

PARK EXPLORER

GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT ACTIVITY GUIDE



*Service Branch Garden
at Veterans Legacy Woods*

FALL 2024

4 An adventure to assist orienteers at The West Woods

6 Introducing your chosen Top 10 Trails Contest winners

16 Get to know your Troy Wetlands during migration season

18 Paying tribute to the majestic evergreen tree with Nora the Explorer

UPCOMING EVENTS *Mark your calendars!*



All public programs and special events are subject to change or be cancelled. Please check our website for updates before heading out.



Try Something That's Out of This World!

Saturday, October 5, at Observatory Park, 4-6 PM

Each Planetary Trail lap equals celestial travel. Space is limited, with T-shirts for the first 250 registrants and medals & ribbons for all. Registration link on page 7.



Sundays, October 6, 13 & 20

1-5 PM at Swine Creek Reservation

Enjoy a horse-drawn wagon ride through the woods, gradually bursting with the colors of fall! First-come-first-served boarding. Rides generally last about 20-30 minutes. Last ride leaves at 4:30 PM.



Shop this unique Nature-themed juried craft show

**Friday, November 1, 5-8 PM & Saturday, November 2, 10AM-4 PM
at The West Woods Nature Center**

Come out Friday evening or Saturday to enjoy vendors indoors and out, finding handmade items for everyone on your list.



Saturday, December 7, at The West Woods Nature Center

11 AM- Noon, Noon-1 PM, 1-2 PM or 2-3 PM

Brighten a senior's holiday season with your thoughtful creation through this make-and-GIVE event! Evergreen decorations that you create will accompany home-delivered meals for seniors by the Geauga County Department on Aging.

Registration required; please choose only one session. All supplies provided.



Celebrate the Longest Night of the Year

Saturday, December 21, 7-10 PM, at The West Woods

Explore the roots of our modern holiday celebrations indoors and out through treats, music, a craft and a magical candlelit walk through the forest highlighting various solstice traditions with costumed interpreters.

FALL PROGRAMS *on pages 7-15*

- Registration is required in advance for limited-enrollment programs on a first come, first served basis. Registration can be completed online or at 440-286-9516.
- Programs may be cancelled in the event of severe weather or a storm warning.
- Programs are generally free of charge; those with fees are noted. Payment of fees must be made at the time of registration with a credit/debit card.
- Registration fees are refundable up to five days prior to the event, or if the Park District cancels the program.
- If you or a member of your family has special needs, please call the Park District regarding available accessibility accommodations.



Geauga Gems Trekking Series Program
Naturalist-led hike recommended to take toward your Trekking Series reward



Nature's Not To Be Missed
Program focused on unique encounters with Nature



Virtual Program
Register and receive a login to participate from home



Fully Wheelchair/Stroller Accessible



Nature Scopes – Program recommended for our fifth-grade Nature Scopes students

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Park Mission

The mission of Geauga Park District is to preserve, conserve and protect the natural features of Geauga County and to provide outdoor recreational experiences to our residents of every age, every ability and at all times of the year.

Park Hours

Daily 6 AM – 11 PM

Big Creek Park’s Donald W. Meyer Center is open weekdays 10 AM – 4:30 PM

The West Woods Nature Center is open daily 10 AM – 4:30 PM

Observatory Park is open daily till 1 AM from Memorial Day to Labor Day and till 11 PM from Labor Day to Memorial Day; its Robert McCullough Science Center and Oberle Observatory are open the 2nd & 4th Fridays & Saturdays of each month 6 – 11 PM and every other Sunday of each month 1 – 4 PM

The Maple Highlands Trail and Welton’s Gorge are open daily dawn till dusk

Burton Wetlands Nature Preserve is open daily 6 AM – 9 PM

www.geaugaparkdistrict.org
info@geaugaparkdistrict.com

Phone: 440-286-9516
 Fax: 440-214-3032

From the Desk of THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Executive Director
 John Oros

Dear Geauga County Friends & Neighbors,

Welcome to the latest edition of your *Park Explorer*. By the time you receive this, another year of The Great Geauga County Fair will have just wrapped up. It seems for me, the end of our fair signals a time to enjoy everything fall.

If you were able to pay us a visit at our building in the Natural Resources Area, you already know the winners of our 2024 Top 10 Trails Contest, which we announced there during the fair. Thank you to our residents who voted for your favorite trails from a list of 20 nominees.

However, if you didn’t get the opportunity to visit us, drumroll please as we also unveil our winners here on page 6! First place went to Ansel’s Cave Trail at The West Woods, second place went to Gorge Overlook Trail at Welton’s Gorge, and third place went to Hemlock Trail at Big Creek Park.

As summer turns to fall, I can’t think of three better trails to enjoy in your Geauga parks. All three will immerse you in some of the most beautiful natural scenery in our county. I hope a hike on one of these trails renews your appreciation for trails, parks, and everything your parks have to offer.

This activity guide is packed with a variety of Nature-inspired activities for you and your family. Upcoming special events include our annual Space Race at Observatory Park, horse-drawn wagon rides at Swine Creek Reservation, Holly Days Artisan Boutique and Mistletoe Market, Greens for Giving, and our ever-popular Winter Solstice Celebration at The West Woods.

Our staff is proud to serve you with so many different fun activities. We hope to see you often this fall in your Geauga Park District!

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS



Howard Bates



Jolene Carnabuci



Ray Guarino



Les LaGatta



Frank Stein

Park Board Meetings

Dates and times are subject to change. Find the current schedule on our website under About GPD, or call 440-286-9516.

FEATURING PARK FRIENDS

Exploring The West Woods for a Greater Good

By Jonathan Boyer

As an outdoor enthusiast, I was recently hooked by the sport of orienteering, which involves navigating a designed course through the forest using a map and compass. The challenge is to find the fastest route through a series of checkpoints, which are orange and white flags with electronic “controls” positioned at strategic locations throughout the woods.

During an orienteering event, navigation is done with a map and compass only – no GPS technology is allowed.

Orienteering is a competitive sport, especially internationally, with top athletes sprinting around, over and through natural obstacles in the forest while searching for the best route for the fastest time. But it is also a great family-friendly activity that can be enjoyed solo or as a team by all ages and skill levels.

The foundation for orienteering is a specially created contour map, where every noticeable detail of the terrain – often down to a few meters – is mapped to an international standard for the purposes of land navigation.



I recently had the opportunity to make such a map for The West Woods in preparation for an orienteering event held at the park in early 2024. The process took 12 months and about 200 hours of time, and it was carried out in all seasons and weather conditions.

Most of my work centered around searching for little-known features and landmarks such as large boulders, marshes, cliffs and gullies. I also spent a lot of time mapping vegetation in order to distinguish open and easily passable forest areas versus thickets or areas with dense trees to avoid – all detail used by

participants for the purposes of knowing where they are and planning the most efficient route through the course.

Making a map like this is a very satisfying process of discovery. In one area of the park stands one of the largest tulip trees in the state of Ohio. In other areas of the park are rock walls with carvings.

I was fascinated to find some old building ruins, faded trails, rusted farming equipment, deep gullies, and rocky cliffs tucked away and seldom seen. The history of the forest speaks in quiet whispers.

With the investment of time into this new map, orienteering events at The West Woods can be enjoyed for years to come. No experience is necessary to complete an entry level orienteering course – a spirit of adventure is the only prerequisite.

I am very grateful for our great park system and look forward to future events where residents can come and experience The West Woods in an entirely new way. 🌿



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jonathan Boyer is a Nature lover, trail runner, kayaker and competitive orienteer. He hopes to see orienteering grow in our area because of its many mental and physical health benefits for all ages.

Orienteering events held at The West Woods in early 2024 were organized as a collaboration between Geauga Park District and the Northeast Ohio Orienteering Club, a volunteer organization.



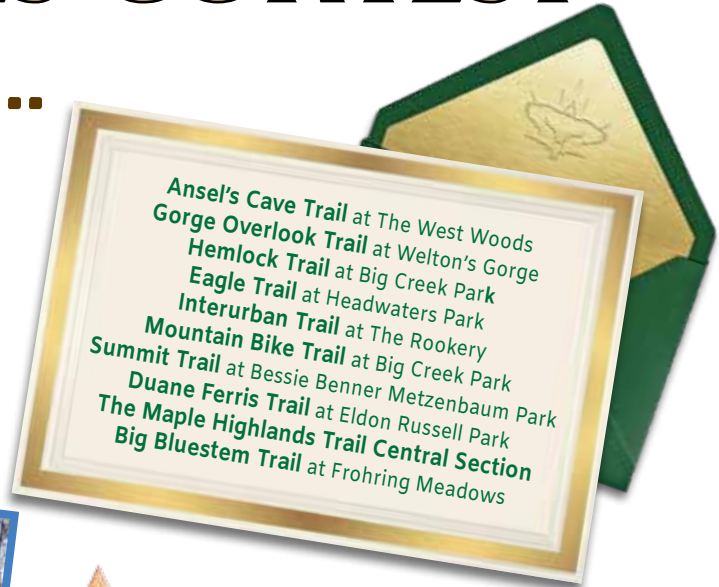
...AND THE WINNERS OF THE TOP 10 TRAILS CONTEST ARE...

