

PARK EXPLORER

GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT ACTIVITY GUIDE



WINTER 2025

4 One man's goal to bike and hike 60 miles for his 60 years

16 A groundbreaking stream creation at Veterans Legacy Woods

17 Discover The West Woods' new trail, named for one gigantic resident

18 Thoughts on appreciating winter's natural treasures

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.



Snowshoe Programs

January 1 - March 31

Register to add your name to one or both of these call/email lists for spontaneous naturalist-led snowshoe programs that will be "called into action" when weather conditions are just right! Borrow our snowshoes (first come, first served) or bring your own. Programs may be at any time day or evening and at any of Geauga Park District's parks depending on conditions. **Registration required.**

Snowshoe Program Call List

For general naturalist-led snowshoe adventures

Learn to Snowshoe Call List

For a special naturalist-led Learn-to program



Geauga Gems Trekking Series Continues in 2025!

The Geauga Gems Trekking Series is kicking off its sixth year, the year of the topaz, with registration opening January 1 for Geauga residents (FREE) and January 15 for others (\$10). Details about registration on page 17.



Saturday February 1, 6-9 PM at Big Creek Park

Meet us in the park to enjoy a fun new special event celebrating the season with winter treats, owl hikes, snow games, an EPIC bonfire and more. **Free fun for the whole family!** *Details on page 9.*



February 15 - April 10 • The West Woods

Register to add your name for the call/email list for our annual program to witness the natural phenomenon of spring breeding behavior of Wood Frogs, Spring Peepers and possibly large salamanders as they move into woodland pools on a warm, rainy night. *Details on page 10.*



Friday, Saturday & Sunday, February 14, 15 & 16 11 AM - 4 PM at The West Woods Nature Center

Join us at the big windows to help identify and count birds, and become an official Citizen Scientist, during this worldwide bird count. *Details on page 11.*



Sundays, February 23, March 2 & 9 • Noon - 4 PM at Swine Creek Reservation in Middlefield Twp.

Get a sweet taste of how maple sugaring methods have evolved throughout history, help gather sap in the sugarbush with a horse-drawn sled, and see sap boil in the sugar house!

Also a stop March 2 & 9 on the statewide Ohio Maple Madness Tour (ohiomaple.org) and Maple Tour of Northeast Ohio (mpneoh.com)

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 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 winter edition of your *Park Explorer*. Here in Geauga County, we love a hearty winter. This year, let's hope for more measurable amounts of snow for outdoor recreation activities along more than 85 miles of trail. Hopefully the white stuff will also hang around long enough to give park staff and volunteers the opportunity to groom trails for your skiing, snowshoeing and snowmobiling enjoyment.

Speaking of trails, check out The West Woods' new Tulip Trail and register for one of February's two naturalist-led hikes out to the trail's namesake, one of the tallest trees in the state of Ohio. This special tuliptree stands approximately 175 feet tall with a crown spread of 89.15 feet and circumference of 181.2 inches! In addition, monthly naturalist-led hikes continue to visit the Top 10 Trails Contest winners you chose last summer. Join us as we head to the Duane Ferris Trail at Eldon Russell Park, the Mountain Bike Trail at Big Creek Park, and the Hemlock Trail at Big Creek Park, or use the list of winners on our website's News & Updates page to lead your own hikes to all 10.

Finally, this year we are unveiling a new Geauga Park District slogan: *Outdoors & All Yours*. This slogan is a reflection of our passion and commitment to you, our Geauga County resident. Your Geauga Park District has grown to 28 open parks, 30 reservable lodges and shelters, and 97 trails, and staff are proud to provide these amenities to you and your family. Thank you for entrusting us with the stewardship of your parks. Whatever your outdoor activity this winter, we hope you visit one (or more) of them; they are all yours to enjoy.

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.



The Maple Highlands Trail's Big CreeK Spur photo by Mike Kramer



Claridon Woodlands
photo by Jim Marquardt

FEATURING PARK FRIENDS

The 60-Mile Challenge

By Mike Kramer

“Uh-oh.” Those may not have been my exact words when I saw the barricade, but this is a family publication so we’ll go with “uh-oh.” The barricade in question announced an unwelcome trail closure and completely blocked our route. We needed a Plan B. Perhaps I should explain...

It was June 1. Three friends and I were riding bikes on The Maple Highlands Trail as part of something I had dreamed up to mark the milestone of my turning 60 this year. I called it “the 60-Mile Challenge” — 60 years/60 miles. In the past, I had marked similar milestones by doing things like climbing Half Dome in Yosemite or hiking rim-to-ranch-to-rim in the Grand Canyon. This time, I wanted to do something closer to home, something that involved our beloved Geauga County parks.

The plan was to bike the entire Maple Highlands Trail, in both directions, and to hike all the trail miles in the four parks it connects: Big Creek Park, Claridon Woodlands, Headwaters Park and Swine Creek Reservation.





Headwaters Park
photo by
Jim Marquardt

Swine Creek Reservation photo by Mike Kramer



NDSD TRAIL

Park

Woodlands

Park

Reservation

I estimated the total distance to be about 40 miles of biking and 20 miles of hiking.

To prepare, and to ensure there would be no problems on the big day (y’know, like a closed trail or something), I had traveled all the trails in bite-size chunks over the preceding months. I knew them, their mileage, and the time required. I thought I had done my due diligence.

What I didn’t know was that a portion of The Maple Highlands Trail had been closed after I rode it at the beginning of May...but ignorance is bliss and the day was here! We began our adventure by hiking all of the trail miles at Big Creek, which brought us to the Big Creek Spur, where we had stashed our bikes. From there, we rode south to Swine Creek, encountering the aforementioned trail closure. Undaunted, we detoured east on Burton Windsor Road and south on state Route 608 to once again join the trail in downtown Middlefield, adding

unexpected hills, mileage and traffic in the process.

Once at Swine Creek, where we were joined by two friends, we hiked those miles and then began our journey north, back to the spur. Down to four intrepid souls once more, we pedaled (detour and all) to Headwaters, hiked those miles, got back on our bikes, pedaled to Claridon Woodlands, hiked those miles, and then back on the bikes for the final nine-mile push back to our starting point.

At day’s end, we had covered 63.2 human-powered miles in just under 11 hours. We were tired but feeling good about the accomplishment. We were also thankful for this wonderful resource. These four beautiful parks, connected by this tremendous bike trail, provided the perfect setting for the challenge. It was a memorable day in a memorable place — our Geauga Park District. 🍁

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mike Kramer has been a Geauga Park District volunteer since 2019. He has enjoyed volunteering for the Volunteer Bike Patrol, the Volunteer Trail Team, and numerous hiking and biking programs. Mike has been a resident of Geauga County for over 30 years.

What goals will YOU set for your next year? Consider “hiking the seasons” with the Geauga Gems Trekking Series! Details on page 17.

Spend Some Time at Whitlam Woods

Just a couple miles up the road from Big Creek Park, Whitlam Woods is Geauga Park District's northernmost park and a little gem, opened in 1976. Bisected by deep ravines of two streams that flow into Big Creek itself, it totals 187 acres, part of which is leased from the Geauga County Commissioners, and there are 1.1 miles to explore along three trails: Overlook Trail to start, Bridge Trail to lead the way, and Sugarbush Trail (with stairs) that loops hikers more than three quarters of a mile through scenic woods.

Hemlock trees here provide year-round greenery in ravines surrounded by a mature beech-maple forest that cloaks most of the park. Each spring a variety of birds including Eastern Towhees, Indigo Buntings and Goldfinches may be spotted nesting here, American Woodcocks perform aerial courtship flights, and lush growths of wildflowers carpet the woodland floor.

