

PARK EXPLORER

GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT ACTIVITY GUIDE

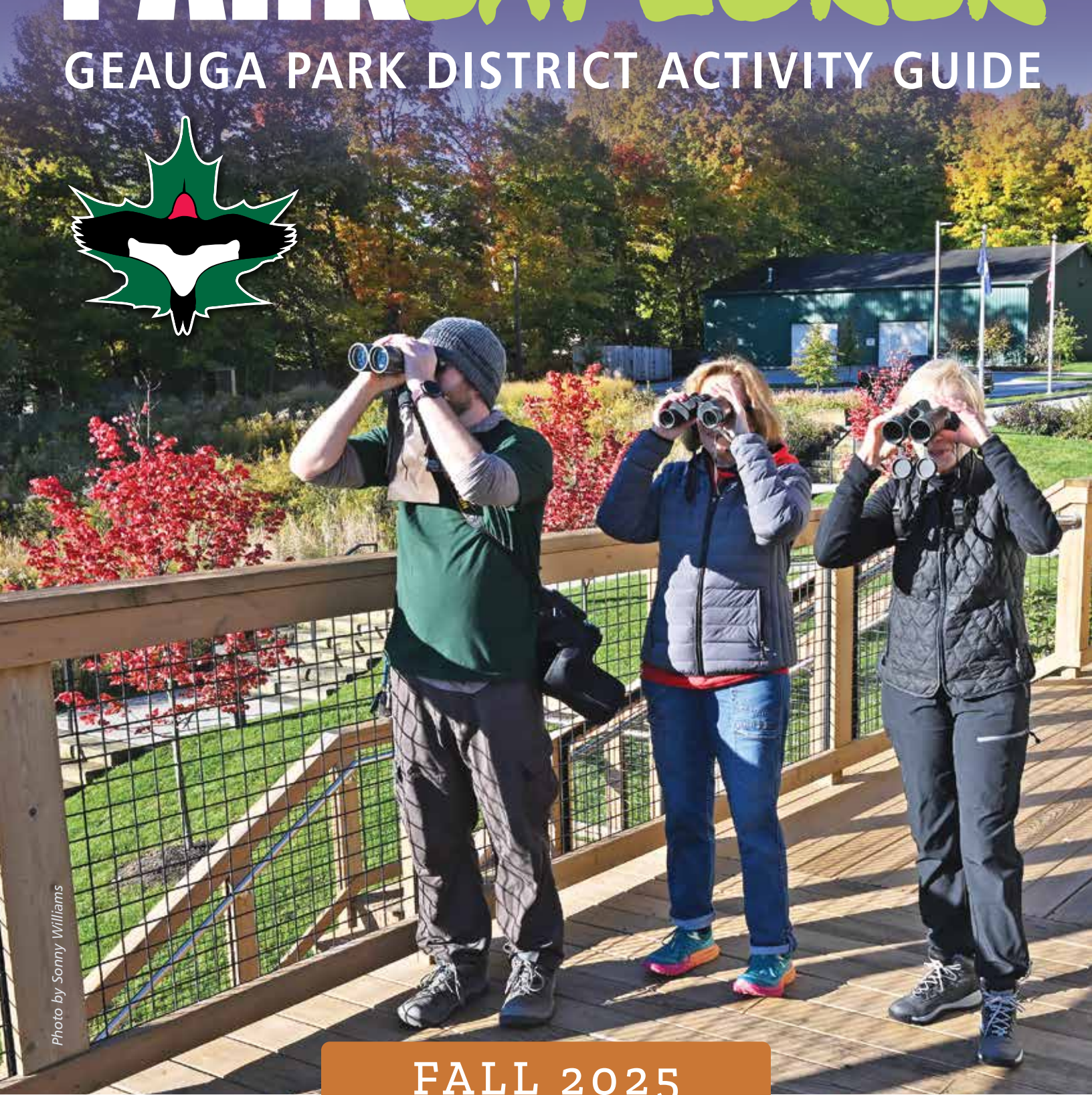


Photo by Sonny Williams

FALL 2025

4 Wild Ohio as seen from Headwaters Park's Boathouse

6 Experience the awe of fall with a visit to Veterans Legacy Woods

16 Facility holds for 2026 open October 1 to Geauga residents

16 & 17 Introducing our next community art show & Park Board Commissioner

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 4, at Observatory Park, 4-6 PM

Each lap of the Planetary Trail equals celestial travel. Limited space; T-shirts for the first 250 registrants, medals & ribbons for all. Registration link on page 7.



**Sunday, October 5, and Saturday & Sunday, October 18 & 19
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 7, 5-8 PM & Saturday, November 8, 10AM-4 PM
at The West Woods Nature Center**

Spend a Friday evening or Saturday visiting vendors indoors and out to find handmade items for everyone on your list!



**Saturday, December 6, 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

Sunday, 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 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

From the Desk of THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Executive Director
 John Oros

Dear Geauga County Friends & Neighbors,

I would like to start by expressing our profound gratitude to you, our Geauga County resident.