1



Of 20 trails nominated by the public, these 10 get the notoriety of being Geauga Park District's Top 10 as voted by YOU!

Thanks to all who cast a vote for your favorites.



2

3



Beginning this fall, Park District naturalists will lead special hikes to help you explore all 10 of your winning trails. These hikes will also count toward the Geauga Gems Trekking challenge. See pages 9, 11 and 14 for this season's guided visits.

With a naturalist or independently, will you make it a goal to get out and see all of them? Hiking the Top 10 will show you a wide variety of Geauga parks, terrain and wildlife all year long.



Let This Be Your Reminder

Registration is always required for programs with fees or limited attendance, but fewer programs now require registration in advance. **Please mark your calendars or set an alarm to attend non-registration programs, as reminder emails cannot be sent for them.**

OCTOBER

Registration begins at 10 AM on September 20 for Geauga residents and September 27 for others. Sign up online or by calling 440-286-9516.

Adventure/Discovery Arts Astronomy Kids Seniors

2 Art Workshop: Helix Bracelet Bead Weaving

Wednesday, October 2, 6–8 PM
Holbrook Hollows, Lodge

Fee: \$63 Geauga resident, \$65 out-of-county
Jewelry artist Fran Rafiani teaches the ancient art of bead weaving to create a beautiful helix bracelet with gemstones, crystals, seed beads and a gold or silver-plated closure. Fee includes a kit with high-end beads and the helix bracelet pattern plus instruction. Ages 14+.
Registration required. ♿

5 Scout Day: Brownies - Eco Friend Badge

Saturday, October 5, 9–11:30 AM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Learn more about outdoor spaces and how to treat them with kindness as you complete all requirements for your Eco Friend badge. Badges are not supplied. Includes a hike. Dress for the weather. Not a drop-off program. **Registration required** for scouts only, but adult leaders must attend.

5 Scout Day: Webelos Cub Scouts - Into the Wild Adventure

Saturday, October 5, 12:30–2 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Webelos, work on this elective indoors and outdoors. Dress for the weather! **Registration required** for scouts only, but adult leaders must attend.

5 Spears to Arrows

(Ages 9+ w/adult)

Saturday, October 5, 1–4 PM

Chickagami Park, Pine Grove Shelter

Learn the history of how the technology of projectiles changed from a simple spear to the compound bow in this hands-on program. See how far you can throw replica spears with an atlatl, then shoot recurve and compound bows. Participants must be at least 9 years old with an adult; no younger children, please.
Registration required.



5 Hound Hike

Saturday, October 5, 3–4 PM

Big Creek Park, Aspen Grove Parking Lot

Dogs and their humans, join us for a 1-mile, medium-level hike along the Trillium Trail (contains stairs). Cold Nose Companions Dog Training will also share some helpful tips and tricks to practice during the hike. Bring dog towels, water, a water bowl, poop scoop and bags for dog clean-up. Only one dog per handler. Dog must be on leash (8 ft max), under control and non-aggressive to people and other dogs.



5 The SPACE RACE!

Saturday, October 5, 4–6 PM

Observatory Park

Fee: \$20 before 10/4 (or as space allows)

As the sun goes down on October 5, run, jog or walk as many course laps as you can in our two-hour race time frame, with each completed lap equating to some amount of travel through our solar system. For example, one .85-mile lap takes you to Mercury, 4 laps and you've arrived on Mars, 10 laps gets you to Pluto, and so on. In this way, you will actually be racing yourself to see how far out-of-this-world you can go! All who complete at least one lap earn a Space Race medal and a ribbon recognizing the furthest space object you "landed" on. Awards for the top three male and female finishers. Register at <https://bit.ly/gpdspace2024>. Race T-shirt for first 250 registrants. Space is limited. Get ready for a race like no other! **Registration required.**

6 Fall Color Kayak

(Ages 12+ w/adult)

Sunday, October 6, 9–11 AM & 1–3 PM

Headwaters Park, Rt. 608 Main Parking

Paddle along the beautiful shores of the East Branch Reservoir and enjoy the autumn color of the forest and the wildlife that call the lake home. Kayaking ability/experience required. Held rain or shine, except in the event of a thunderstorm, so dress for the weather. **Registration required** beginning September 27 at 10 AM.



6 Nature Journaling: Nests

Sunday, October 6, 1–3:30 PM

Orchard Hills Park, Lodge

Fee: \$20 Geauga residents, \$24 out-of-county

Attend this monthly series to learn basic journaling techniques to record your Nature observations. This month our inspiration will be nests. Partially outdoors. Taking photos is optional. First-time participants must pay \$20 for Geauga residents or \$24 for out-of-county residents to purchase a new journal, pen and other supplies. Those who attended the series before, but not within the calendar year, must pay \$10 for Geauga residents or \$12 for out-of-county residents to cover additional instruction and supplies. Those who already registered within the calendar year are free. **Registration required** by phone only.

7 Geauga Skywatchers: The Nature of Constellations

Monday, October 7, 6:30–7:30 PM

Gauga West Library

Learn the lore and natural history of some of the animal constellations. A few of the constellations we'll cover are Ursa Major, Cygnus and Aquilla. Designed for grades 6-12, but anyone can join. **Registration required** through Geauga County Public Library's website. In collaboration with the Chagrin Valley Astronomical Society, Geauga County Public Library, Burton Public Library and Foundation for Geauga Parks. ♿

10 Early Morning Hike

Thursday, October 10, 8–9:30 AM

Veterans Legacy Woods

Start your day with an up-paced hike of 2-3 miles of hilly terrain.

11 Homeschool Days: Tremendous Trees

(Ages 5–7 & 8–12)

Friday, October 11, 10:30 AM–Noon

Big Creek Park, Meyer Center

Homeschoolers, discover the amazing world of trees through fun activities and exploration. Adults attend with children. Indoors and outdoors, so dress for the weather. **Registration required** for all attending.

■ Adventure/Discovery
 ■ Arts
 ■ Astronomy
 ■ Kids
 ■ Seniors

12 Cemeteries of Geauga Van Trip

Saturday, October 12, 9 AM–4 PM
The West Woods

Explore Geauga's historic cemeteries on this day-long van trip. Adults only, please. We'll visit Memorial Cemetery, Welton Cemetery and South Newbury Cemetery, along with several others, making several restroom stops and a break for lunch. Bring a bag lunch, water and snacks. Dress for the weather and wear hiking shoes/boots, as we will get out and walk at each location. **Registration required.**

12 ASM International's Materials Park

Saturday, October 12, 1–2 PM
ASM International

Explore under the geodesic dome at ASM International's Materials Park! We'll meet some key minerals in the Minerals Garden, learn the history of the ASM dome, and find out more about the materials that make up our world. **Registration required.**

13 Welton's Gorge Backcountry Gorge Exploration

Sunday, October 13, 9:30 AM–Noon
Welton's Gorge

Take a strenuous off-trail hike into a rocky woodland ravine with deep rock ledges, cool streams, wildflowers, salamanders and other stream life. Must be capable of hiking unassisted over rugged terrain including slippery rocks, downed trees, steep slopes and stream crossings. Held rain or shine, so dress for the weather and wear sturdy shoes with good traction even in wet conditions. Bring a walking stick or one will be provided. Long pants recommended. **Registration required.**



13 Howling with Coyotes

Sunday, October 13, 7–9:30 PM
Observatory Park

Learn amazing facts about coyotes and hike out to two survey locations to broadcast real coyote recordings into the night with hopes of hearing return calls! **Registration required** for all attending.

15 Blackbrook Audubon: Wonderful Woodpeckers

Tuesday, October 15, 7–8:30 PM
Big Creek Park, Meyer Center


Join Blackbrook Audubon Society for a program about woodpeckers. We'll look at woodpecker identification and the fascinating features of this family of unique birds. 