Along forest margins, then, dense thickets and grapevine tangles also provide cover to a variety of wildlife, including Ruffed Grouse, deer, turkey and fox. Remnants of an old field are now home to a second-growth red maple woods, and soft mosses and club mosses can be found covering the ground. 🌿



FIELD NOTES:
IT IS RATHER ENCHANTING TO WALK AMONG SUCH TALL TRUNKS. IN THIS MATURE FOREST, THE TREES ARE EXTRAORDINARY WHETHER FILLED WITH LEAVES OR BARE-BRANCHED. VISIT AFTER SNOWFALL FOR A WINTER WONDERFUL AND NICE WORKOUT.

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.*

JANUARY

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

Adventure/Discovery Arts Astronomy Kids Seniors

2 Nature Explorers: Be a Wildlife Detective

(Ages 6-11 w/adult)
Thursday, January 2, 1-3 PM
Big Creek Park, Deep Woods
Examine a collection of Nature artifacts indoors, then head outside in search of wildlife evidence (including tracks, droppings, nests, shed material and signs of feeding), clues that reveal animal presence and activity. Registration required for all attending.

3 Grandparents in the Park: Happy Bird Day!

Friday, January 3, 10:30 AM-Noon
Big Creek Park, Meyer Center
Grandparents and grandchildren, join a naturalist for fun hands-on indoor and outdoor activities celebrating our bird friends. Snacks and beverages provided. Registration required.

4 Ansel's Cave Hike: History Written in Rock

Saturday, January 4, 10 AM-Noon
The West Woods
Hike to Ansel's Cave, 2 miles over hilly terrain with a stream crossing, to discover its history written in rock with a rare opportunity to go into this restricted area! Dress for the weather and wear sturdy foot gear.

5 Travelogue: Scotland

Sunday, January 5, 1-2 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center
From the highlands and the islands to castles and glens...join Holly and Brad Sauder as they share their dream trip to Scotland!

5 Top 10 Trails Hike: Duane Ferris Trail

Sunday, January 5, 1-2:30 PM
Eldon Russell Park
You voted, and now we hike! Let's explore this fan-favorite trail together and see what makes it so special.

5 Nature Journaling: Getting Started

Sunday, January 5, 2:30-3:30 PM
Holbrook Hollows, Lodge
Fee: \$20 Geauga residents, \$24 out-of-county
For those new to Nature journaling or wanting a refresher, this is a one-hour introduction covering basic journaling techniques to record your observations. Fee includes a new journal, pen, color pencils and monthly Nature journaling opportunities. Registration required by phone only.



Photo by Jeff Hickox

6 Early Morning Hike

Monday, January 6, 8-9 AM
Chickagami Park
Start your day with an up-paced hike of 2-3 miles.

11 Scout Day: Junior Girl Scout "Geocacher Badge"

Saturday, January 11, 9:30-11:30 AM
Orchard Hills Park, Lodge
Join us for a morning of high-tech hide-and-seek as you work toward your Geocacher Badge (not provided). We will provide GPS units for use during the program. Dress for the weather. Registration required for scouts only, but adult leaders must attend.

11 Scout Day: Bear Scouts "Bear Habitat Adventure"

Saturday, January 11, 12:30-2:30 PM
Orchard Hills Park, Lodge
Join us to work on your Habitat Adventure. Dress for the weather, as the program includes a mile-long hike. Registration required for scouts only, but adult leaders must attend.

11 Whatever-the-Weather Venture (Ages 8+ w/adult)

Saturday, January 11, 2-3:30 PM
Observatory Park, Cygnus Shelter
We are hoping for snow for this one. If conditions are just right for snowshoeing, that is what we'll do. If not, we'll take a cold-weather hike. Whatever the weather, let's get outside! Borrow a pair of our snowshoes or bring your own. Ages 8+ with adult. Registration required for all participants.

11 Square Dance Experience!

Saturday, January 11, 3:30-5:30 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center
Drop in and join the HUBS Square Dance Club to learn square dance basics, watch the club perform and live lively!

12 Learn to Cross Country Ski

Sunday, January 12, 1-3 PM
Orchard Hills Park, Lodge
Learn the basics of cross-country skiing including proper clothing, types of equipment and proper technique. Indoor presentation will be followed by outdoor instruction. Ski rental available in advance from Geiger's, 50 Shopping Plaza, Chagrin Falls, OH 44022, 440-247-4900. A special rental rate for this program applies: \$19 for patron pick-up on Saturday after 3 PM and return on Monday during business hours. Registration required.

12 Travelogue: Cambodia

Sunday, January 12, 1-2 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center
Join Doreen Sockel, an accomplished photographer, as she takes us on a visual tour of Cambodia. We'll travel from the bustling street markets of Phnom Pehn to countryside monasteries with resident monks in their saffron robes, and to the ancient empire of Angkor Wat. Doreen will also share heartwarming images and interesting stories of the people of Cambodia.

12 Nature Journaling: Wildlife Windows

Sunday, January 12, 2:30-5 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center
Fee: \$20 Geauga residents, \$24 out-of-county
A monthly series to learn basic journaling techniques to record your Nature observations. This month our inspiration will be outside our wildlife window. We will also be setting up our journal for success throughout the year. 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.

Photo by Brad Sauder



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

13 Full Moon Hike: The Hardwood Moon

Monday, January 13, 6:30–7:30 PM
Observatory Park

Listen for the sound of creaking and popping trees as we explore the woods on this after-dark hike. Then, weather permitting, observe the rising full moon using park telescopes. 🗺️

14 "Yarn Over" in the Park

Tuesday, January 14,
1–2:30 PM & 6–7:30 PM,
The West Woods, Nature Center

Join this new group to crochet or knit in the parks! Each quarter, we'll gather in a different park to work a project using colors reflecting the season. To begin, bring four colors of yarn that depict winter: blues, grays, whites, cream. Participants must have knowledge of crocheting or knitting, as this is not a "learn-to" group. Project details sent upon registration. Participants may also choose to bring their own projects to work instead. **Registration required.** 🗺️



Photo by Tom Elesh Jr.

16 Elderberries: Interurban Rail Line History Talk

Thursday, January 16, 1–2:30 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Seniors, join us for a history program about the Maple Leaf Route of the Interurban rail line that ran through Geauga County in the early 20th century! Presented by local historian, Interurban expert, and author Dan Rager in collaboration with the Geauga Department on Aging, University Hospitals Geauga Medical Center. **Registration required.** 🗺️

17 Homeschool Days: Geology Rocks!

(Ages 5-7 & 8-12 w/adult)
Friday, January 17, 10:30 AM–Noon
The West Woods, Nature Center

Sign up for some hands-on fun learning about rocks and other geology topics. Indoors and outdoors, so dress for the weather. **Registration required** for all attending.

18 Welton's Gorge Winter Trail Hike

Saturday, January 18, 10–11:30 AM
Welton's Gorge

Hike at least 2 miles to discover the sights and sounds of winter. On this hike we will not go down into the gorge, but rather enjoy views from the trail above. Held rain, snow or shine, so dress for the weather. **Registration required.**

18 Wildlife Detective Training & Hike

Saturday, January 18, 1–3 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Sharpen your detective skills with hands-on activities about various types of wildlife evidence (tracks, droppings, nests, shed and molted material, and meal remains) as clues that reveal animal presence and activity, followed by a short hike to discover wildlife signs along the trail.

18 Nassau Astronomy Night with CVAS

Saturday, January 18, 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.

19 Agents of Discovery: How To

Sunday, January 19, 1–2 PM & 3–4 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Get an introduction to our digital Nature walks using the free Agents of Discovery app on your smartphone, featuring Tapper the Red-headed Woodpecker as your guide! We'll download the app and head outside to visit eight points of interest along the trail. **Registration required.** 🗺️

20 X-TREME Winter Fun Day!

(Grade 5-10)
Monday, January 20, 1–4 PM
Orchard Hills Park, Lodge

Spend the afternoon having an "X-TREME" amount of winter fun outside with friends! Try snowshoes, bring a sled for some fun downhill rides, learn about winter wildlife, and warm up by a fire with hot cocoa and s'mores. Entirely outdoors, so dress for the weather. Parents are welcome to stay for winter fun but may also drop kids off; all participants must have a signed waiver. **Registration required** for kids only.