Since becoming executive director of your Geauga Park District in November of 2013, I have emphasized the importance of serving you and your family. Our entire staff has worked hard to focus our efforts on serving you, and we recognize the importance of your role in financially sustaining 28 parks, 92+ of miles of trails, 12 lodges, 27 shelters, 33 campsites, and countless naturalist programs and special events.

In providing these services, we strive to create park experiences with an emphasis on fun and enjoyment. We’ve touted your role in being our honored park guest through creative park slogans like “Your Parks, Here for You,” “Adventure Ready,” “Something for Everyone,” and most recently “Outdoors & All Yours.” The ongoing Geauga County Maple Leaf series “Kicking It In the Parks” is doing a nice job of highlighting staff who work in various capacities, what they’re excited to share about their slice of park operations, and the vital roles they play in your parks as well.

Gaugua Park District staff take great pride in working for you. We are so privileged to steward pristine natural areas, build and maintain park amenities for your enjoyment, and provide numerous park programs and special events for those quality times with friends and family.

As we get into fall, we will continue to serve you to the best of our abilities. We look forward to providing a variety of creative activities for you and your family to enjoy. This activity guide is chock-full of fun activities including our annual Space Race at Observatory Park, horse-drawn wagon rides at Swine Creek Reservation, Holly Days at The West Woods, and our ever-popular Geauga Gems hiking series with our naturalists.

Whatever your adventure, we look forward to seeing you in the parks and spending some time with you this fall. We want you to know, it is a blessing and honor to serve you. Thank you for the privilege of stewarding your parks.

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS



Howard Bates



Ray Guarino



Sally LaMarca



John Ralph



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

Where Nature is Bountiful

A PERSPECTIVE ON CONSERVATION FROM THE BOATHOUSE

By Vicky Solomon

Photo by Vicky Solomon



What is 100 miles long but only 30 miles from beginning to end? The Cuyahoga River! It begins at springs seeping out of our Geauga highlands in Montville and Hambden; it ends at downtown Cleveland, just 30 miles west. On its journey, however, the Cuyahoga's waters flow 50 miles southward, where the river bends sharply north, plunging over Cuyahoga Falls near Akron. North, it flows 25 miles through Cuyahoga Valley National Park, then another 20 through cities, finally emptying into Lake Erie in Cleveland.

Headwaters Park is my neighborhood: I've lived nearby for three decades, led naturalist programs in it, and I staff the boathouse here. During the summer, your Geauga Park District provides everything you need to borrow kayaks or canoes. And you are boating on the Cuyahoga River here – the water you paddle or fish in will go over Cuyahoga Falls about two days later.

Photo by Vicky Solomon



When the water level is low in the fall, you can see foundations of cottages from a small resort named Crystal Lake that nestled around the lush ravine in the 1920s. The City of Akron built the dam in 1937 to create the reservoir, flooding the cottage sites. Headwaters Park continues a legacy of Nature preservation and recreation opportunities that's 100 years old.



Photo taken through a scope at Headwaters Park

A pair of Bald Eagles built their nest last spring in a big white pine within sight of the boathouse. We watched them raise their baby, catching fish and feeding the nestling, which grew from grey fluffball to black-feathered fledgling. Then, the first of July — gone from the nest. First of August, I noticed three Bald Eagles circling high on the winds: probably “our” eagle family. An osprey flew in low, arcing around hunting fish, when suddenly a Bald Eagle zoomed down and chased it away. Aerial high drama!

Red-eyed Vireos and cicadas provide the soundtrack in summer. Flute-like calls of wood thrushes ring through the woods as shadows lengthen. In the fall, Sandhill Cranes feed on the shores. You can't mistake their croaky trills for anything else.

You can paddle, picnic, hike, bike, fish, camp, ski, ride your horse, birdwatch, and Nature study here, where our Geauga Park District continues to protect and preserve the Cuyahoga headwaters' beauty and quality for generations to come. I love working toward that mission. 🍀