Photo by Jim Marquardt

17 Hawk Watch

Thursday, October 17, 8 AM–Noon
Veterans Legacy Woods

Let's enjoy the view overlooking the valley of the western branch of the Cuyahoga River and see if we can catch a glimpse of migrating raptors! This is a stationary birding program. Bring binoculars. **Registration required.**


17 Elderberries: Horse-Drawn Wagon Ride

Thursday, October 17, 11:30 AM–1:30 PM
Swine Creek Reservation, Woods Edge

Seniors, enjoy a naturalist-led horse-drawn wagon ride just for you, as well as the natural wonders of autumn. Lunch sponsored by Burton Healthcare. In collaboration with the Geauga County Department on Aging and UH Geauga Medical Center. Wagon has stairs leading up to bench seating. **Registration required.**

17 Full Moon Hike: The Hunter's Moon

Thursday, October 17, 6:30–7:30 PM
Observatory Park

Join us for this naturalist-led hike of 1.5-miles over level terrain at a gentle pace to experience Nature at night. Then, weather permitting, observe the rising full moon and the night sky using park telescopes. 

18 Inclusive Fall Wagon Ride

Friday, October 18,
10–10:45 AM & 11–11:45 AM
Swine Creek Reservation, Woods Edge

A special program for adults in the developmental disability community! Enjoy the wonders of autumn with a naturalist as you ride a wagon pulled by a tractor through the woods. Dress for the weather. Wagon has stairs leading up to bench seating. Picnic shelter will be available for participants who wish to stay after the program. **Registration required.**

19 Cross-County Fall Colors Van Trip

Saturday, October 19, 10 AM–3 PM
Big Creek Park, Aspen Grove

Take a naturalist-led van trip to visit areas around the county with spectacular views of fall colors! We'll start north at Big Creek Park, then head south to end at one of our newest parks, Troy Wetlands. Along the way we'll stop at other amazing sites, including the spectacular Century Village Museum overlook and a surprise location to purchase a snack or treat. Bring a packed lunch. **Registration required.**

19 Accessible Nature Cart Tours

Saturday, October 19, 1–2 PM & 2–3 PM
The West Woods

Our parks are beautiful, but can be a challenge for people with limited mobility. Our cart tours are a terrific way to help you explore the parks! We will make stops to talk about interesting natural and cultural features we discover, all while being out in Nature. Participants must be able to enter and exit a six-seat golf cart. We also ask that participants limit registration to themselves and one guest. **Registration required.**

19 Headwaters Horse Ride

Saturday, October 19, 3–5 PM
Headwaters Park, Crystal Lake
Rt. 608 Parking Lot

Bring your own horse for this leisurely ride on the Buckeye and Maple Bridle trails for a total of approximately 2 miles out and back, enjoying autumn color, views of the reservoir and Nature lore. Expect gravel, bridge crossing, possibly bikes and/or Amish buggies. Helmets encouraged. Bring a shovel to clean up after your horse in the parking lot. **Registration required.**

19 Sunset/Moonrise Horseback Ride

Saturday, October 19, 6–8 PM
Headwaters Park, Crystal Lake
Rt. 608 Parking Lot

Bring your own horse for this leisurely naturalist-led ride to experience the sights and sounds of autumn as the sun sets and the moon rises over the East Branch Reservoir, a 4-mile out-and-back ride on the Buckeye and Maple Bridle trails. Expect hills, gravel, bridge and stream crossings. Helmets encouraged. Bring a shovel to clean up after your horse in the parking lot. **Registration required.**

19 Nassau Astronomy Night with CVAS

Saturday, October 19, 7–11 PM
Observatory Park, Nassau
Astronomical Station

Stop in to discover this awesome facility and join members of the Chagrin Valley Astronomical Society taking in the wonders of the night sky using our restored telescope! A limited number of people will be permitted inside the building at a time, which may result in a wait to enter. Cancelled if cloudy; check our website or social media for notice.

21 Advanced Odds & Ends Baskets

Monday, October 21, 9:30 AM–4 PM
The West Woods, Affelder House
Fee: \$25 Geauga residents, \$30 out-of-county
Advanced basket weavers, build on your skills by designing your own pattern to create a small basket. Due to program preparation expenses, a refund may not be processed if cancellation occurs within five days of the program. **Registration required.** ♿

21 22 Advanced Odds & Ends Baskets - 2-Day Workshop

Monday, October 21, 6–9 PM
-AND- Tuesday, October 22, 6–9 PM
The West Woods, Affelder House
Fee: \$25 Geauga residents, \$30 out-of-county
Advanced basket weavers, build on your skills by designing your own pattern to create a small basket. This is a two-day class. Due to program preparation expenses, a refund may not be processed if cancellation occurs within five days of the program. **Registration required.** ♿

24 Nature Explorers: Night Hike (Ages 6-11 w/adult)

Thursday, October 24, 6:30–8 PM
Observatory Park
Experience Nature's transition from day to night as we take a hike around Observatory Park. The sun sets and stars come out; Grey and Fox Squirrels go to bed; Flying Squirrels start getting active; and songbirds subside as the Barred Owls begin to call. Indoors and outdoors, so dress for the weather. Children must be accompanied by an adult. **Registration required** for all attending.

RECURRING PROGRAMS

6 13 20 Horse-Drawn Wagon Rides

Sundays, October 6, 13 & 20, 1–5 PM
Swine Creek Reservation, Woods Edge
Enjoy the sights, sounds and scents of fall with a horse-drawn wagon ride! First-come, first-served boarding. Limited seating. No pets. Rides last about a half hour and are cancelled by bad weather. Last ride leaves at 4:30 PM. ♿

8 22 Geauga Walkers

Tuesdays, 1–2:30 PM
October 8, Orchard Hills Park
October 22, Burton Wetlands Nature Preserve
Hike for active seniors of 2 miles. Orchard Hills Park is a moderate hike on hilly terrain. Naturalist leads hikes in Geauga Park District parks. Other hikes held weekly in Geauga County and surrounding areas. Call Geauga Senior Center for full schedule: 440-279-2167.

24 Maple Town Tune Traders

Thursday, October 24, 7–9 PM
Veterans Legacy Woods, Freedom Hall
Singers and musicians take turns presenting tunes as others join in. All musical genres, instruments and musicianship levels welcome. Come to play, sing, or simply enjoy as an audience member. ♿

25 Buckeye Trail Highlight Hike

Friday, October 25, 1–3 PM
Big Creek Park, Maple Grove Parking lot
The Buckeye Trail winds nearly 1,444 miles around Ohio. Let's visit a Geauga Park District park that follows the Blue Blazes. Participants must be able to hike about 3.5+ miles of paved/gravel surfaces. Held rain or shine, so dress for the weather and bring water. Ages 10+ with adult; no younger children, please. **Registration required.**


25 Nature at Night Hike

Friday, October 25, 7–8:30 PM
Beartown Lakes Reservation
Walking through a park in the dark is a unique experience. Even during the calm of early fall, all our senses become enhanced as we hike without the use of lights, making wildlife easier to discover. Children must be accompanied by an adult.


26 The Big Hike at Swine Creek

Saturday, October 26, 9 AM–Noon
Swine Creek Reservation, Woods Edge
Hike 5-6 miles on muddy trails with stream crossings and big hills, exploring as many trails as possible and making Nature observations as we go. **Registration required.**

11 25 Edgar Allan Poe's Universe

Friday, October 11, 7–8 PM, Observatory Park, Robert McCullough Science Center ♿
Friday, October 25, 7–8 PM 
Edgar Allan Poe didn't only write spooky poems, he was also obsessed with astronomy. Explore his mind-bending ideas about the universe! Followed by night sky viewing, weather permitting. Oct 25 is a virtual program. We will send you a link a few days before the program. **Registration required.**

11 12 25 26 Night Sky Viewing

Fridays, October 11 & 25, 8–11 PM
Saturdays, October 12 & 26, 7–11 PM
Observatory Park, Robert McCullough Science Center
If skies are clear, observe the night sky through the Oberle telescope and other telescopes spaced out around the plaza. Planetarium presentation if cloudy. ♿ 



27 Top 10 Trails Hike: Eagle Trail

Sunday, October 27, 9–10:30 AM
Headwaters Park, Mayfield Rd. Entrance
You voted, and now we hike! Headwaters Park's Eagle Trail was voted one of the Top 10 Trails in Geauga Park District, so let's explore this trail together and see what makes it so special.

27 The Sky Tonight Planetarium Show

Sunday, October 27, 2–2:45 PM & 3–3:45 PM, Observatory Park, Robert McCullough Science Center
Join us for a planetarium presentation about what to watch for in the night sky this week. ♿

27 Campfire Cooking: Pie Iron Pot Pies

Sunday, October 27, 5–7 PM
Sunnybrook Preserve, Lodge
Fee: \$4 Geauga County residents, \$6 out-of-county
Learn a new outdoor skill and get inspired for your next camping adventure! Pie irons are great for sandwiches and dessert pies. This time we'll bring back a favorite, the chicken pot pie, and hopefully inspire some ideas for your next outing. **Registration required** for all participants. ♿



22 26 Timbertots: Outstanding Owls!