23 Maple Town Tune Traders

Thursday, January 23, 7–9 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

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 Backcountry Hike

(Ages 12+)
Saturday, January 25, 9 AM–Noon
Hambden Hills

Get off trail for some intense exploration, exploring a property not yet open to the public. Pack water and snacks and wear taller waterproof boots. Children must be accompanied by an adult. **Registration required** for all participants.

25 Otter Man Returns!

Saturday, January 25, 2–3:30 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

A program for all ages! Come learn about the amazing River Otter and other weasels through illustrations, videos, pelts, games and other hands-on activities, then watch the infamous "Otter Man" come to life and return to the wild before your very eyes!

26 Landscaping with Resilient Native Plants in a Changing Ecosystem and Climate

Sunday, January 26, 1–2 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Join Eddie Lagucki, lead horticulturalist at Lantern Court Estate at Red Oak Camp. He has a master's degree in conservation leadership from Colorado State University and is an ISA Certified Arborist. Learn how local ecosystems have changed over time due to climate change and the cultivation of invasive plant species, as well as which tough native plant species can improve ecosystem health and withstand a continually warmer, less predictable Northeast Ohio climate. In collaboration with The Native Plant Society of Northeastern Ohio. 🗺️

26 The Sky Tonight Planetarium Show

Sunday, January 26, 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. 🗺️

26 Animal Ambassador Meet & Greet

Sunday, January 26, 3–4 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

The critters that live inside The West Woods Nature Center are known as animal ambassadors. This means they get to help teach people about Nature. During this live animal program, learn about and meet up-close our complete animal ambassador team! 🗺️

26 Bring In Your Telescope

Sunday, January 26, 4–5 PM
Observatory Park, Robert
McCullough Science Center

If you have a new (or old) telescope and would like to learn how to use it, drop in! Staff and volunteers will help guide you through the basics of setting up and using your telescope. 🗺️

RECURRING PROGRAMS

Photo by Tami Gingrich



5 6 12 Coffee with the Birds

Sunday, January 5, 9–10 AM & 10:30–11:30 AM
Monday, January 6, 10:30–11:30 AM & 2–3 PM
Sunday, January 12, 9–10 AM & 10:30–11:30 AM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Join Naturalist Renell for some close-up bird viewing and identification of winter birds at the feeders while enjoying a hot beverage. **Registration required**; please choose just one session. ♿

10 24 Radio Astronomy with DLITE

Friday, January 10, 7–8 PM
Observatory Park, Robert McCullough Science Center ♿

Friday, January 24, 7–8 PM 📺
Learn the fundamentals of radio astronomy and find out about the new DLITE radio telescope at Observatory Park. Followed by night sky viewing, weather permitting. January 24 is a virtual program. We will send you a link a few days before the program. **Registration required** for virtual session only.

10 11 24 25 Night Sky Viewing

Fridays, January 10 & 24, 8–11 PM
Saturdays, January 11 & 25, 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. ♿

14 28 Geauga Walkers

Tuesdays, 1–2:30 PM
January 14, Beartown Lakes Reservation
January 28, Bessie Benner Metzenbaum Park

A naturalist-led hike of about 2 miles for active seniors. Other hikes held weekly in Geauga County and surrounding areas. Call Geauga Senior Center for full schedule: 440-279-2167.

23 25 Timbertots: Wildlife Detective

(Ages 3-5 w/adult)
Thursday, January 23, 10–11 AM & 1–2 PM
Claridon Woodlands, Lodge

Saturday, January 25, 10–11 AM & 1–2 PM
Holbrook Hollows, Lodge
Become a wildlife detective to discover signs that animals left behind! **Registration required** for all attending including adults and siblings.

FEBRUARY

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

Adventure/Discovery Arts Astronomy Kids Seniors

1 Top 10 Trails Hike: Mountain Bike Trail

Saturday, February 1, 1–2:30 PM
Big Creek Park, Deep Woods Parking Lot
You voted, and now we hike! Let's explore this fan-favorite trail together and see what makes it so special. We'll hike about 1.5 miles of primitive trail over hilly terrain.

1 Wild About Winter Nights!

Saturday, February 1, 6–9 PM
Big Creek Park, Maple Grove
Discover the fun that a winter night provides! We'll celebrate the wonders of winter with an EPIC bonfire, hot chocolate, s'mores, owl hikes, winter astronomy, snow games, snowshoeing and more! Held whatever the weather and all outdoors, so dress accordingly.

2 Travelogue: South Texas Birding Adventure!

Sunday, February 2, 1–2 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center
Join local birding buddies Matt Valencic, Kelly Stanek, Dave English and Chief Naturalist John Kolar to experience their unforgettable birding adventure in South Texas! ♿

2 Nature Journaling: Nature's Engineers

Sunday, February 2, 2:30–5 PM
The Rookery, Great Blue Heron Lodge
Fee: \$20 Geauga residents, \$24 out-of-county
A monthly series to learn basic journaling techniques to record your Nature observations. This month's inspiration will be nature's engineers. 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. ♿

2 Giants Among Us! Discovering Geauga County's Biggest Trees

Sunday, February 2, 3–4 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center
Since 2016, Geauga Soil and Water Conservation District has been sponsoring Geauga County's BIG TREE Contest. Join Geauga SWCD's Gail Prunty to em-BARK on a unique indoor adventure to meet some of our biggest trees in the county, learn how to measure a big tree, hear stories of their past, and celebrate the benefits and joy they bring. ♿

4 Scout Day: Tiger Cub Scouts "Sky is the Limit Adventure"

Tuesday, February 4, 5:30–7 PM
Observatory Park, Robert McCullough Science Center
Tiger Cub Scouts, join us at this International Dark Sky Park to work towards your Sky is the Limit Adventure. Dress for the weather. **Registration required** for scouts only, but adult leaders must attend. ♿

6 Scout Day: Cadette Girl Scouts "Night Owl Badge"

Thursday, February 6, 5:30–7:30 PM
Observatory Park, Robert McCullough Science Center
Uncover mysteries of the world after dark as we explore the night sky at Observatory Park and work on your Night Owl badge (not provided). **Registration required** for scouts only, but adult leaders must attend.

8 Orienteering 101

Saturday, February 8, 10 AM–12:30 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center
An introductory level program presented by the Northeastern Ohio Orienteering Club to give you the basics on how to navigate your way through the woods using a map and compass, in preparation for the TWW-O Classic 2025 Race in March. Dress for the weather. **Registration required.**

■ Adventure/Discovery
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8 Nature's Valentines: Make it Yourself!

Saturday, February 8, 1–3 PM
Swine Creek Reservation, Lodge
Craft your own unique Valentines from natural items with the help of project samples and step-by-step instructions. Drop in at any time during program hours to make one or all of them. Children must be accompanied by an adult. **Registration required** for all attending. ♿

8 Whatever-the-Weather Venture

Saturday, February 8, 2–4 PM
Big Creek Park, Maple Grove Parking Lot
We are hoping for snow for this one. If conditions are just right for snowshoeing, that is what we'll do. If not, we'll take a cold-weather hike. Whatever the weather, let's get outside! Borrow a pair of our snowshoes or bring your own. Ages 8+ with adult. **Registration required** for all participants.

8 Nature at Night Hike

Saturday, February 8, 7–8:30 PM
Sunnybrook Preserve
Walking through a park in the dark is a unique experience. During the quiet of winter, all our senses become enhanced as we hike without the use of lights, making Nature easier to discover. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

9 Ansel's Cave Hike: History Written in Rock

Sunday, February 9, 10 AM–Noon
The West Woods
Hike to Ansel's Cave, 2 miles over hilly terrain with a stream crossing, to discover its history written in rock with a rare opportunity to go into this restricted area! Dress for the weather and wear sturdy foot gear.