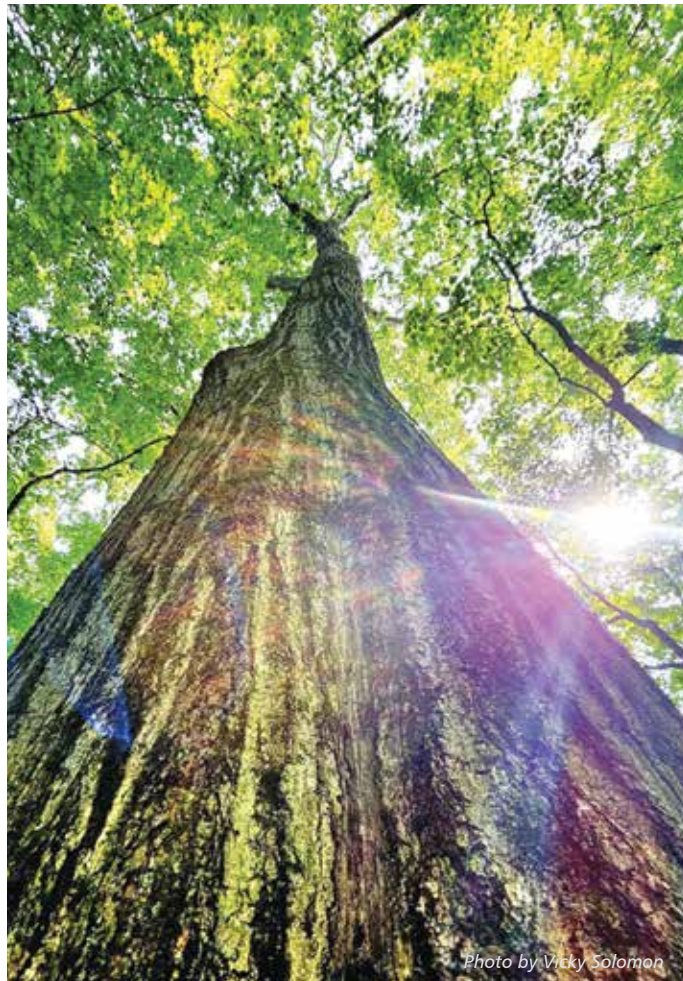


Photo by Vicky Solomon

Older still are many trees in Headwaters Park. Big beech trees are up to 300 years old; an enormous linden tree towers over the boat ramp, and some of the largest oldest sugar maples I've ever seen stand like sentinels along the Eagle Trail. Former generations cared for those maples as a sugar bush. When I first hiked here in the 1990s, admiring the carpets of spring wildflowers, the sugarhouse was still standing. And this trail is still one of the best places to see woodland wildflowers; look for cute little seersucker sedge by the steps.

Oh, the view from my boathouse “office!” White pines and willows, Blue Herons and Cormorants, foxgloves and monkey flowers...! Different plants bloom each week; it's never the same scene. Orange tangles of the parasitic plant, dodder, twine up over shrubbery on the sand. Butterflies and bees feed on goldenrod, and bright blue bottle gentians line the banks into autumn.



Photo by Vicky Solomon

Spend Some Time at Veterans Legacy Woods

Oh the view! You see it as soon as you drive through the entrance of this scenic, at-times steep, and overall spectacular park.

Designed to honor the legacy of anyone who has served in our Armed Forces, special features include a Corridor of Flags, Service Branch Garden, and monolithic-style sandstone wall bearing the park's name. On the wall in The Club on the lower level of Tribute Lodge hangs a beautiful plaque with spaces to honor a lost loved one who served in the military. There is also a Rainbow Bridge to honor and remember lost pets with special tribute paid to military dogs, police K-9 units and service dogs.

The 180 acres of Veterans Legacy Woods, formerly Wicked Woods Golf Course, were purchased by Geauga Park District in November 2018 with the intent of restoring them to a more natural state.

Part of this plan included the creation of a coldwater stream, and related restoration work, which was finally completed just this past spring. Keep an eye out for future programming to tour this special site! The project created 1,700 feet of coldwater stream, a hopeful site for introduction of Ohio native brook trout. It also restored 1,450 feet of warm water stream, returned 32 acres in the Cuyahoga River watershed to a more natural state, and enhanced three wetlands.

Also ecologically significant, the section of the Cuyahoga River that runs through the property is a high quality stream system rich in both aquatic flora and fauna, making it an important contributor to the region's biodiversity.

Traversing mostly fields with rolling terrain, Veterans Legacy Woods' updated trail system totals 3.8 miles. Reforestation projects like 1,000 Trees have made huge strides in restoring forested habitats for the future. Since park trails can be quite hilly, a six-passenger golf cart can be borrowed to help veterans, seniors ages 65+, and guests with limited mobility explore and enjoy the trails whenever they are clear of snow and ice.

Children can also make special memories here on a Nature-based playground, and a public pavilion offers picnic tables, restrooms and a water refill station. Tribute Lodge has three reservable indoor spaces, touting a wonderful view from its windows and expansive deck. 🍃

FIELD NOTES:

SINCE THE GRADE OF THE PROPERTY HEADS DOWNHILL FROM THE ENTRANCE AND LODGE, HIKING TO THE BACK OF THE PROPERTY CAN BE FAIRLY EASY - BUT REMEMBER, THE HIKE BACK WILL BE A STEADY UPHILL CLIMB. TIME YOUR VISIT ACCORDINGLY + BRING WATER IF IT'S HOT!

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.

Since we can't send emails about non-registration programs, please remember to mark your calendar or set an alarm to attend.

Adventure/Discovery Arts Astronomy Kids Seniors

1 Nature Journaling for Families: Build on Your Skills

Wednesday, October 1, 6–8 PM
Big Creek Park, Deep Woods

Build on your Nature journaling skills. Bring your own journal and supplies and journal using prompts provide during instruction. Content for ages 9+. Please register all attending. **Registration required.**



4 Headwaters Horse Ride

Saturday, October 4, 3–5 PM
Headwaters Park, Crystal Lake Parking Lot

Bring your own horse for this leisurely ride on the Buckeye and Maple Bridle trails for a total of approximately 4 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.**

4 Sunset/Moonrise Horseback Ride

Saturday, October 4, 6–8 PM
Headwaters Park, Crystal Lake 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.**



