterman: Volunteer Coordinator

Volunteer Corner



VOLUNTEERS IN THE FIELD

Volunteer Ron Gross assists with teaching Cultural-history Summer Campers about blacksmithing! Each got to make and take home a triangular dinner bell! Thanks, Ron!



GATHERING & TRAINING

▣ Prairie Days Open House Training

September 17th: 1pm-3pm ~OR~ 19th: 5pm-7pm

Find out what your role will be during Prairie Days and by the end of training you will be an expert. Not sure how you want to help? Join us and see all the volunteer opportunities! (Choose only one DATE.)

▣ Volunteer Appreciation

Monday, November 7: 6pm

Time to mingle with those familiar faces you see here at the Park District. Join us for a "THANK YOU" dinner, followed by awards and more!

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

▣ Prairie Days

Calling ALL volunteers... Don't miss out on the BIGGEST event of the year! We need YOUR help assisting the public with activities, setting up exhibits, stirring apple butter, running the Log House and lots more! Join us for a busy and exciting weekend!

▣ Butterfly Days - Sept. 3

Do you LOVE butterflies? Come and assist during Butterfly Days on September 3rd with children's crafts, monitoring the butterfly tent and more!

▣ Candlelight Dinners on the Prairie

Do you enjoy cooking over a hearth? If so, come and join us for a full day of fun and cooking!



DARKE COUNTY BIRDERS CLUB



The Darke County Birders Club is open to beginning and experienced birders alike. Monthly meetings include a short business session followed by a program on a variety of topics. The club meets the fourth Tuesday of each month at Shawnee Prairie Preserve Nature Center. Monthly field trips begin at the Nature Center where directions and carpooling opportunities are discussed. For more information, contact Steve Miller at 547-3340.

Labor Day Birding
Monday, September 5

Bird Darke County in the morning and then meet at McDonalds North to share your findings at noon.

Walk with the Director
Saturday, September 10, 12:30pm

We will walk and talk with Roger Van Frank at one of our Parks.

Covered Bridge Hunt
Sunday, September 18, 8am

After a summer of "working" trips for the OBBS2, we'll head to scenic Greene County to seek secluded covered bridge sites. Greene County is filled with great places to bird and visit.

Meeting
Tuesday, September 27, 7pm

6pm: Pre-meeting Hike at Chestnut Street Marsh
7pm: End of the Trail: Cowboy at heart, Dwight "Buford" Edwards, will share his experiences as a retired Darke County game warden.

Annual Camp-out
October 8, 9 and 10

We will go birding along Lake Erie's shores while camping at Maumee Bay State Park. Contact Steve Miller if you have questions.

PROGRAMS, MEETINGS, & TRIPS

Sparrow Walk
Saturday, October 22, 12:30pm
Meet at Chestnut Street Marsh to see what sparrow surprises are in store this year.

Meeting
Tuesday, October 25, 7pm
6pm: Last pre-meeting Hike at Chestnut Street Marsh for 2011
7pm: Sea Birds: Pelagic birds spend most of their life over the ocean. Steve Miller will share his experiences looking for these birds. This will be the first meeting of our biannual silent auction.

Happy Bird Day
Saturday, November 5, 12:30pm
We will again visit Aullwood Audubon Center for an afternoon of birding.

Brookville Lake
Sunday, November 20, 8am
Enjoy fall birding along beautiful Brookville Lake, near Liberty, IN.

Meeting
Tuesday, November 22, 7pm
Colorado Camp: Autumn Young relates her ABA birding experience this past summer in Colorado. This is the final meeting for the silent auction. 11

Darke County Parks

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Quarterly Question:

The glowing faces of Jack O' Lanterns are a common sight through the month of October, but did you know the tradition goes back hundreds of years and the original Jack O' Lanterns weren't pumpkins? Which vegetable was used to make the original Jack O' Lanterns? When did the pumpkin take over?

Call in your answer to the Nature Center at 937.548.0165 or email your answer to info@darkecountyparks.org. All correct answers will be placed in a drawing for a FREE gift. One guess per person please.

WISH LIST

If you have any of the following items and would be willing to donate them to Darke County Parks, please contact the park office at 548-0165. Your donations are tax deductible.

- ☐ Black Oil Sunflower Birdseed
- ☐ Mixed Birdseed
- ☐ 18th Century Black Powder Rifle or Smoothbore
- ☐ Beeswax (natural color) taper candles for Log House
- ☐ 18th Century Canvas Tent
- ☐ Historic Antique Tractor in good working condition
(for use during Prairie Days, hayrides, agricultural demonstrations and interpretation)
- ☐ Fresh/frozen ham or turkey for Log House Dinners
- ☐ DR-brushcutter style mower (see Roger for details)

Check out our Flickr page @ www.flickr.com/groups/dcparks/ for great pictures! Submit your own Parks' pictures too!

Darke County Parks Contacts

Director/Secretary - Roger Van Frank

Senior Naturalist - Robb Clifford

Naturalist / Volunteer Coordinator - Laura Schwieterman

Naturalist - Erica Dickey

Office Manager - Deb Shiverdecker

Manager of Parks Maintenance Operations - Nathan Epperly
Parks Maintenance - Chris Supinger

Board of Park Commissioners

John M. Cook, President

L. Stephen Shaltry, Vice-President

Daniel C. Schipfer, Commissioner-At-Large

Questions about the newsletter or operations of the Park District may be directed to 937.548.0165 Monday through Friday, 9am-5pm, or send an email to director@darkecountyparks.org.