10 Early Morning Hike

Monday, February 10, 8–9 AM
Welton's Gorge
Start your day with an up-paced hike of 2-3 miles.

12 Full Moon Hike: The Crow Moon

Wednesday, February 12, 6:30–7:30 PM
Observatory Park
Even during winter, Nature is active at night. Join us on a hike to see what left its tracks! Then, weather permitting, observe the rising full moon using park telescopes. ♿



Photo by Ian Sheppard

15 Nature Break: Women's Retreat

Saturday, February 15, 8:30 AM–1 PM
Big Creek Park, Meyer Center
Fee: \$8 Geauga residents, \$10 out-of-county
Retreat to the park to re-energize and relax. Activities include snowshoeing or walking, an aerobic activity, and a Nature-themed activity and lesson. Includes a light breakfast and hot lunch. Dress in layers with comfortable clothes for both indoor and outdoor activities. **Registration required.**



Amphibian Awakening Call List

February 15 – April 10,
8–9:15 PM or 9:30–10:45 PM
Register your name on this call list to witness the natural phenomenon of spring breeding behavior of Wood Frogs, Spring Peepers and possibly large salamanders. Notification by phone on the day of the program. Dress for the weather. Bring flashlights. **Registration required.**

15 Nassau Astronomy Night with CVAS

Saturday, February 15, 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.

20 Elderberries: Maple Sugaring!

Thursday, February 20, 11:30 AM–1 PM
Swine Creek Reservation, Lodge
Discover the secrets of pure Geauga Gold... maple syrup! Enjoy a provided lunch in the lodge, followed by a hands-on program in the sugarbush and sugar house learning about the maple sugaring process. In collaboration with the Geauga Department on Aging and University Hospitals Geauga Medical Center. **Registration required.**

20 Bring In Your Garden Tools

Thursday, February 20, 1–3 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center
Have a shovel that needs sharpened? Clippers that need cleaned? Bring in your garden tools for a pre-spring maintenance session! No gasoline or electric tools, please. Drop in anytime during program hours and we'll help YOU clean, sharpen and spruce-up your hand tools so they're ready for spring. ♿

20 Camp Gas Canister Recycling Prep

Thursday, February 20, 1:30–3:30 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center
Have a pile of empty camp gas canisters laying around? Want to recycle them, but you're not sure how? Bring in your old empty 100-to-450-gram Isobutane/butane propane canisters or 1-pound propane cylinders anytime during program hours and we'll have the tools to help YOU vent and puncture those canisters so they are ready to be safely recycled. Max 12 canisters per person, please. ♿



22 Big Tree Hike!

Saturday, February 22, 9–11 AM & 1–3 PM, The West Woods, Affelder House Parking Lot
Hike our newest trail, the Tulip Trail, to discover our state-record tuliptree, one of the largest of its kind in the state of Ohio! Hike is approximately 3 miles over rolling hills. Come prepared for the variable winter weather and potentially icy trails. Carpooling highly recommended, as parking is very limited. **Registration required.**

22 Hawk Watch Bird Van Trip

Saturday, February 22, 9–11 AM
Swine Creek Reservation, Woods Edge Parking Lot
Join us for a birding adventure into Amish farmland in search of raptors including Rough-legged Hawks, Harriers and Kestrels, plus other winter birds of the open country. Bring binoculars/spottling scopes and a camera if you'd like and board our passenger van for the trip. **Registration required.**



Photo by Linda Gilbert

22 Buckeye Trail Highlight Hike: Trail Town Burton

Saturday, February 22, 2–3:30 PM
Burton Square

Meet us on the north end of Burton Square, near the gazebo, and we'll following the Blue Blazes south for 1.7 miles, then retrace our steps back to the square. Must be able to hike 3-4 miles. Held rain or shine, so dress accordingly and bring water.

22 Icy Insects


Saturday, February 22, 2–3:30 PM
Whitlam Woods

For some bugs, their love light heats up when the weather cools down. A sharp eye can find springtails, stoneflies, spiders and more crawling around on the winter ground, even on top of the snow! We'll explore the park for these creatures on this cool winter hike.



22 Nature Night Lecture Series: Native Plantings

Saturday, February 22, 7–8:30 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

It might still be winter, but spring gardening is right around the corner. As author Doug Tallamy discusses in his book, "Nature's Best Hope," let's look at why native plants are beneficial to our landscapes. We will discuss the relationships between wildlife and native vs non-native plants, review the best plant choices for the landscape, and highlight plants that are readily found in your local garden center. 

23 Sap's-a-Risin'!

Sunday, February 23, Noon–4 PM
Swine Creek Reservation

Visit Geauga Park District's sugarhouse, sugarbush and lodge for a sweet taste of how maple sugaring methods have evolved throughout history! Help gather sap in the sugarbush alongside a horse-drawn sap sled, experience tapping, gathering and boiling methods used in the past and today, see sap boiling in the sugar house, and taste some maple syrup made onsite. Then, warm up with live music (Raccoon County Ramblers) and maple treats in the lodge. Also March 2 and 9.


25 Inclusive Experience: Wildlife Detectives

Tuesday, February 25, 10:30–11:30 AM
Big Creek Park, Meyer Center

A special program for adults in the developmental disability community! Join a naturalist to become a wildlife detective as we discover some amazing animal clues and try to decipher who they belong to! **Registration required** for all participants.

27 Maple Town Tune Traders

Thursday, February 27, 7–9 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center



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. 



RECURRING PROGRAMS

2 10 Coffee with the Birds

Sunday, February 2,
9-10 AM & 10:30–11:30 AM
Monday, February 10,
10:30–11:30 AM & 2–3 PM

The West Woods, Nature Center Lobby
Join Naturalist Renell for some close-up bird viewing and identification of winter birds at the feeders while enjoying a hot beverage. **Registration required**; please choose just one session.  


2 4 Timbertots: Big Birds!

(Ages 3-5 w/adult)
Sunday, February 2, 10–11 AM & 1–2 PM
Big Creek Park, Cherry Room
Tuesday, February 4, 10–11 AM & 1–2 PM
The Rookery, Great Blue Heron Lodge
Explore the amazing lives of eagles, owls and hawks...OH MY! Partially outdoors, weather permitting, so dress accordingly. **Registration required.**





7 8 Basket Weaving for Beginners

Friday, February 7, 1–5 PM
Saturday, February 8, 9:30 AM–2 PM
Big Creek Park, Meyer Center

Fee: \$25 Geauga residents, \$30 out-of-county
Beginners, learn how to weave a basket! Naturalist Renell will teach basic techniques to create a small square handled basket. Due to program preparation expenses, a refund may not be processed if cancellation occurs within five days of the program. Registration required. 


7 21 How to Spot a Meteorite

Friday, February 7, 7–8 PM,
Observatory Park, Robert
McCullough Science Center 
Friday, February 21, 7–8 PM 

Think you've found a meteorite? Come learn how to test whether a rock is from Earth or outer space. We'll also show how you can track a meteor you've seen streaking through the sky and follow it down to Earth! Followed by night sky viewing, weather permitting. February 21 is a virtual program. We will send you a link a few days before the program. **Registration required** for virtual session only.



7 8 21 22 Night Sky Viewing

Fridays, February 7 & 21, 8–11 PM and
Saturdays, February 8 & 22, 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. 

14 15 16 Great Backyard Bird Count: The West Woods

Friday, Saturday & Sunday,
February 14, 15 & 16, 11 AM–4 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Stop in anytime during program hours to help tally the birds seen at the big windows and become an official Citizen Scientist during this worldwide bird count coordinated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society.  

11 25 Geauga Walkers

Tuesdays, 1–2:30 PM
February 11, Big Creek Park, Aspen Grove
February 25, Swine Creek Reservation,
Woods Edge


A naturalist-led hike of about 2 miles for active seniors. Other hikes held weekly in Geauga County and surrounding areas. Call Geauga Senior Center for full schedule: 440-279-2167.