4 The SPACE RACE!

Saturday, October 4, 4–6 PM
Observatory Park

Fee: \$20

As the sun goes down on October 4, run, jog or walk as many course laps as you can in our two-hour race time frame. Each completed lap will equate to an amount of travel through our solar system for example, one .85-mile lap takes you to Mercury, 4 laps and you're 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 will earn a Space Race medal, and you'll receive a ribbon when you "land" (finish) recognizing how far you went and which planet you reached. Awards go to the top three male and female finishers. **Registration** is open now at www.gcxcrcing.com/spacerace for registration, \$20 for each participant \$20 before 10/3. Space is limited, with race T-shirts for the first 250 participants only. Get ready for a race like no other! **Registration required.**

5 The Big Hike at Headwaters

Sunday, October 5, 9 AM–Noon
Headwaters Park, Route 608 Parking Lot

If you ready to hike 4 to 5 miles, this is the perfect hike for you! We'll explore Headwaters Park, hiking as many trails as possible. Adults only. Bring water and a snack.

5 Nature Journaling: Kayak Experience

Sunday, October 5,
9 AM–Noon & 1–4 PM
Burton Wetlands Nature Preserve

Fee: \$20 Geauga residents, \$24 out-of-county
Attend this monthly series to learn basic journaling techniques and record your Nature observations while kayaking. Kayaking experience required. Taking photos is optional. Fees, which include the purchase of a new journal, pen and other supplies, are as follows: first-time participants pay \$20 (Gauga residents) or \$24 (out-of-county residents); those who attended before, but not within the calendar year, pay \$10 (Gauga residents) or \$12 (out-of-county residents); those who attended within the calendar year pay nothing. **Registration required** by phone only at 440-286-9516.

6 Full Moon Hike: The Harvest Moon

Monday, October 6, 6:30–8 PM
Observatory Park

Enjoy a walk under the harvest supermoon and learn how autumn's harvest is celebrated around the world, then observe the rising full moon using park telescopes, weather permitting. 🏠

11 Welton's Gorge Backcountry Gorge Exploration

Saturday, October 11, 9:30 AM–Noon
Welton's Gorge

A strenuous hike where the stream is our "trail." Explore a rocky woodland ravine to discover deep rock ledges, cool streams, salamanders and other unique features. Must be able to hike 2 miles without assistance off-trail in rugged terrain including slippery stream bottoms, steep grades, boulders, downed trees, poison ivy and thorn bushes. Dress for the weather and wear sturdy shoes with good traction that can also get wet. Bring a walking stick or we will provide one. Yaktrax or similar cleats may be advisable based on slippery conditions. Held rain or shine. **Registration required.**

11 Backcountry Hike: Park Preserve

Saturday, October 11, 12:30–4 PM
Chesterland location TBA

A strenuous, off-trail autumn hike at the Mayer Preserve with hills, ravines, obstacles, stream crossings and a spectacular view across the Chagrin Valley. Discover wildlife, explore habitat, and learn the importance of protected lands for biodiversity. Held rain or shine. Dress for the weather and wear sturdy shoes that can provide traction but can get wet and muddy. Directions will be sent before program to those who have registered. **Registration required.**

11 The Sky Tonight Planetarium Show

Saturday, October 11, 4–5 PM
Observatory Park, Robert McCullough Science Center

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

12 Autumn Bird Walk

Sunday, October 12, 9–11 AM
Headwaters Park

Discover both resident and migratory birds in the forest and on the water during this slow-paced bird walk. Experienced leader will assist participants with observation and identification. Binoculars available to borrow or bring your own.

12 Cross-County Fall Colors Van Trip

Sunday, October 12, 10 AM–3 PM
Veterans Legacy Woods

A naturalist-led van trip to visit areas around the county with spectacular views of fall colors. Adults only. Start at Veteran's Legacy Woods and head to amazing sites including overlooks of Headwaters Park and Century Village. Bring a packed lunch. Includes a stop at a surprise location to purchase a snack or treat. Participants will be driven back to starting location to end the program. **Registration required.**

Adventure/Discovery Arts Astronomy Kids Seniors

12 Fall Color Canoe Float

Sunday, October 12, 1–3 PM
Headwaters Park, Boat Launch

Enjoy the fall colors as we paddle along the shores of this beautiful lake! Canoeing ability/experience expected of participants. Dress for weather. Held rain or shine, except in the event of a thunderstorm. Ages 10+; must be 12+ to paddle. **Registration required** by phone beginning October 2 at 10 AM.

14 "Yarn Over" in the Park

Tuesday, October 14, 1–2:30 PM & 6–7:30 PM, Veterans Legacy Woods

Celebrate autumn with the vibrant colors of the season! Bring 4-5 colors of yarn that depict autumn to you: oranges, deep reds, browns and gold. Participants need to have knowledge of crocheting or knitting, as this is not a "learn to" group. Our small projects this season will be pumpkins as well as hats to donate to other residents in need; pattern links are sent via the registration confirmation email prior to program. Participants may also choose to bring their own projects to work instead. **Registration required.**

16 Elderberries: Horse-Drawn Wagon Ride

Thursday, October 16, 11:30 AM–1:30 PM
Swine Creek Reservation, Woods Edge

Seniors, come along on a naturalist-led horse-drawn wagon ride to enjoy natural wonders unique to autumn. The wagon has stairs leading up to bench seating. Lunch will be sponsored by University Hospitals Geauga Medical Center. Elderberries is a collaboration with the Department on Aging and UH Geauga Medical Center. **Registration required.**

16 Hawk Watch

Thursday, October 16, 3–6 PM
Veterans Legacy Woods, Deck

Enjoy the view looking over the valley of the western branch of the Cuyahoga River and see if we can catch a glimpse of migrating raptors during this stationary birding program. Bring binoculars. **Registration required.**



17 Howling with Coyotes

Friday, October 17, 7–9:30 PM
The West Woods

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.