(Ages 3-5 w/adult) Tuesday, October 22, 10-11 AM & 1-2 PM, Claridon Woodlands, Judge Lester Taylor Lodge
Saturday, October 26, 10–11 AM & 1–2 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center
Join Nora the Explorer to discover what makes owls such a hoot with hands-on indoor activities and outdoor exploration. Dress for the weather. **Registration required** for all attending.

Adventure/Discovery Arts Astronomy Kids Seniors

2 Astrotots XL: Animal Astronauts

(Ages 6-11 w/adult)
Saturday, November 2, 9:30–10:45 AM & 1–2:15 PM, Observatory Park, Robert McCullough Science Center
Did you know that a variety of animals have left this planet and travelled in space? Come discover animals' place in the exploration of space, both yesteryear and in the future! Register just children ages 6-11. Registration required. ♿

3 Backcountry Hike

Sunday, November 3, 1–3:30 PM
The Rookery
Explore for evidence of wetland wildlife like beavers, otters and herons. Hike more than 2 miles on and off trail with wet, muddy conditions, downed logs and stream crossings. Held rain or shine, so dress for the weather and wear appropriate foot gear. Registration required.

4 Geauga Skywatchers: Navigate the Night Sky

Monday, November 4, 6:30–7:30 PM
Observatory Park, Robert McCullough Science Center
Enjoy a planetarium program to help you learn to find your way around the night sky. Designed for grades 6-12, but anyone can join. Registration required through Geauga County Public Library's website. In collaboration with the Chagrin Valley Astronomical Society, Geauga County Public Library, Burton Public Library and Foundation for Geauga Parks. Registration required. ♿

7 Early Morning Hike

Thursday, November 7, 8–9:30 AM
Big Creek Park, Aspen Grove
Join us for an early-morning up-paced hike with hilly terrain. Held rain or shine, so dress for the weather.

8 Hidden Gems Hike

Friday, November 8, 5–6:30 PM
Sunnybrook Preserve
Hike with a naturalist along these beautiful trails to discover some of Nature's hidden gems! Must have the ability to hike 2 miles over hilly terrain. Held rain or shine. Wear footwear that can get wet and muddy.

8 Meet the Artists: Wildlife Photography

Friday, November 8, 7–9 PM
The West Woods Nature Center
Vic Weizer has a passion for capturing images of birds of prey in Northeast Ohio. Dwight Boyer has a shared passion, photographing the beauty of wildlife in their natural habitat. Meet both these talented wildlife photographers and view their work.



9 Scout Day: Wolf Cubs - Finding Your Way Adventure

Saturday, November 9, 10–11:30 AM
Big Creek Park, Meyer Center
Wolf Cub Scouts, learn how to use a map and compass, then use those skills to go on an off-trail hike. Dress for the weather. Registration required for scouts only, but adult leader must attend.

9 Fire-Building Techniques

Saturday, November 9, 10 AM–Noon
Sunnybrook Preserve, Lodge
Let's practice some fire-building skills. We will explore modern fire-building techniques, plus ways to improvise a fire-starter in a pinch. Build your fire to roast a marshmallow or two. Registration required. ♿

9 Nature Trek Fitness Hike

Saturday, November 9, 1–2:30 PM
Frohning Meadows
Let's move it, people! Burn off those calories on this fitness hike, learning some cool Nature facts along the way. Must be able to hike up to 4.5 miles on various trail conditions. Held rain or shine, so dress accordingly and bring water.

9 Scout Day: Junior Girl Scouts - Outdoor Art Explorer Badge

Saturday, November 9, 1–3 PM
Big Creek Park, Meyer Center
Junior Girl Scouts, work on your Outdoor Art Explorer badge and explore Nature through art! Partially outdoors, so dress for the weather. Registration required for scouts only, but adult leader must attend.

10 Buckeye Trail LONG-Haul Hike!

(16.6 Miles)
Sunday, November 10, 8:30 AM–4:30 PM
Headwaters Park, Rt. 608 Maple Highlands Trail Parking Lot
A hike for experienced hikers looking for a long trek on paved and gravel trails. This is a shuttle service for a 16.6-mile self-guided hike along the Buckeye Trail. We'll meet at Headwaters to drop off cars, then shuttle you to the starting point at Big Creek Park. From there, you will simply walk back to your car, with an estimated hike time of 6-8 hours. Held rain or shine, so dress accordingly and bring water and food. Adults only, please. Registration required.

10 Nature Journaling: Exploring Journaling Materials

Sunday, November 10, 1–3:30 PM
The West Woods, Affelder House
Fee: \$20 Geauga residents, \$24 out-of-county
Attend this monthly series to learn basic journaling techniques to record your Nature observations. This month we'll explore the different kinds of multi-media materials used in nature journaling from paper, pens, and paints. Partially outdoors. Taking photos is optional. First-time participants must pay \$20 for Geauga residents or \$24 for out-of-county residents to purchase a new journal, pen and other supplies. Those who attended the series before, but not within the calendar year, must pay \$10 for Geauga residents or \$12 for out-of-county residents to cover additional instruction and supplies. Those who already registered within the calendar year are free. Registration required by phone only.

10 Seed Collecting & Meadow Meander

Sunday, November 10, 1:30–3:30 PM
Frohning Meadows
Take in a short indoor introduction to planting a meadow, followed by a hike in the meadow with a fantastic variety of meadow and prairie plants to collect seeds for the Park District, plus some seeds to take home. Ages 12+; Registration required.



10 Comeback Critters: Home Again in Ohio

Sunday, November 10, 3–4 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center
Learn how otters, bears, eagles, osprey, Sandhill Cranes and other wildlife have reclaimed Ohio homelands including Geauga County. What may reappear in coming years?

10 Night Hike

Sunday, November 10, 6–7:30 PM
Welton's Gorge
While hiking 2 miles of trails, we'll keep our eyes and ears open for wildlife as some are settling down for the night and others are just getting up.

12 The Great Lakes in 6 Pies

Tuesday, November 12, 6:30–7:30 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center
Mmm-mmm, time for pie! Come and learn six pie recipes that feature native plants of the Great Lakes region: maple, pawpaw, Concord grape, groundcherry, wildrice, and black walnut. Registration required. ♿

15 Full Moon Hike: The Beaver Moon

Friday, November 15, 6–7 PM
Observatory Park

Join us for this naturalist-led hike of 1.5-miles over level terrain at a gentle pace to learn about beavers and experience nature at night. Then, weather permitting, observe the rising full moon and the night sky using park telescopes. 🗺️

16 17 Weave a Laundry Basket

2-Day Workshop, Saturday, November 16, Noon–5 PM -AND- Sunday, November 17, Noon–5 PM
Hollbrook Hollows, Lodge
Fee: \$65 Geauga residents, \$75 out-of-county
Advanced basket-weavers, build on your skills by weaving a double-walled tote basket. This is a two-day class. Must be able to follow a basket pattern for design detail. Due to program preparation expenses, a refund may not be processed if cancellation occurs within five days of the program. **Registration required.** 🗺️



16 Welton's Gorge Trail Hike

Saturday, November 16, 1:30–3 PM
Welton's Gorge

Join a naturalist for an afternoon walk on the Gorge Overlook and Dogwood trails to see what the season has to offer.

16 Nassau Astronomy Night with CVAS

Saturday, November 16, 7–11 PM
Observatory Park, Nassau
Astronomical Station

Stop in to discover this awesome facility and join members of the Chagrin Valley Astronomical Society taking in the wonders of the night sky using our restored telescope! A limited number of people will be permitted inside the building at a time, which may result in a wait to enter. Cancelled if cloudy; check our website or social media for notice.

16 Nature Night Lecture Series: Stream Fish

Saturday, November 16, 7–8:30 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Darters, shiners, dace, madtoms – our waterways are filled with a multitude of little fishes that many people never notice. Some of these fish are brightly colored, others have interesting behaviors, and all are important to the health of our ecosystem. Discover that there are more than just gamefish in our waters! 🗺️



17 Top 10 Trails Hike: Ansel's Cave Trail

Sunday, November 17, 1–3 PM
The West Woods

You voted, and now we hike! The West Wood's Ansel's Cave Trail was voted one of the Top 10 Trails in Geauga Park District, so let's explore this trail together and see what makes it so special. Dress for the weather and wear sturdy, waterproof foot gear. Hike is 2 miles over hilly terrain with a stream crossing.