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




1 Bird Nest Quest Hike

Saturday, March 1, 10 AM–Noon
Orchard Hills Park, Lodge

Examine our bird nest collection inside the lodge, then head outside to discover abandoned nests along the trail and learn cool facts about the birds who made them. Hike is about 2 miles on and off trail. Held rain, snow or shine, so dress for the weather and wear waterproof footwear. 

1 Meet the Artists

Saturday, March 1, 1–3 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Journey through a diverse collection of images portraying details big and small, all celebrating the colors and life present on this vivid planet of ours. Artists Deb Berkebile and Brittany Paynter express their visions through textiles, pottery, paint and watercolor works of art. 

6 13 Art Workshop: Wood Carving Simple Birds (Two-Night Class)

Thursday, March 6 & 13, 6–8 PM
Holbrook Hollows, Lodge

Fee: \$45 Geauga residents, \$50 out-of-county
Join award-winning wood carver Robert Stadtlander to carve two simple birds, a cardinal and a chickadee, in this two-night class (March 6 and 13, same time both nights). A one-time fee covers both sessions and includes basswood blocks to carve. Supplies and tools are provided, but you may bring your own if you have them. Tools, glass bird eyes and additional carving blocks will also be available for purchase directly from the carver if desired. Ages 18+. **Registration required.**

7 Nature at Night Hike

Friday, March 7, 7–8:30 PM
The West Woods

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

8 Orienteering Event: TWW-O Classic 2025 Race

Saturday, March 8, 11 AM–2 PM
The West Woods

Fee: \$10 pre-registered club members, \$15 pre-registered non-members, \$20 walk-up
Join the Northeastern Ohio Orienteering Club for a special orienteering event, co-hosted by Geauga Park District, with five classic-style courses ranging from beginner through advanced skill levels! Fun for anyone – casual walkers, competitive runners, seasoned orienteers, or those simply interested in map and compass. All courses can be done solo or as a group (2-6). Time to complete will vary by course and skill level, but most take 45-120 minutes to complete. Come ready for adventure and dress for the weather. **Registration required** through the NEOOC at <https://neoc.com/upcoming-events>, where more information can also be found.


8 Sunset Nature Stroll

Saturday, March 8, 6–7:30 PM
Orchard Hills Park

Take a beautiful stroll through the park at sunset. We'll keep our eyes and ears open for wildlife as some are settling down for the night while others are just getting up.

8 Marsh Mammal Viewing

Saturday, March 8, 6–7:30 PM
The Rookery

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

11 Homeschool Days: Maple Sugaring

(Ages 5-7 & 8-12 w/adult)
Tuesday, March 11, 10:30–12 PM
Swine Creek Reservation, Woods Edge

Explore the history of maple sugaring in Geauga County, gather sap in the sugarbush, and learn how it's boiled to make syrup. Entirely outdoors, so dress for the weather. **Registration required** for all attending.

13 Total Lunar Eclipse

Thursday, March 13, 11:30 PM through Friday, March 14, 4:30 AM
Observatory Park

Join us for a total eclipse of the moon! We'll watch as the Earth's shadow creeps in to cover the moon during this rare event beginning just before midnight, with the maximum eclipse early Friday morning around 2:25 AM.

15 Waterfowl Migration Watch: Mosquito Lake Van Trip

Saturday, March 15, 7 AM–Noon
The West Woods

March and April are good times to see spring migratory waterfowl. Hop aboard and we'll head out to visit one of Trumbull County's birding hotspots together. Dress for the weather, as we'll be in and out of the van at various locations, and bring binoculars/spotting scope and a camera if you'd like. **Registration required.**

15 Scout Day: Lion Cub Scouts "Mountain Lion Adventure"

Saturday, March 15, 9:30–11 AM
Holbrook Hollows, Lodge

Lion Cub Scouts, join us to work toward your Mountain Lion Adventure! **Registration required** for scouts only, but adult leaders must attend.

15 Scout Day: Daisy Girl Scouts "Eco Learner Badge"

Saturday, March 15, 12:30–2 PM
Holbrook Hollows, Lodge

Daisy Girl Scouts, join us to work on the Eco Learner badge (not provided). Includes a hike and time outdoors, so dress for the weather. **Registration required** for scouts only, but adult leaders must attend.


16 Maple Sugaring Van Trip

Sunday, March 16, 12:30–4 PM
The West Woods, Lobby

A naturalist-led van trip to two local maple producers: Messenger Century Farm and IQ Maple Syrup in Auburn Township. Each location provides a tour of how they produce maple syrup from sugarbush to sugarhouse. Dress for the weather and prepare for a walk through the woods, which could include mud and uneven trails. **Registration required.**

16 Nature Journaling: Sapsuckers

Sunday, March 16, 1–3:30 PM
Big Creek Park, Deep Woods

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 are the plants and animals that utilize tree sap for food. Partially outdoors. Taking photos is optional. 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. 

20 Elderberries: Outstanding Owls

Thursday, March 20, 1–2:30 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Explore owls through an illustrated presentation introducing our common owls by sight and sound. We will see how pellets, feathers and other owl material reveals much about the predatory nature of these birds. Refreshments served. In collaboration with the Geauga Department on Aging and University Hospitals Geauga Medical Center. **Registration required.**



Photo by Jeff Hickox

22 Astrotots XL: Constellation Celebration

(Ages 6-11 w/adult) Saturday, March 22,
9:30–10:45 AM & 1–2:15 PM
Observatory Park, Robert
McCullough Science Center

Explore the wonders of the night sky in the way the ancient people did. Hear the stories, learn the shapes, and handcraft your own mini planetarium that might encourage YOU to become an astronomer some day! **Registration required for children only.**

22 Hidden Gems Hike: Russell Uplands Preserve

Saturday, March 22, 10–11:30 AM
Russell Uplands Preserve

Discover the natural wonders of early spring along these beautiful trails with a hike of about 2 miles over hilly terrain. Held rain or shine; wear footgear that can get wet and muddy. Carpooling highly recommended, as parking is very limited. **Registration required.**

22 Campfire Cooking: Dutch Ovens “Lazy Lasagna”

Saturday, March 22, 5–7 PM
Big Creek Park, Deep Woods Lodge
Fee: \$4 Geauga residents, \$6 out-of-county

Learn a new outdoor skill and get inspired for your next camping adventure! Together we'll make yummy, melty layers of cheese, marinara sauce and Italian sausage, a “lazy lasagna,” using dutch ovens over a campfire. **Registration required for all participants.**



22 Nassau Astronomy Night with CVAS

Saturday, March 22, 7–11 PM
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. No registration required. - Volunteers needed



23 Top 10 Trails Hike: Hemlock Trail

Sunday, March 23, 2–3:30 PM
Big Creek Park, Deep Woods Lodge
Parking

You voted, and now we hike! Let's explore this fan-favorite trail together and see what makes it so special.

25 Grandparents in the Park: Spring Celebration!

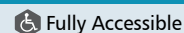
Tuesday, March 25, 10:30 AM–Noon
The West Woods, Nature Center

Grandparents and grandchildren, join a naturalist for fun hands-on indoor activities celebrating the animals and plants of the spring! Indoor and outdoor activities. Beverages provided; please bring a snack to share. **Registration required.**

25 Spring Break Planetarium Show

Tuesday, March 25,
11 AM–Noon & 1–2 PM
Observatory Park, Robert
McCullough Science Center

Come inside for a family-centered planetarium presentation to learn what to look for in the night sky this spring!



26 Early Morning Hike

Wednesday, March 26, 8–9 AM
Holbrook Hollows, Franklin Marsh Entrance
Start your day with an up-paced hike of 2-3 miles along hilly terrain.