18 Astrotots XL: Starstruck!

(Ages 6-11 w/adult)
Saturday, October 18, 9:30–10:45 AM, 1–2:15 PM, Observatory Park, Robert McCullough Science Center

Are you amazed by the beauty of a star lit sky? Are you curious about the size of stars, the number of stars, the possible effects stars have on our personalities? Attend this star-studded program and discover all sorts of "starry trivia" that will deepen your interest in astronomy. **Registration required** for participating children only.

18 Nature Trek Fitness Hike

Saturday, October 18, 10 AM–Noon
Veterans Legacy Woods

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 at up to 4.5 miles on various trail conditions. Held rain or shine, so dress for the weather and bring water.

18 What's in My First Aid Kit?

Saturday, October 18, 1:30–4 PM
Big Creek Park, Meyer Center

Your first aid kit is essential for outdoor activities. We'll discuss the most common outdoor injuries and ailments and see if our first aid kits are up to the job, then have a practical exercise out on the trail. This is an indoor/outdoor program and NOT a training/certification. **Registration required.**

18 Nassau Astronomy Night with CVAS

Saturday, October 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 Hound Hike

Sunday, October 19, 10–11 AM
Swine Creek Reservation, Woods Edge
Dogs and their humans, join us for a 1.2-mile hike along the medium level Gray Fox Trail, then take home an "Adventure Ready" dog scarf to remember it by! Cold Nose Companions Dog Training will also meet us to share some helpful tips and tricks to practice during the hike. Don't forget to bring dog towels, water, a water bowl, poop scoop and bags for dog clean-up. Only one dog per handler, who must be able to fully control dog, kept on leash at all times (8 ft. max). Dogs must be non-aggressive to people and other dogs; aggressive behavior or excessive barking will result in participants being asked to leave. Walkers without dogs are welcome, too!



19 Accessible Nature Cart Tours

Sunday, October 19, 1–2 PM, 2–3 PM
Observatory Park

Our parks are beautiful but can be a challenge for people with limited mobility. Our cart tours are a great 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. All participants must be able to enter and exit a 6-seat golf cart. We ask that participants limit registration to themselves and one guest. **Registration required.**

23 Maple Town Tune Traders

Thursday, October 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. Please note new location.

24 Inclusive Fall Wagon Ride

Friday, October 24, 10–10:45 AM & 11–11:45 AM
Swine Creek Reservation, Woods Edge

A special program for adults in the developmental disability community. Join us for a horse-drawn wagon ride through the woods to enjoy the wonders unique to autumn. Wagon has a ramp and potential wheelchair seating; please indicate if registering a participant in a wheelchair. Dress for the weather. Picnic shelter reserved for those wishing to utilize the shelter afterward. **Registration required** for all participants.

Please check our website for changes or cancellations before attending.

Since we can't send emails about non-registration programs, please remember to mark your calendar or set an alarm to attend.

Fully Accessible Nature Scopes

24 What's On Our Trail Cameras?

Friday, October 24, 7–9 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Geauga Park District has been deploying remote cameras throughout the parks, and we have captured some pretty entertaining videos of our local wildlife. Join us for the presentation to view these videos of otters, beavers, coyotes, deer and more!

25 Scout Day: Tiger Cub Scouts – "Tigers in the Wild"

Saturday, October 25, 10–11:30 AM
Big Creek Park, Aspen Grove

Tiger Cub Scouts (6-8 years old), join us to work on your Tigers in the Wild Adventure. Outdoors; dress for the weather. **Registration required** for scouts only, but adult leaders must attend.

25 Mushrooms of Northeast Ohio

Saturday, October 25, 10–11 AM
Big Creek Park, Meyer Center

Ohio's diverse habitat allows for a wide variety of mushrooms. Join Jerry Pepera from the Ohio Mushroom Society for a fascinating presentation of the common mushrooms found in Northeast Ohio. This presentation will discuss identification and fungi's role in Nature.



5 18 19

Horse-Drawn Wagon Rides

Sunday, October 5, Saturday, October 18 and Sunday October 19, 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.

7 21 **Geauga Walkers**

Tuesdays, 1–2:30 PM
October 7, Orchard Hills Park
October 21, Burton Wetlands Nature Preserve
A naturalist-led hike for active seniors of approximately 2 miles. Other hikes held weekly in Geauga County and surrounding areas. Call Geauga Senior Center for full schedule: 440-279-2167.