17 Waterfowl Watch

Sunday, November 17, 3–5 PM
LaDue Reservoir, Boathouse Parking Lot

Meet up to scan the shores of LaDue Reservoir for migratory ducks, loons, grebes, swans and Bald Eagles during prime migration time. Spotting scopes provided. Van seats available first-come, first-served; caravan behind if van fills. Bring binoculars. 🗺️

21 Elderberries: Coyotes, Our Town & Country Canines

Thursday, November 21, 1–2:30 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Seniors, join Naturalist Linda to learn amazing facts about coyotes. Refreshments sponsored by Eliza at Chagrin Falls. In collaboration with the Geauga County Department on Aging and UH Geauga Medical Center. **Registration required.** 🗺️

21 Maple Town Tune Traders

Thursday, November 21, 7–9 PM
Veterans Legacy Woods, Freedom Hall

Singers and musicians take turns presenting tunes as others join in. All musical genres, instruments and musicianship levels welcome. Come to play, sing, or simply enjoy as an audience member. 🗺️

23 Creek Trail Hike at Big Creek

Saturday, November 23, 1–3 PM
Big Creek Park, Woodin Road
Horse Trail Parking Lot

Hike 2.1 miles along the Creek Trail with some steep hills, scenic views of Big Creek, and a stream crossing that could be 12 inches deep. Dress for the weather with sturdy footwear that can get wet. Participants will hike to the Tupelo Pond entrance on Ravenna Road, then we will shuttle you back to your vehicle in a park van. Ages 10+; no younger children, please. **Registration required.**

🗺️ Fully Accessible 🗺️ Nature Scopes

23 Hidden Gems Hike: Burton Wetlands Nature Preserve

Saturday, November 23, 10–11:30 AM
Burton Wetlands Nature Preserve

Hike with a naturalist on these beautiful trails to discover some of Nature's hidden gems along the trail and on Lake Kelso!

23 Marsh Mammal Viewing

Saturday, November 23, 4:30–6 PM
The Rookery

Beavers, muskrats, otters and mink all swim in our local wetlands. Learn about these amazing creatures before setting up an evening stake-out to see what species might appear. 🗺️



24 Waterfowl Migration Van Trip

Sunday, November 24, 9 AM–4 PM
The West Woods

November ushers in colder weather, and with it comes the waterfowl. We'll keep our options open, but visit Lake Erie and other large bodies of water to look for gulls, ducks, grebes and more. Bring a sack lunch and binoculars, and dress warmly. Adults only, please. **Registration required.**

24 Hound Hike

Sunday, November 24, 9–10 AM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Dogs and their humans, join us for a hike on Ansel's Cave! This will be a 2-mile medium-level hike. Cold Nose Companions Dog Training will also share some helpful tips and tricks to practice during the hike. Bring dog towels, water, a water bowl, poop scoop and bags for dog clean-up. Only one dog per handler. Dog must be on leash (8 ft max), under control and non-aggressive to people and other dogs.

24 Nature's Ornaments: Make it Yourself!

Sunday, November 24, 1–4 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

From evergreens to icicles, the beauty of the holiday season can be seen in Nature. Try your hand at making some of your own unique ornaments from natural items. Register for the program and drop in at any time during program hours to make one or all of the ornaments. **Registration required** for all attending; children must be accompanied by an adult. 🗺️

NOVEMBER

Registration begins at 10 AM on September 20 for Geauga residents and September 27 for others. Sign up online or by calling 440-286-9516.

Adventure/Discovery Arts Astronomy Kids Seniors

24 The Sky Tonight Planetarium Show

Sunday, November 24, 2–2:45 PM & 3–3:45 PM, Observatory Park, Robert McCullough Science Center
Join us for a planetarium presentation about what to watch for in the night sky this week. ♿

29 Hike Your Turkey Off

Friday, November 29, 9 AM–12:30 PM
The West Woods, Affelder Parking Lot
With Thanksgiving leaving us feeling a bit overstuffed, it's time to hike that turkey off with a steady-paced, calorie-burning 8-mile hike. That's right, 8 miles – one mile for every extra helping!
Registration required.

29 Wildlife Detective Bingo

Friday, November 29, 2–3:30 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center
Grab your family and friends for a fun Nature twist on traditional BINGO! We'll show animal clues like tracks, feathers and more, and the first one who has all the animals on their card wins! Small Nature-themed prizes will be awarded. ♿

RECURRING PROGRAMS

1 2 Astrotots: Animals in Space (Ages 3-5 w/adult)

Friday, November 1, 9:30–10:30 AM, 11 AM–Noon & 1–2 PM
Saturday, November 2, 11:30 AM–12:30 PM
Observatory Park, Robert McCullough Science Center

Not all astronauts are people! Many, many different animals have travelled into space! Come learn why and help Commander Melvin decide which creatures have travelled in spaceships. Register just children ages 3-5. **Registration required.** ♿



1 2 Holly Days Artisan Boutique & Mistletoe Market

Friday, November 1, 5–8 PM, Saturday, November 2, 10 AM–4 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Browse a premier selection of Nature-themed holiday decor and gifts for sale by regional artisans – the perfect opportunity to find unique, handmade items for everyone on your list! Join us on Friday evening as well as Saturday to enjoy indoor AND outdoor vendors, as well as our Mistletoe Market featuring handmade gifts created by young artisans. ♿

5 19 Geauga Walkers

Tuesday, November 5, 1–2:30 PM
Big Creek Park, Aspen Grove
Tuesday, November 19, 1–2:30 PM
Eldon Russell Park
Hike for active seniors of 2 miles. Naturalist leads hikes in Geauga Park District parks. Other hikes held weekly in Geauga County and surrounding areas. Call Geauga Senior Center for full schedule: 440-279-2167.

8 16 Timbertots: Turkey Time! (Ages 3-5 w/adult)

Friday, November 8, 10–11 AM & 1–2 PM
The Rookery, Great Blue Heron Lodge
Saturday, November 16, 10–11 AM & 1–2 PM, Sunnybrook Preserve, Lodge
What goes gobble gobble and struts around the park? Preschoolers having fun learning about turkeys! Activities will be indoors and out. **Registration required** for all attending.

8 22 Make a Spectroscope

Friday, November 8, 7–8 PM
Observatory Park, Robert McCullough Science Center ♿
Friday, November 22, 7–8 PM 📺
Make-and-take a spectroscope and learn how this astronomical tool has let humans study faraway planets, stars and galaxies. Followed by night sky viewing, weather permitting. Nov. 22 is a virtual program where you will learn how to make your own spectroscope. We will send you a link a few days before the program. **Registration required.**

8 9 22 23 Night Sky Viewing

Fridays, November 8 & 22, 8–11 PM
Saturdays, November 9 & 23, 7–11 PM
Observatory Park
If skies are clear, observe the night sky through the Oberle telescope and other telescopes spaced out around the plaza. Planetarium presentation if cloudy. ♿ 📺



DECEMBER

Registration begins at 10 AM on September 20 for Geauga residents and September 27 for others. Sign up online or by calling 440-286-9516.

Scout Snowshoe Call List

Month of December
The West Woods
Scouts, register to receive notifications of naturalist-led snowshoe programs when weather conditions are right. Borrow our snowshoes or bring your own! Programs may be any time, day or evening, and at any of Park District parks depending on snow conditions. Scouts must attend with adult leaders. **Registration required** beginning November 1.

2 Geauga Skywatchers

Monday, December 2, 6:30–7:30 PM
Chardon Library
Join us for an astronomy-themed presentation designed for grades 6-12, but anyone can join. Topic will be announced online. **Registration required** through Geauga County Public Library's register. In collaboration with the Chagrin Valley Astronomical Society, Geauga County Public Library, Burton Public Library and Foundation for Geauga Parks. **Registration required.** ♿

7 Holiday Greens Workshop

Saturday, December 7, 9 AM–Noon & 1–4 PM
Swine Creek Reservation, Lodge
Fee: \$33 Geauga residents, \$36 out-of-county
Decorate for the holidays by making a beautiful arrangement from fresh evergreens. Select from three options: 1) table arrangement with candle, 2) wreath or 3) pair of mini table arrangements in Christmas mugs/ramekins. Visit our website under News & Updates for photos resembling each project and more specific project descriptions. A variety of ribbons, evergreens and pinecones will be provided. Bring any accents you wish to add, as well as pruners and a plastic bag to protect your car seat from water. **Registration required.** ♿

7 Scout Day: Webelos Cub Scouts - Earth Rocks Adventure

Saturday, December 7, 9–11:30 AM
The West Woods, Nature Center
Webelos, work toward your Earth Rocks Elective Adventure. Program will be held both indoors and outdoors, so dress for the weather. Only scouts need to register, but adult must attend. **Registration required.**

7 Thompson Ledges Backcountry Hike

Saturday, December 7, 10 AM–Noon
Thompson Ledges Township Park, 16755 Thompson Road
Explore the northern undeveloped portion of Thompson Ledges on primitive trails through oak and hemlock forests hoping for snow-covered hemlocks decorating the ledges. Must be capable of traveling several miles through rocky, uneven terrain with some steep slopes and logs to step over. Dress for the weather with sturdy footwear. Walking sticks and traction enhancers like Yaktrax recommended. **Registration required.**



Photo by Sonny Williams

7 Greens for Giving

Saturday, December 7, 11 AM–Noon, Noon–1 PM, 1–2 PM and 2–3 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center
A make-&GIVE event to create 300+ evergreen decorations to be given to seniors along with Geauga County Department on Aging's home-delivered meals. All supplies provided. Brighten a senior's holiday season with your thoughtful creation! **Registration required**; please register for only one session. ♿

7 Thompson Ledges Hike

Saturday, December 7, 1–2:30 PM
Thompson Ledges Township Park, 16755 Thompson Road
Explore the improved southern portion of magnificent Thompson Ledges on primitive trails through oak and hemlock forests with the possibility of early snow on the hemlocks. Hikers must be capable of traveling several miles through rocky, uneven terrain with some steep slopes and logs to step over. Dress for the weather with sturdy footwear. Walking sticks and traction enhancers like Yaktrax recommended. **Registration required.**

8 Hidden Gems Hike: Eldon Russell Park

Sunday, December 8, 1–2 PM
Eldon Russell Park
Discover the beautiful natural wonders of this park along its trails. This easy-level hike will be no longer than 1.5 miles. Held rain or shine. Wear footwear that can get wet and muddy.