26 Café Con Las Aves / Coffee With The Birds

Wednesday, March 26, 9:30–10:30 AM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Carpinteros, carboneros, y mirlos! Brush up on your Spanish when you drop in for some close-up bird viewing at the feeders while enjoying a hot beverage. **Registration required.**

27 Make it Yourself: Hiking Stick

Thursday, March 27, 1–3 PM
Sunnybrook Preserve, Lodge

Hit the park during spring break to decorate a hiking stick just in time for the spring hiking season! All supplies will be provided to help you turn a regular broom stick handle into the hiking stick of your dreams. **Registration required only for those decorating a hiking stick.**

27 Maple Town Tune Traders

Thursday, March 27, 7–9 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

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.

28 Ice Moons

(Virtual) Friday, March 28, 7–8 PM

Learn about the icy moons of our outer solar system and the robots on their way to explore them. This is a virtual program; we'll send you a link a few days before the program. **Registration required.**



28 Skydance: Flight of the Woodcock!

Friday, March 28, 7:15–8:30 PM
The Rookery

This annual rite of spring returns to The Rookery since habitat restoration has made the area along the Woodcock Trail more suitable to our featured species. Get a behind-the-bushes look at the courtship antics of one unique bird, the American Woodcock, highlighted by its amazing “sky dance” with “wing song” and careening descent!

Adventure/Discovery Arts Astronomy Kids Seniors



29 Wonderful Waterfowl Van Trip

Saturday, March 29, 9 AM–4 PM
The West Woods

As the landscape starts to thaw, waterfowl start congregating on large lakes, ponds and marshes. We'll keep our options open but plan to visit Lake Erie and other large bodies of water on this trip to look for gulls, ducks, grebes and more. Dress for the weather and bring binoculars and a sack lunch. **Registration required.**



Photo by Jake Kouwe

1 4 Timbertots: Maple Sugar Time!

(Ages 3-5 w/adult)

Saturday, March 1,
10–11:30 AM & 1–2:30 PM

Tuesday, March 4,
10–11:30 AM & 1–2:30 PM,

Swine Creek Reservation, Woods Edge

Explore outdoors and enjoy hands-on activities to discover where and how we get real maple syrup! Entirely outdoors, so dress for the weather and wear snow boots. **Registration required for all attending.**

29 Hike The West Woods: Cabin Fever Cure

Saturday, March 29, 1:30–3:30 PM
The West Woods

Join a naturalist to explore The West Woods in search of early indicators of spring. Dress for the weather and hilly trails, wearing sturdy shoes that can get wet.

30 Waterfowl Watching for Beginners

Sunday, March 30, 2–4 PM
Headwaters Park, Boathouse

Learn the basics for identifying waterfowl that are taking a rest from migration as we walk along the edge of the reservoir. Binoculars provided or bring your own. Park in the main lot and walk back to the boathouse.

RECURRING PROGRAMS

2 9 Maple Driving Tour

Sundays, March 2 & 9, 10 AM–5 PM
Swine Creek Reservation

Gauga Park District is a featured stop on the statewide Ohio Maple Madness Tour and the Maple Tour of Northeast Ohio today. Stop in any time during listed hours, with sap collection in our sugarbush alongside a horse-drawn sap sled at 1 and 2 PM. Also March 9. Visit ohiomaple.org or mpneoh.com for more information.

2 9 Sap's-a-Risin'!

Sundays, March 2 & 9, Noon–4 PM
Swine Creek Reservation

Visit Gauga Park District's sugarhouse, sugarbush and lodge for a sweet taste of how maple sugaring methods have evolved throughout history! Help gather sap in the sugarbush alongside a horse-drawn sap sled, experience tapping, gathering and boiling methods used in the past and today, see sap boiling in the sugar house, and taste some maple syrup made onsite. Then, warm up with live music (Mr. Haney String Band) and maple treats in the lodge.

3 4 Weave a Lug Handle Basket

Monday, March 3, 3–9 PM
Tuesday, March 4, 12:30–6 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Fee: \$25 Geauga residents, \$29 out-of-county
Weave a small pot-shaped basket with lug handles that will measure roughly 8" wide by 4.5" tall. Skill level: intermediate. Due to program preparation expenses, a refund may not be processed if cancellation occurs within five days of the program. **Registration required.**

30 The Sky Tonight Planetarium Show

Sunday, March 30, 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.

30 Nassau History Tour

Sunday, March 30, 4–6 PM
Observatory Park, Nassau Astronomical Station

Drop in during program hours for history-focused tours of the Nassau Astronomical Station.

11 25 Geauga Walkers

Tuesdays, 1–2:30 PM
March 11, The West Woods
March 25, Walter C. Best Wildlife Preserve, Sunset Shelter

A naturalist-led hike of about 2 miles for active seniors. Other hikes held weekly in Geauga County and surrounding areas. Call Gauga Senior Center for full schedule: 440-279-2167.



21 22 Astrotots: Shapes & Stories of the Night Sky

(Ages 3-5 w/adult)
Friday, March 21, 9:30–10:30 AM,
11 AM–Noon & 1–2 PM
Saturday, March 22, 11:30–12:30 PM
Observatory Park, Robert McCullough Science Center


Lions and tigers and bears...OH MY! Come listen and look at some of the legends of the night sky! Make-n-take your own booklet of basic constellations and wear your "stariest" outfit to make Commander Melvin happier than happy! **Registration required for children only.**

28 29 Night Sky Viewing

Friday, March 28, 8–11 PM
Saturday, March 29, 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. No registration required.

ARCHERY FOR EVERYONE

 All wheelchair and stroller accessible

All winter archery programs are held inside
The Rookery's Great Blue Heron Lodge



Archery Practice (Ages 9+)

Friday, January 24,
2:30–3 PM & 3:30–4 PM
Sunday, January 26,
11:30 AM–Noon & 4:30–5 PM
Thursday, February 20,
3–3:30 PM
Friday, February 21,
6:30–7 PM & 7:30–8 PM
Saturday, February 22,
7:45–8:15 PM
Monday, March 17,
10:30–11 AM & 11:30–Noon

Sign up for a 30-minute session to take the next step in improving your aim through practice. Registrants must have taken one of our Introduction to Archery programs. Children must be accompanied by an adult. **Registration required.**

Introduction to Archery for Adults

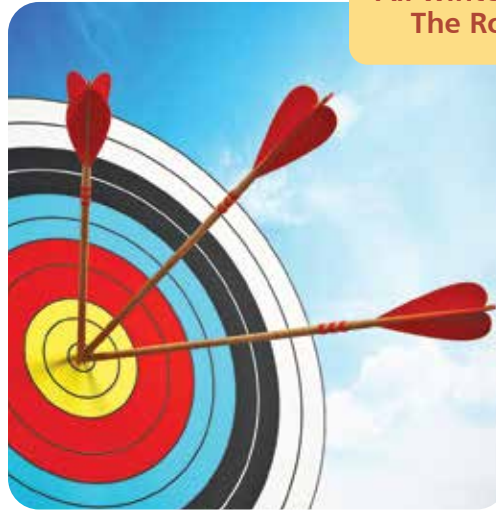
Saturday, January 25,
3–4:30 PM
Friday, February 21,
2–3:30 & 4–5:30 PM
Saturday, March 15,
12:30–2 PM
Monday, March 17,
2–3:30 PM

Adults will learn the basics of target archery. Please wear close-toed shoes. **Registration required.**

Introduction to Archery for Kids (Ages 9-16 w/adult)

Sunday, January 26,
12:30–2 PM
Sunday, March 16,
10–11:30 AM

Register kids ages 9-16 to learn the basics of target archery. Participants must be at least 50" tall and wear closed toed shoes. **Registration required** for youth only, but adult must also attend.



Introduction to Archery for Families

Sunday, March 16,
1–2:30 PM

Families with children ages 9+, learn the basics of target archery together. Participants must be at least 50" tall. No younger children please. Children must be accompanied by adult. **Registration required** for all participants.