25 Scout Day: Brownie "Eco Friend" Badge

Saturday, October 25, 1–3 PM
Big Creek Park, Aspen Grove

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

25 ASM Minerals Garden & Dome Tour

Saturday, October 25, 3–4 PM, Offsite

Join us for an outdoor tour of the minerals garden at ASM International's geodesic dome to learn the history of the site's iconic geodesic dome, then explore the fascinating science of the minerals of the minerals garden. Directions provided after registration. **Registration required.**

RECURRING PROGRAMS

10 24 Ohio's Ancient Skywatchers

Friday, October 10, 7–8 PM

Observatory Park, Robert McCullough Science Center

Friday, October 24, 7–8 PM (Virtual)

Discover the clues that ancient Ohioans left about their knowledge of the sky, including at Ohio's "World Heritage" sites! Followed by night sky viewing, weather permitting. October 24 is a virtual program. Sign up and we will email you the Zoom link before the program. (Please be sure your email is correct in your account.) **Registration required** for virtual program only.

10 11 24 25 Night Sky Viewing

Fridays, October 10 & 24, 8–11 PM

Saturdays, October 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.

17 18 Astrotots:

Super Stars! (Ages 3-5 w/adult)

Friday, October 17, 9:30–10:30 AM,

11 AM–Noon & 1–2 PM

Saturday, October 18, 11:30 AM–12:30 PM

Observatory Park, Robert McCullough Science Center

Have you ever wondered about the stars in the night sky? Why are stars so tiny? Why do stars twinkle? Where do stars hide in the daytime? Come discover the mystery and magic of stars and make-n-take your own starry craft. **Registration required** for participating children only.

26 Hidden Gems Hike: Observatory Park

Sunday, October 26, 1–3 PM
Observatory Park

Discover the natural wonders that can be found at Observatory Park along the trails during daylight hours! This hike will be approximately 2.5 miles over fairly level terrain. Held rain or shine. Wear footgear that can get wet and muddy.

28 Early Morning Hike

Tuesday, October 28, 8–9:30 AM
The West Woods, Affelder House

Join us for an early morning up-paced hike through the hilly forest of this beautiful park. Held rain or shine, so dress for the weather.



17 18 Basket Weaving: Pumpkin Basket

Friday, October 17, Noon–6 PM
Saturday, October 18, Noon–6 PM
Swine Creek Reservation, Lodge

Fee: \$35 Geauga residents, \$40 out-of-county
Skill level: beginner. Try your hand at basket weaving using the twining method of weaving to make a pumpkin basket with a wooden base and handle. Due to program preparation expenses, a refund may not be processed if cancellation occurs within 5 days of program. **Registration required.**

20 26 Timbertots: Autumn Exploration!

(Ages 3-5 w/adult)

Monday, October 20,
10–11 AM & 1–2 PM

Orchard Hills Park, Lodge

Sunday, October 26,
10–11 AM & 1–2 PM

Headwaters Park, Boathouse

Join Nora the Explorer for a fun time discovering the sights, scents and sounds of autumn in Nature! Program outdoors; dress for the weather. **Registration required** for all attending including adults and siblings.

Adventure/Discovery Arts Astronomy Kids Seniors

1 Buckeye Trail Highlight Hike

Saturday, November 1, 1–2:30 PM
Eldon Russell Park, Horwath's Shelter
The Buckeye Trail winds nearly 1,444 miles around Ohio. Without hiking the entire trail, let's visit one of the eight Geauga Park District parks that can access the Blue Blazes. Must have the ability to hike 2-4 miles on various terrain. Held rain or shine, so dress for the weather and bring water.

1 Seed Collecting & Meadow Meander


Saturday, November 1, 1:30–3:30 PM
Observatory Park
Join Geauga Park District staff for a short indoor introduction to planting a meadow, then hike the meadow and collect seeds for the Park District (as well as some to take home) while viewing the fantastic variety of meadow and prairie plants established at Observatory Park. Ages 12+ with adult; no younger children. **Registration required.**



2 Creek Trail Hike at Big Creek

Sunday, November 2, 1–3 PM
Big Creek Park, Woodin Road Horse Trailer 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 park at the Woodin Road horse trailer lot and hike out to the Tupelo Pond parking lot on Ravenna Road; a park van will shuttle you back to your vehicle. Ages 10+ with adult; no younger children. **Registration required.**

5 Full Moon Hike: The Beaver Moon

Wednesday, November 5, 6–7:30 PM
Observatory Park
Join us for a walk to explore Nature at night and learn about the beavers that are so busy this time of year, then observe the rising full moon using park telescopes, weather permitting. 

8 Welton's Gorge Backcountry Gorge Exploration

Saturday, November 8, 9–11:30 AM
Welton's Gorge
A strenuous hike where the stream is our "trail." Explore a rocky woodland ravine to discover deep rock ledges, cool streams, salamanders and other unique features. Must be able to hike 2 miles without assistance off-trail in rugged terrain including slippery stream bottoms, steep grades, boulders, downed trees, poison ivy and thorn bushes. Dress for the weather and wear sturdy shoes with good traction that can also get wet. Bring a walking stick or we will provide one. Yaktrax or similar cleats may be advisable based on slippery conditions. Held rain or shine. **Registration required.**

8 Scout Day: Junior Girl Scouts – "Outdoor Art Explorer" Badge

Saturday, November 8, 10 AM–Noon
Big Creek Park, Deep Woods
Junior Girl Scouts, join us to work on your Outdoor Art Explorer Badge and explore Nature through art! Dress for the weather, as we'll take a hike and spend time outdoors. **Registration required** for scouts only, but adult leaders must attend.