8 Nature Journaling: Animal Tracks

Sunday, December 8, 1–3:30 PM
Big Creek Park, Meyer Center
Fee: \$20 Geauga residents, \$24 out-of-county
Attend this monthly series to learn basic journaling techniques to record Nature observations. This month our inspiration will be tracks and the animals who left them. Partially outdoors. Taking photos is optional. First-time participants must pay \$20 for Geauga residents or \$24 for out-of-county residents to purchase a new journal, pen and other supplies. Those who attended the series before, but not within the calendar year, must pay \$10 for Geauga residents or \$12 for out-of-county residents to cover additional instruction and supplies. Those who already registered within the calendar year are free. **Registration required** by phone only.

8 Hound Hike

Sunday, December 8, 3:30–4:30 PM
Frohning Meadows
Dog and their humans, join us for an easy 2-mile hike. Cold Nose Companions Dog Training will also meet us to share some helpful tips and tricks to practice during the hike. Bring dog towels, water, a water bowl, poop scoop and bags for dog clean-up. Only one dog per handler. Dog must be on leash (8 ft max), under control and non-aggressive to people and other dogs.

10 Early Morning Hike

Tuesday, December 10, 8–9 AM
Eldon Russell Park
Join a naturalist for an early-morning up-paced hike on the primitive Duane Ferris Trail.

11 Inclusive Experience: Evergreen Creation

Wednesday, December 11, 10–11:30 AM
The West Woods, Nature Center
A special program for adults in the developmental disability community! Create an easy-but-impressive evergreen centerpiece to take home. Caregivers should plan on assisting. **Registration required** by phone only. ♿

13 Paracord Holiday Ornament (Adults only)

Friday, December 13, 6–8 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center
Fee: \$10 Geauga residents, \$14 out-of-county
Choose two holiday-inspired paracord colors and learn how to weave a global knot to create a charming little ornament. This is an intermediate decorative knot; we'll work through step by step. Adults only, please. **Registration required.** ♿

13 Ohio's Ancient Skywatchers

Friday, December 13, 7–8 PM
Observatory Park, Robert McCullough Science Center
December brings the Winter Solstice, which makes it the perfect time to learn how Ohio's ancient cultures highlighted this important date in their architecture. Let's explore the astronomical hints left in ancient sites built by Ohio's ancient Native American cultures. Followed by night sky viewing, weather permitting. ♿



14 Ho Ho Ho Hiking with Santa & Buddy the Elf

Saturday, December 14, 10–11:30 AM & 1–2:30 PM,
The West Woods, Nature Center
Discover the wonders of the season on a magical hike with Santa Claus and Buddy the Elf! Santa will also be available after the hike for photos and wish lists. **Registration required** for all attending.

14 Fire-Building Techniques

Saturday, December 14, 10 AM–Noon
Headwaters Park, Boathouse
Let's practice some fire-building skills. We'll explore modern fire building techniques and ways to improvise fire starting in a pinch. Build your fire to roast a marshmallow or two. **Registration required.** ♿

14 Hike The West Creek Conservancy Addition

Saturday, December 14, 1–2:30 PM
Observatory Park, Nassau Astronomical Station
Visit the newest addition to Geauga Park District's parks and preserves! This is a soggy, off-trail hike, so participants should dress accordingly. The hundred-acre site where we will meet, adjacent to Observatory Park, was formerly the West Creek Conservancy's Cuyahoga Headwaters Initiative. Adults only, please. **Registration required.**

Adventure/Discovery Arts Astronomy Kids Seniors

14 Nature at Night Hike

Saturday, December 14, 7–8:30 PM
Walter C. Best Nature Preserve

Walking through a park in the dark is a unique experience. All our senses become enhanced as we hike without lights, making wildlife easier to discover. Ages 8+; no younger children, please. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

15 Top 10 Trails Hike: Gorge Overlook Trail

Sunday, December 15, 9–10:30 AM
Welton's Gorge

You voted, and now we hike! Welton's Gorge's Gorge Overlook Trail was voted one of the Top 10 Trails in Geauga Park District, so let's explore this trail together and see what makes it so special. We will also hike the beautiful Dogwood Trail as well. Hike is approximately 2 miles over rolling terrain.

15 The Sky Tonight Planetarium Show

Sunday, December 15, 2–2:45 PM
Observatory Park, Robert McCullough Science Center

Join us for a planetarium presentation about what to watch for in the night sky this week.

15 Research in Our Parks: Survey Results

Sunday, December 15, 2:30–3:30 PM

Learn about cool discoveries made in Geauga parks from butterfly, dragonfly and bird surveys conducted during the past spring to fall. This is a virtual program using Zoom. Sign up and we will send you the link to attend. **Registration required.**

15 Full Moon Hike: The Bear Moon

Sunday, December 15, 5–6 PM
Observatory Park

Join us for this naturalist-led hike of 1.5-miles over level terrain at a gentle pace. Learn about Black Bears and experience Nature at night. Then observe the rising full moon and night sky using park telescopes, weather permitting.

19 Elderberries: Memories of the First Moon Men

Thursday, December 19, 1–2:30 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Over a half-century has passed since we watched and wondered about the first human to set foot on the moon. Let's celebrate that historic moment together with presenter and Park District volunteer Jann Glove by attending this fast-paced, fun and fact-filled medley of moon-landing minutia and everything you never knew about the infamous Apollo 11 crew. Refreshments sponsored by Jennings at Notre Dame Village. In collaboration with the Geauga County Department on Aging and UH Geauga Medical Center. **Registration required.**

19 Maple Town Tune Traders

Thursday, December 19, 7–9 PM
Veterans Legacy Woods, Freedom Hall
Singers and musicians take turns presenting tunes as others join in. All musical genres, instruments and musicianship levels welcome. Come to play, sing, or simply enjoy as an audience member.

21 Winter Solstice Celebration!

Saturday, December 21, 7–10 PM
The West Woods

Celebrate the longest night of the year by exploring the roots of our modern holiday celebrations indoors and out! Enjoy treats, hot beverages and music; create a solstice-themed craft; stroll the self-guided Solstice Traditions Trail, a magical, candlelit route through the forest; and watch interactive skits highlighting solstice traditions of various civilizations with costumed interpreters. Please dress for the weather, as much of the program is outside. No dogs, please. Program is an open-house format ending at 10 PM. Shuttles from ASM will run 6:30-10:30 PM.



21 Nassau Astronomy Night with CVAS

Saturday, December 21, 7–11 PM
Observatory Park, Nassau Astronomical Station

Stop in to discover this awesome facility and join members of the Chagrin Valley Astronomical Society taking in the wonders of the night sky using our restored telescope! A limited number of people will be permitted inside the building at a time, which may result in a wait to enter. Cancelled if cloudy; check our website or social media for notice.

22 Holiday Plant Hike

Sunday, December 22, 2–3:30 PM
Burton Wetlands Nature Preserve
Forests and fields have mostly gone dormant in the winter, but many of the plants we can still find have a holiday or seasonal connection. Join us on this walk through winter woodland and meadow to discover a variety of these plants.

RECURRING PROGRAMS

3 17 Geauga Walkers

Hike & Holiday Lunch Tuesday, December 3, Noon–2:45 PM, Claridon Woodlands, Judge Lester Taylor Lodge
This is the annual holiday potluck luncheon, so please bring a dish to share. Naturalist-led hike (approximately 2 miles) at noon, lunch at 1 PM, then indoor presentation.