Introduction to Archery for Homeschool Families

Thursday, February 20,
10:30 AM–Noon

Home-school families with children ages 9+, learn the basics of target archery together. Participants must be 50" tall and wear closed-toed shoes. Indoor space is limited; no younger children please. Children must be accompanied by adult. **Registration required** for all participants. .



Photo by Sonny Williams

Archery Games for Adults

Saturday, January 25,
1–2:30 PM
Sunday, January 26,
2:30–4 PM
Thursday, February 20,
1–2:30 PM
Monday, March 17,
7–8:30 PM

Take the next step in improving your aim through playing archery games. Registrants must have taken one of our Introduction to Archery programs. **Registration required.**

Archery Games for Kids

Saturday, March 15,
10–11:30 PM

Take the next step in improving your aim by playing archery games. Registrants must have taken one of our Introduction to Archery programs. Participants must be age 9+, at least 50" tall and accompanied by an adult. No younger children, please. **Registration required.**

Archery Games for Families

Saturday, January 25,
10:30 AM–Noon
Saturday, February 22,
6–7:30 PM
Sunday, March 16,
3:30–5 PM

Take the next step in improving your aim by playing archery games. Registrants must have taken one of our Introduction to Archery programs. Participants must be age 9+, at least 50" tall and accompanied by an adult. No younger children, please. **Registration required** for all participants.

Making a Way for Nature



puzzled for a while on how to remedy this situation and return the stream back to cold water. Then it hit me...why not just disconnect it totally from the warmwater influences and re-direct it into a newly created stream?"

Pira had never heard of it being done before, and consulted colleagues (long-time ecological restoration specialists, aquatic biologists, etc.) who said the same but were definitely intrigued. (We now know that only one such stream exists in the entire country: Hatchery Creek in Kentucky!)

Fast forward some years and Pira's vision is now a reality thanks to great partners the Chagrin River Watershed Partnerships and the Ohio EPA, which funded it for \$1.1 million through its Water Resource Restoration Sponsorship Program (WRRSP).

Other interesting and appealing components include the removal of two ponds, restoration/improvement of several existing warm water streams and wetlands, removal of old asphalt golf cart paths, and planting of many native trees and shrubs.

"All this great work wouldn't have been possible without the Ohio EPA, sponsorship from the City of Sandusky, and partnership from the West Creek Land Conservancy, Covia (Best Sand in Chardon), which donated tons of locally quarried sandstone rock, and Arms Trucking, which donated the time and trucks to haul all the stone," Pira said.

When complete, the project will be seen and programmed via a primitive trail with great wildlife viewing "and a chance to study just how resilient Nature can be if only we give it a chance," Pira said. On display: the importance of clean groundwater, stream health, and rare species conservation. "And who knows," he said, "some visiting students may even become biologists who help us continue to preserve Ohio's natural heritage."



An extremely unique project finishing up in your Geauga Park District is gaining lots of attention statewide — the creation of 1,700 feet of coldwater stream at Veterans Legacy Woods.

Located in the park's northeastern corner, the work actually returns 32 acres in the Cuyahoga River watershed to a more natural state. But the thing that's got everyone talking is the potential for Ohio's State Endangered native brook trout to be introduced here. It's a fish found in only three viable streams in Geauga County, all owned and managed by the Park District.

Park Biologist Paul Pira began working on a detailed natural resource management restoration plan for the property shortly after its 2018 purchase.

"As we speak, multiple pieces of large construction equipment are working away on creating a brand new stream from scratch," Pira said on a warm fall day. "The water source was always there, a beautiful spring that allows ice-cold groundwater to come to the surface. Unfortunately, this cool, clean, unpolluted groundwater was quickly intercepted by warmer streams and ponds that thermally polluted (raised water temperatures) and ruined the unique coldwater aspect of the stream."

Pira continued: "Coldwater streams are very special and rare habitats which support fragile aquatic life. I was very



ADVENTURES in Geocaching

N 41° 26.313'
W -81° 01.373'



Check out the new geocache at Swine Creek Reservation in Middlefield Twp.

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

No need for winter blues with two parking lots from which to choose. From Lake Side Shelter or from the lodge, the trickiest part is the people you'll dodge.

Walk the park drive or take the Siltstone Trail; either way, you surely won't fail. This cache is unique, but sort of a dud.

There's no sap in this bucket, and it needs a good scrub.

For a real challenge, seek it out when the weather's just right.

A warm day and cold night can produce a sticky delight.

Device-driven? Try Agents of Discovery



App-based fun for the whole family (or just you) is returning to The West Woods for another year, with all-new missions local **Agents of Discovery** can solve — plus, a grab-bag of new Agents-themed rewards! This free game shows you around the park and its wildlife as you walk, featuring seasonal challenges to complete. Explore the app now by downloading it on your smartphone and creating a free account, then head to the park to play.



Geauga Gems Trekking Series Registration

Sign up between January 1 and September 30 to "hike the seasons"!

To complete this year's series, you'll hike a minimum of four trails each season from a trail list which was created by Geauga Park District naturalists. Attending a naturalist-led hike? Count it as one of your trails. Don't see YOUR favorite trail? Add it to your list. Hike a total of 16 trails over four seasons to earn your special commemorative sticker for the year (and your trekking pole if you are a first-time finisher). Interested in hiking more? As an alternative, hike 80 self-guided miles instead to earn your rewards.

Upon registration for the series, you'll receive an email with a link to a printable Geauga Gems Trekking Series Card to track your progress. You may also pick up a card at The West Woods Nature Center or Big Creek Park's Meyer Center. Throughout the year, keep your card with you to mark your trails, then submit your completed hiking card at The West Woods Nature Center whenever it's finished. Awards will be available starting November 1. All hiking cards must be submitted no later than December 31. **Registration required** for all participating.



Photo by Jen Jeromin

New Trail at The West Woods Named After Giant Tree

Tulip Trail, aptly named for a giant tuliptree situated just off the path, is the newest trail to be added to The West Woods, at 1.2 miles. It is best accessed from the Affelder House entrance and parking lot off of Chillicothe Road. Do you see the gigantic tree near the path? It stands 175 feet tall with a crown spread of almost 90 feet, and won Geauga Soil and Water Conservation District's Big Tree Contest back in 2022. Tulip Trail also features mature and early successional forest and transects a beautiful pine tree plantation. Welcome!

To see Tulip Trail's namesake up close, register for the naturalist-led Big Tree Hike in February (registration required because of limited parking). Details on page 10

Donations to
Geauga Park District
August through
October 2024

Thank You to All of Our Generous Donors

Lisa Geschke	Donation in memory of Denise Thomas	\$100.00
Janice McManus	Donation for replacement bench & plaque	\$325.00
Jim & Deborah Nemecek	Donation in memory of Katy Berquist	\$100.00
Linda R. Angstrom	Nature Scopes donation	\$100.00
Pine Brook Properties	Unrestricted donation	\$500.00
Sonny M. Williams	Veterans Tribute Plaque	\$500.00
The Cleveland Foundation	Bessie Benner Metzbaum Fund - unrestricted	\$2,000.00

Winter's Natural Treasures

The winter season is full of natural treasures! Those who are willing to bundle up and venture outdoors this time of year are rewarded with a unique experience that they will not speak of, for their secret is golden. The wonderful world of winter might become overcrowded if too many of us knew of its secrets!



The first snowfall of the year is always a magical event. The fluffy blanket of snow beckons us to come and play in it. Every living and non-living thing stands out in sharp contrast against a white blanket of snow. The Northern Cardinal is the most brilliant red, and the sky, such a majestic blue. Even the night sky seems brighter and more filled with stars in winter.