8 Scout Day: Wolf Cub Scouts – "Paws on the Path" Adventure

Saturday, November 8, 1–2:30 PM
Big Creek Park, Deep Woods
Wolf Cub Scouts, join us as we work on the Paws on the Path Adventure! We'll begin with an introduction inside followed by an outdoor hike to observe Nature this season. Dress for the weather. **Registration required** for scouts only, but adult leaders must attend.


9 Bird Nest Quest Hike

Sunday, November 9, 10 AM–Noon
Eldon Russell Park, Horwath's Landing
Take a look at our bird nest collection under the shelter, then head out to discover abandoned nests along the trail and learn cool facts about the birds who made them! Hike approximately 2 miles and mostly on-trail with some off-trail. Insulated, waterproof footwear highly recommended. Held rain, snow or shine; dress for the weather.

9 Campfire Cooking: Forks & Foil

Sunday, November 9, 4:30–6:30 PM
Big Creek Park, Deep Woods
Fee: \$4 Geauga residents, \$6 out-of-county
Learn a new skill and get inspired for your next camping adventure! Together we'll create foil meals packed with your choice of fiery veggies or sausage, shrimp, zucchini and corn cobs, seasoned to your liking. Hot dogs on standby for picky eaters. **Registration required.** 

14 Make a Star Pointer

Friday, November 14, 7–8 PM
Observatory Park, Robert McCullough Science Center
Make-and-take a cardboard contraption that helps you locate stars, planets and other objects in the night sky. Followed by night sky viewing, weather permitting. 

15 Take Me to the Migration Van Trip

Saturday, November 15, 8 AM–4 PM
The West Woods
November in Ohio means waterfowl migration! We'll point the van in the direction of the best local bird reports, migrant traps, and any rare bird that shows up in our local area. Adults only. Please bring a sack lunch, binoculars, and dress warm in case we end up along Lake Erie. **Registration required.**

15 Hike The West Creek Conservancy Addition

Saturday, November 15, 3–4:30 PM
Observatory Park, Nassau Astronomical Station
Visit the newest addition to Geauga Park District's parks and preserves – a hundred-acre site adjacent to Observatory Park that was formerly the West Creek Conservancy's Cuyahoga Headwaters Initiative. This is a soggy, off-trail hike, so dress accordingly. Adults only. **Registration required.**

16 Late Morning Bird Walk

Sunday, November 16, 9–11 AM
Walter C. Best Wildlife Preserve
The early bird catches the worm, but migrating waterfowl sit on the water all day allowing for a later start to the day! November is a wonderful month for migration, so let's explore Best Lake for any and all birds.

16 Backcountry Hike

Sunday, November 16, 1–3:30 PM
The Rookery
An on-and-off-trail hike with wet, muddy hiking, stepping over logs and crossing streams as we venture backcountry for a distance of more than 2 miles. Held rain or shine, so dress for the weather. **Registration required.**

16 A Year in the Life of Milkweed (Virtual)

Sunday, November 16, 2:30–3:30 PM
Inspired by Doug Tallamy's book *The Nature of Oaks*, this virtual program takes a look at milkweed through an entire year. Learn about its various insect associations as well as other aspects of its importance in Nature. Sign up and we will email you the Zoom link to attend before the program (so please be sure your email address is correct in your account). **Registration required.**

Please check our website for changes or cancellations before attending.

Since we can't send emails about non-registration programs, please remember to mark your calendar or set an alarm to attend.

Fully Accessible

Nature Scopes




16 Marsh Mammal Viewing

Sunday, November 16, 4:30–6 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.


19 Art Workshop: Beach Glass Ornament

Wednesday, November 19,
4–5:30 PM & 6–7:30 PM
Claridon Woodlands

Fee: \$18 Geauga residents, \$20 out-of-county
Join Beach Glass artist Sue Luck to create the perfect holiday ornament using authentic Lake Erie Beach Glass! Learn about Lake Erie glass and create a snowman, a Christmas tree, an angel, or another scene of your choosing. You will be provided with all materials, or may bring your own glass if you have it. Ages 18+. **Registration required** for one session, either afternoon or evening. 


20 Elderberries: Outstanding Otters

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

Seniors, join Chief Naturalist John to learn about the amazing River Otter and other weasels through illustrations, videos and pelts. Refreshments sponsored by Ohman Family Living at Home. Elderberries is a collaboration with the Geauga Department on Aging and UH Geauga Medical Center. **Registration required.** 

20 Maple Town Tune Traders

Thursday, November 20, 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. Program cancelled in event of snow; check park website the day of program for an update. 

21 Homeschool Days: Wildlife Wonders

(Ages 5-7 & 8-12)
Friday, November 21, 10:30 AM–Noon
Big Creek Park, Meyer Center

Homeschoolers, enjoy hands-on fun learning about wildlife of the past and present and testing your Nature detective skills! Some outdoor activities, so dress for the weather. **Registration required** for all attending including children and adults.