Tuesday, December 17, 1–2:30 PM
Sunnybrook Preserve

Hike for active seniors of 2 miles. Naturalist leads hikes in Geauga Park District parks. Other hikes held weekly in Geauga County and surrounding areas. Call Geauga Senior Center for full schedule: 440-279-2167.



8 9 Timbertots: Evergreen Artists!

(Ages 3-5 w/adult)
Sunday, December 8
10–11:30 AM & 1–2:30 PM
Monday, December 9,
10–11:30 AM & 1–2:30 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Discover through fun activities all the reasons evergreens are excellent in Nature and at home! We'll use real greens to make a centerpiece to take home, with bows and pinecones provided; bring small decorations if desired, and hand clippers if you have them. Partially outdoors, so dress for the weather. **Registration required** for all attending.

13 14 Night Sky Viewing

Friday, December 13, 8–11 PM
Saturday, December 14, 7–11 PM
Observatory Park, Robert McCullough Science Center

If skies are clear, observe the night sky through the Oberle telescope and other telescopes spaced out around the plaza. Planetarium presentation if cloudy.

31 New Year's Eve Nature Celebration!

Tuesday, December 31, 11 AM–12:30 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center
Celebrate New Year's Eve with fun activities for all ages! There will even be a "toast" at 12:00 NOON! Pizza and beverages provided. **Registration required** for all attending beginning December 5 at 10 AM.

ARCHERY FOR EVERYONE

OCTOBER archery programs are held at Chickagami Park's outdoor archery range. Arrive 15 minutes early to walk to the archery range.

Archery Practice (Ages 9+)
Thursday, October 3, 10–10:30 AM,
10:45–11:15 AM, 11:30 AM–Noon
Improve your aim with these 30-minute practice sessions. Must have participated in our Introduction to Archery program to register. Children must be accompanied by adult; no younger children, please. **Registration required.**



Archery Games for Homeschool Families
Thursday, October 3, 1–2:30 PM
Home-school families with children ages 9+ improve your aim through playing archery games. You must have participated in an Introduction to Archery program to register. Families with children ages 9+ Register all attending. **Registration required.**

Archery Games for Adults
Thursday, October 3, 3–4:30 PM
Improve your aim through playing archery games. Must have participated in our Introduction to Archery program to register. **Registration required.**

Introduction to Archery for Families
Saturday, October 19, 10:30 AM–Noon
Families with children ages 9+, learn the basics of target archery together. Participants must be 50" or taller and wear closed-toe shoes. No younger children, please. Children must be accompanied by an adult. **Registration required** for all attending.

Archery Games for Families
Saturday, October 19, 1–2:30 PM
Families with children ages 9+, improve your aim through playing archery games. Must have participated in our Introduction to Archery program and be at least 50" tall to register. No younger children, please. Children must be accompanied by an adult. **Registration required** for all attending.

Introduction to Archery for Adults

Saturday, October 19, 3–4:30 PM
Learn the basics of target archery with other adults. Wear close-toed shoes. **Registration required.**



NOVEMBER & DECEMBER archery programs are held at The Rookery's Great Blue Heron Lodge

Archery Practice (Ages 9+)
Saturday, November 30, 10:30–11 AM &
11:15–11:45 AM
Sunday, December 29, 1–1:30 PM &
1:45–2:15 PM
Improve your aim through these 30-minute practice sessions. Must have participated in our Introduction to Archery program to register. Children must be accompanied by adult; no younger children, please. **Registration required.** ♿



Archery Games for Families
Saturday, November 30, 1–2:30 PM
Sunday, December 29, 3–4:30 PM
Families with children ages 9+, improve your aim through playing archery games. Must have participated in our Introduction to Archery program and be at least 50" tall to register. No younger children, please. Children must be accompanied by an adult. **Registration required** for all attending. ♿

Archery Games for Adults
Saturday, November 30, 3–4:30 PM
Improve your aim through playing archery games. Must have participated in our Introduction to Archery program to register. **Registration required.** ♿

Introduction to Archery for Families (Ages 9+ w/adult)
Sunday, December 29, 10:30 AM–Noon
Families with children ages 9+, learn the basics of target archery together. Participants must be 50" or taller and wear closed-toe shoes. No younger children, please. Children must be accompanied by an adult. **Registration required** for all attending. ♿

Archery Camp for Kids
(Ages 9-15) Monday, December 30
Ages 9-11: 9 AM–Noon
Ages 12-15: 1–4 PM
Kids, learn archery during this three-hour drop-off Archery Camp! We'll outline safety protocols, review how to use the equipment, practice techniques, and work on our aim by playing a few games. We'll even take a nature walk as part of our day. **Registration required.**



Geauga Gems Trekking Series Continues in 2025!

The Geauga Gems Trekking Series kicks off its sixth year, the year of the topaz, with registration opening January 1 for Geauga residents and January 15 for others. You'll still hike four trails a season to keep on track this year, but your choices will widen. Sign-up is FREE for all Geauga residents but costs \$10 for out-of-county residents. For more information as soon as it becomes available, visit our website under *Activities*, then *Hiking, Walking & Running*.

Get to Know Your Newest Park: Troy Wetlands

A new park where you can explore features like none other in Geauga Park District, Troy Wetlands consists of a beautiful open marsh landscape with an accessible boardwalk — a gem available for all to discover at 18725 Claridon-Troy Road in Troy Township.

This 60-acre park is also unique for Geauga County because its waters flow into the Mahoning River, which many people are surprised to learn is part of the Ohio River watershed.



Photo by Dave Dreimiller



Two trails here total .35 miles featuring an elevated scenic overlook deck and boardwalk built by Geauga Park District's talented in-house construction crew. Other points of interest include fishing platforms (its ponds were formerly part of a fish farm), picnic tables, and several other places to rest and take in the amazing view. Plan a visit this fall for optimal viewing of migratory waterfowl and you may be surprised by what you spot!

According to Reports on eBird.org ...

Since its opening, Troy Wetlands has stayed neck-and-neck with LaDue Reservoir and Lucia S. Nash Preserve for the highest number of bird species sighted in Geauga County and reported to eBird.org. Its combination of wetlands and forest provide habitat for a wide variety of birds, and its boardwalks and elevated deck provide fantastic vantage points to see all there is to see. Will fall migration season help Troy Wetlands rise to the top? Chief Naturalist John Kolar says it's going to be close, but only time will tell...we'll keep you posted on social media.



ADVENTURES in Geocaching



N 41° 27.246
W -81° 22.784'

Check out the new geocache
at Russell Uplands Preserve in Russell Twp.

Expires January 1, 2026. Find details on our website under Activities.

Don't rush your pace on the Hickory Trace.
The trail may be narrow unless you're a sparrow.
Four bridges you cross, so please don't get lost.
Heading uphill, time to rejoice – this trail offers more
than one choice.
If you find an unmarked fork, you'd better turn around,
Since that is where this cache can be found.
It's snug as a bug, but not in a rug.

Device-driven? Try Agents of Discovery



You've never explored The West Woods like this before! Agents is a free game and a fun way to learn about Nature and wildlife. New challenges drop each season. Explore the app now by downloading it on your smartphone and creating a free account, then head to the park for your first mission. What are you waiting for?



Returning this season...



BIRD IN THE HAND & SNOWSHOE BORROWING

Starting in October, visit The West Woods' Bird in the Hand Feeding Station, where birds land right on your hand for birdseed — a truly priceless experience!

Snowshoe borrowing is another great way to connect with the Great Outdoors and get some wintertime exercise. While Nature hasn't been consistent or generous with the white stuff lately, we're holding out hope that this season will be a good one for this wonderful sport. Borrowing is free for Geauga residents. For details about both of these Nature connections, visit our website under *Activities*, then *Birdwatching* or *Snowshoeing*.



Donations to
Gauga Park District
May through
July 2024

Thank You to All of Our Generous Donors

Blackbrook Audubon Society	Donation for The West Woods Nature Center	\$200.00
Cabinetworks Group	Unrestricted Donation	\$200.00
Cleveland Foundation	Lewis & Ruth Affelder General Fund Support	\$2,057.00
Foundation for Geauga Parks	Nature Writing Contest Prizes	\$450.00
Gauga Arts Council	Donation for Community Art Shows	\$1,000.00
Matthew Rambo	1,000 Trees Sponsorship	\$250.00
Frank Fletcher	Unrestricted Donation	\$250.00
Jennifer J Jeromin	Veterans Tribute Plaque	\$500.00

As a naturalist with Geauga Park District, I have the honor of educating people of all ages about Nature. However, I must admit that children ages 3 to 5 especially bring me joy as I get to play a part in introducing them to the world around us. Every month, the children and I explore different topics, though few of our explorations repeat from year to year. One such exception is our annual "Evergreen Artists" tradition in December. This program began more than 20 years ago and explores evergreens through a story, activities and outdoor exploration. Then the last half-hour is spent with each child making their own evergreen centerpiece to take home and enjoy for the holidays.