So many various birds grace us with their presence during the wintertime. Forests and fields are teeming with songbird activity. Chickadees, titmice, nuthatches and other songsters form mixed foraging groups that are constantly active in a daily struggle for survival. As the sun sets below the horizon, Great Horned Owls sing "who's awake? me, too," while Short-eared Owls hunt for rodents in meadows and farm fields.

Let's not forget the many other winter active animals. A playful River Otter slides into a partially frozen stream, while a White-footed Mouse narrowly escapes the talons of a Red-tailed Hawk.

An opossum fancies death to attempt an escape from a hungry coyote, and a flying squirrel glides across the moonlit sky. Many of these stories are etched in the snow as tracks and other signs, making winter a perfect time to discover them.

Although most plants are dormant,

some such as goldenrods and asters can be observed dispersing their seeds from their lifeless stalks throughout the winter. A stroll through an evergreen forest of eastern hemlocks or white pines is an olfactory feast, sure to please even the most stubborn of noses.

Likewise, a combination of sounds intertwine to create the music of winter, like the sound of the wind whipping through the trees on a cold February evening, or the crack of ice on a pond during a mid-winter thaw. The unique silence brought about by a fresh blanket of snow creates a quiet music all its own.

Evening skies are saturated with stars that brighten up the darkness like sparkling diamonds. They join together to form an array of pictures; a queen, a great bear, and a hunter all have stories to tell.

Yes, a short journey into the wonderful world of winter is a truly unique, rewarding experience. A treasure chest full of sights, sounds and smells awaits you! So, what are you waiting for? It's time to bundle up for a winter adventure!





Amazing Antlers

They're made of bone that grows really fast outside the body...what?! Yes, and they fall off and grow back every year! Fascinating. In fact, antlers are made from the fastest growing bone in the animal kingdom! For this reason, some researchers believe that studying them may help in cancer research, as deer have considerably lower cancer rates than other mammals.

SPRING (April-May) Growth begins from two bases on top of the deer's skull called **pedicles**. This growth is covered by a living tissue called **velvet**, which supplies blood and nutrients for the antlers to grow.

SUMMER (June-July) As the amount of daylight increases, this triggers the antlers to grow very rapidly, about 1/4 inch to sometimes 1/2 inch per day!

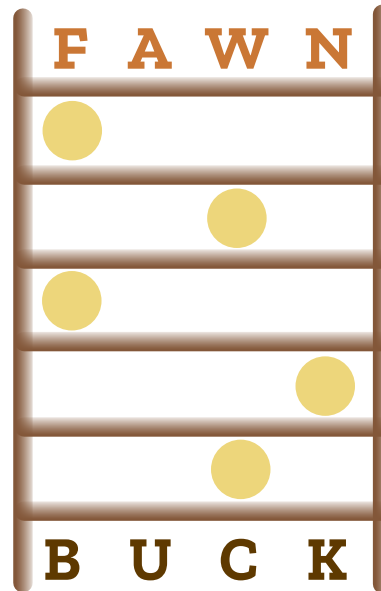
LATE SUMMER (September) Daylight starts to decrease, which slows the growth, and the antlers harden. The velvet that provided nutrients also dries up and peels off.

FALL TO WINTER (October-December) Hardened antlers are now bone, and the deer use them during the rut (during breeding season) to show off to females and fight other males.

WINTER TO EARLY SPRING (January-March) As days get really short, the antlers' connection to the pedicles weakens and they fall off. Open wounds on the pedicles form scabs. Then, after a few weeks, the process begins all over again!

Turn a **FAWN** into a **BUCK** by changing just one letter on each rung of the ladder.

Yellow circles indicate the letter that needs to be changed from the previous word, and clues below should also help. Good luck!



The first appearance of daylight in the morning

An expression of anger or frustration

A building on a farm where animals might live

The external covering of woody stems

The rear portion of something

If you see a newborn fawn alone this spring



...you may assume that the fawn has been abandoned, but this is normal behavior. A doe may leave her young somewhere safe while she is out foraging. Newborn fawns know to stay still and quiet as to not attract predators. Most often the mother doe is nearby, keeping a watchful eye. It's best to keep your distance and leave it alone.

Do you know why dollar bills are called "bucks?"

In the 18th and 19th centuries, buckskin (male deer's skin) was valuable for making shoes and outerwear, so it was used as a form of currency in trading.

Go on a shed hunt...

Fallen antlers, or *sheds*, can be a challenge to find. If you have woods in your yard and see deer walk through on occasion, you may just find one of these treasures if you go looking —



but be quick, as dropped sheds are usually found first by small rodents that chew on them for the calcium and other minerals they provide. February seems to be a good time to search for sheds on your walks.

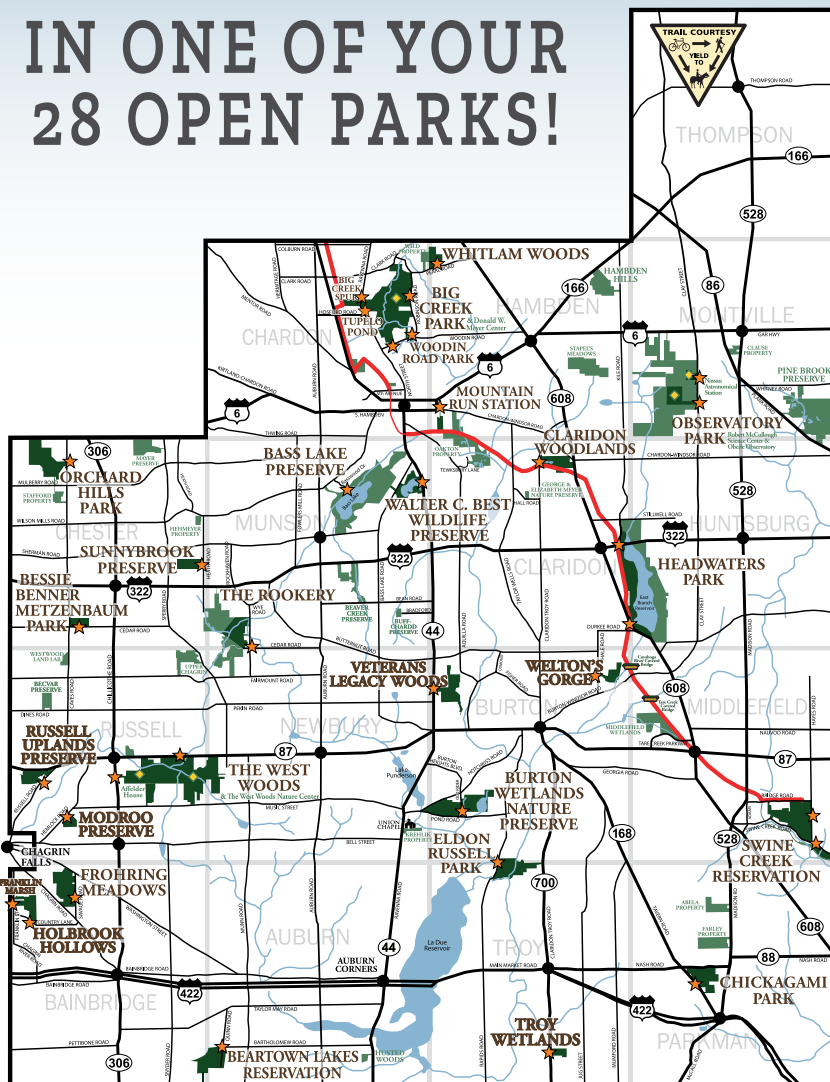
Answers for the word ladder are found on the bottom of the back cover.



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Saturday February 1, 6-9 PM
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Meet in the park for a fun new special event featuring winter treats, owl hikes, snow games, an EPIC bonfire and more.
Free fun for the whole family!

Details on page 9

Sap's a-Risin'! Annual Sugaring Celebration

Sundays Noon-4 PM
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Swine Creek Reservation in Middlefield

Details on pages 11 & 14

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Answers for the word ladder are dawn, darn, barn, bark, back