Over the years, I've used a variety of activities to help the children learn about evergreen trees, but the most popular and effective one is a short rhyming song that a fellow naturalist and I came up with during our lunch break. *The Evergreen Song's* lyrics are printed here on the green tree. I think the reason adults and children request this song year after year is because it's not only fun to sing, but it showcases so many fundamental facts about evergreen trees.

For each verse of *The Evergreen Song* here, I'll share a little more information that you can consider as you hum this song for the rest of the day!

The Evergreen Song (sung to the tune of *Jingle Bells*)

**Evergreens,
Evergreens,
Evergreens are fine.
They have cones,
give animals homes,
Cedar, spruce and pine!
Evergreens,
Evergreens,
Evergreens are great.
Big and small,
short and tall,
and fun to decorate!**

Evergreens, Evergreens, Evergreens are fine...

The leaves of deciduous broad-leaved trees lose their green pigment and ultimately all fall off, leaving only the new buds for the next year. Evergreen species, however, slowly shed a portion of their needles from summer through fall, so that most of the tree remains green all year, adding a pretty "fine" color to the winter landscape. One exception to this is the Eastern Larch (or Tamarack), an "evergreen" that sheds its needles all at once.

They have cones, give animals homes...

Trees are grouped into two main categories: Deciduous and Coniferous. Most evergreens (a.k.a. "conifers") are in the coniferous category. Deciduous trees have flowers which produce fruits containing seeds. Coniferous trees have two types of cones. One, a pollen cone, fertilizes the other: a seed cone, which we recognize as what is commonly referred to as a "pinecone."

Since evergreens produce protein-rich seeds inside their cones, and their branches remain covered with needles year round, many animals like squirrels, chipmunks and birds use evergreens for food and shelter.

Cedar, spruce and pine...

Although many people refer to evergreens in general as "pine trees," conifers are actually divided into many different families and genera. The pine family contains pines which are genus *Pinus*. Spruce is also in the family of pines, but the genus *Picea*. In Ohio, we don't have true native cedar, but we do have the native Eastern red-cedar, which is in the Cypress family and genus *Juniperus*.

Big and small, short and tall...

Evergreens come in a huge range of sizes. The tallest tree in the world (located in California) is a conifer. The Sequoia that holds this record is 380.3 feet tall. Ohio's evergreens range in size from the tall White Pine at 80-120 feet to the shorter Eastern red-cedar at 30-50 feet.

...and fun to decorate!

For me, winter begins when Geauga Park District offers its various evergreen workshops and programs. Whether you decorate an evergreen centerpiece to donate through our "Greens for Giving" outreach program, attend our Timbertots preschool program with your child, or sign up for our Holiday Greens workshop to choose from a variety of projects to make and take home, you'll have a fun time adding a natural addition to your holiday décor!

So this season, take the time to appreciate the amazing evergreens in the parks and around your neighborhood!



Creatures We Enjoy at Halloween That Really Aren't So Scary

Fall is a fun time of summer-to-winter transition. It is also time for two holidays that often have animals associated with them. The turkey is used during Thanksgiving in line with its feelings of togetherness and gratitude. But the animals we think of during Halloween time are considered scary or creepy. Are they, though? Not really. They pose no threat to humans and are actually _____ to our environment!

To find the word that completes this sentence, use the clues to guess the animals related to Halloween.



A creature that can eat thousands of insects in one night, flying but not a bird. Its wings have bones more similar to a hand and covered by a thin membrane.



A large bird considered to be one of Nature's cleaners. Often it doesn't have any feathers on its head. Its keen sense of smell helps it find its food — mainly dead animals.

A creature with no legs. It uses its muscles, scales and friction to move in different ways. It uses its tongue to collect scent from the air.

A bird that is the largest of the crow species. Its name is another word for a glossy black color. In some cultures, it is a symbol of darkness.

A strong emotion caused by the feeling of danger — what we feel when we are afraid.



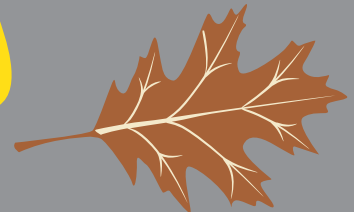
A creature with eight legs. It can be hairy or smooth and spins silk, creating webs to catch its prey.

A black bird whose name is associated with a dressed-up character hung up in cornfields that is meant to scare these birds away.





A creature with six legs and three body parts. Some have wings, some do not. Some are pollinators, and some are a food source for other animals.



A creature with rough, bumpy skin that was believed to be a companion to witches. If you touch it, will you get warts? No way, that's just a myth!

A bird with large eyes that is active and hunts at night. Depending on its species, its sounds can vary from hoots to screams and wild laughter — maybe just a little eerie.



Have You Ever Written a Haiku Before?

A haiku is usually only 3 lines long and doesn't rhyme. It has 5 syllables in the first line, 7 syllables in the second line, and 5 syllables in the third line. Haikus are often about Nature, a feeling, or a moment when you experienced something.

Try to think about something in Nature that you saw (or something you felt or experienced) and write your own haiku! Here's an example about an owl.

The owl is stunning
as it's swooping down to hunt
I am left in awe

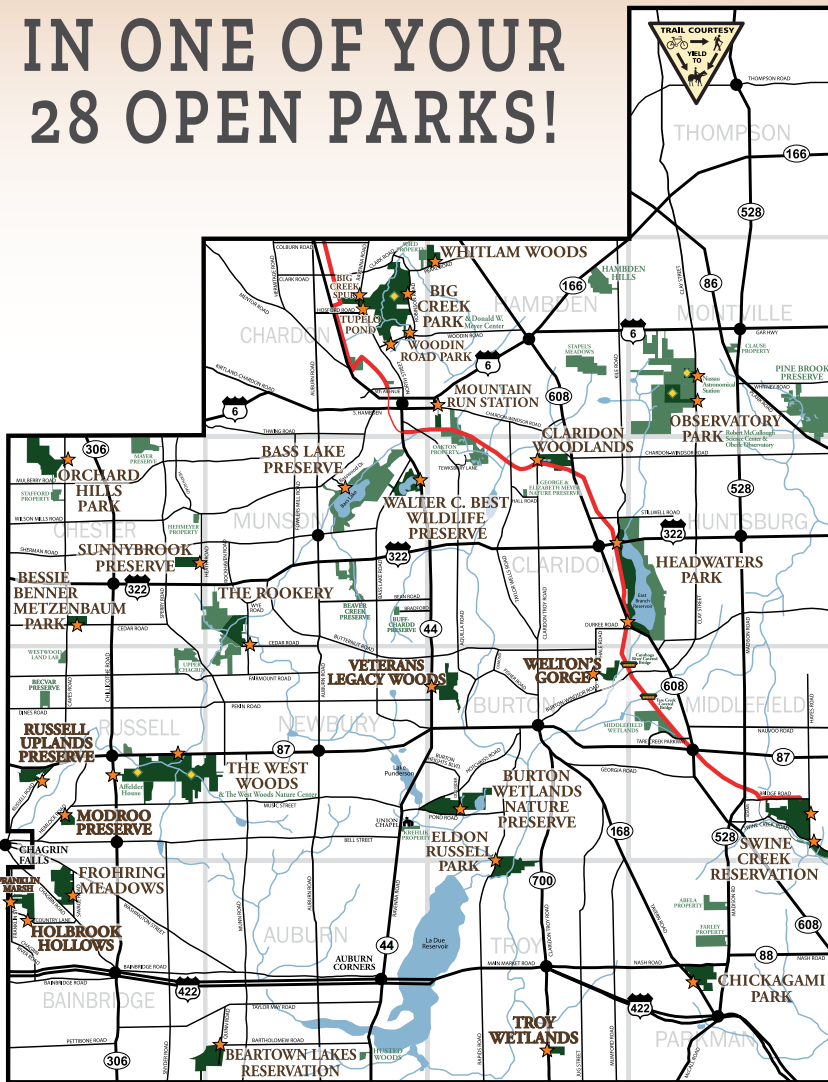




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**A unique, juried
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Geauga Park District
invites you to find
holiday decor &
gift items for
everyone on
your list!

**Friday, Nov. 1, 5-8 PM &
Saturday, Nov. 2, 10 AM-4 PM**
The West Woods Nature Center
9465 Kinsman Road (Rt. 87) in Russell Twp.

Plus, shop
handmade gifts
and artwork
made by youth

**Mistletoe
Market**



Answers to word puzzle: bat, vulture, snake, raven, fear, spider, crow, insect, toad, owl - BENEFICIAL