22 Welton's Gorge Fall Trail Hike

Saturday, November 22, 9–10:30 AM
Welton's Gorge

Hike with a naturalist along these trails to discover signs of the winter season. Must be able to hike at least 2 miles. Held rain, snow or shine, so dress for the weather. This trail hike will not go down into the gorge, but rather enjoy views of the gorge from the trail above.



22 Hidden Gems Hike: Metzenbaum

Saturday, November 22, 1–2:30 PM
Bessie Benner Metzenbaum Park

Hike with a naturalist along these beautiful trails to discover some of Nature's hidden gems! Must have the ability to hike 1.5 miles over hilly terrain. Held rain or shine. Wear footgear that can get wet and muddy.

22 Waterfowl Watch

Saturday, November 22, 2–4 PM
LaDue Reservoir, Boathouse Parking Lot
Meet up at LaDue's boathouse lot to scan the shores for migratory ducks, loons, grebes, swans and Bald Eagles during prime migration time. Bring binoculars; spotting scopes provided. Van seats available first-come, first-served; caravan behind if van fills.

22 Nassau Astronomy Night with CVAS


Saturday, November 22, 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.

23 Hound Hike

Sunday, November 23, 10–11 AM
The West Woods, Turkey Ridge
Dogs and their humans, join us for a 2-mile medium-level hike to Ansel's Cave, then take home an "Adventure Ready" dog scarf to remember it by! Cold Nose Companions Dog Training will also share helpful tips and tricks to practice during the hike. Don't forget to bring dog towels, water, a water bowl, poop scoop and bags for dog clean-up. Only one dog per handler, who must be able to fully control dog, kept on leash at all times (8 ft. max). Dogs must be non-aggressive to people and other dogs. Walkers without dogs are welcome, too!

23 Nature's Ornaments: Make it Yourself!

Sunday, November 23, 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. 


24 Early Morning Walk

Monday, November 24, 8–9:30 AM
Tupelo Pond in Big Creek Park
Join a naturalist for an early morning, up-paced hike with few stops along the hilly Tupelo Trail.


28 Hike Your Turkey Off

Friday, November 28, 9 AM–12:30 PM
The West Woods, Affelder House
With Thanksgiving leaving us feeling a bit overstuffed, it's time to hike that turkey off with a strenuous, steady-paced, calorie-burning 8-mile hike. That's right, 8 miles – one mile for every extra helping! **Registration required.**

29 Wildlife Detective Bingo

Saturday, November 29, 2:30–4 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center
Grab your family and friends for a fun Nature twist on traditional BINGO. Animal clues like tracks and feathers will be shown, and the first ones to make BINGO with the correct animals win a Nature-themed prizes! Snacks provided. **Registration required.** 

29 The Sky Tonight Planetarium Show

Saturday, November 29, 4–5 PM
Observatory Park, Robert McCullough
Science Center
Join us for a planetarium presentation about what to watch for in the night sky this week. 

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

30 Coffee with the Birds

Sunday, November 30,
11 AM–Noon & 12:30–1:30 PM
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. ♿

30 Naturalist Linda's Homegrown Park



(Virtual)

Sunday, November 30, 2:30–3:30 PM

Inspired by Dr. Doug Tallamy's "Homegrown National Park" initiative to encourage native plantings on private property, come learn about how many and what kinds of plants and animals inhabit Naturalist Linda's 38-acre family property in Geauga County. Sign up and we will email you the Zoom link to attend before the program (so please be sure your email address is correct in your account).

Registration required.

RECURRING PROGRAMS

2 3 Nature Journaling: Getting Ready for Winter

Sunday, November 2, 1–3:30 PM &
Monday, November 3, 9–11:30 AM
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 learn about different ways animals get ready for winter. Partially outdoors. Taking photos is optional. Fees, which include the purchase of a new journal, pen and other supplies, are as follows: first-time participants pay \$20 (Gauga residents) or \$24 (out-of-county residents); those who attended before, but not within the calendar year, pay \$10 (Gauga residents) or \$12 (out-of-county residents); those who attended within the calendar year pay nothing. **Registration required** by phone only.

4 18 Geauga Walkers

Tuesdays, 1–2:30 PM
November 4, Eldon Russell Park
November 18, Beartown Lakes
Reservation

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



Photo by Sonny Williams

7 8 Holly Days Artisan Boutique

Friday, November 7, 5–8 PM &
Saturday, November 8, 10 AM–4 PM
The West Woods or Big Creek Park

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! ♿



9 14 Timbertots: Oh Deer!

(Ages 3–5 w/adult)

Sunday, November 9, 10–11 AM & 1–2 PM
Friday, November 14, 10–11 AM & 1–2 PM
The Rookery, Great Blue Heron Lodge

Join Nora the Explorer to discover our amazing wildlife neighbor, the White-tailed Deer! Fun activities indoors and out; dress for the weather. **Registration required** for all attending including adults and siblings.

14 15 29

Night Sky Viewing

Friday, November 14, 8–11 PM &
Saturdays, November 15 & 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.



17 18 Odds & Ends Baskets

Monday, November 17, 4–9 PM &
Tuesday, November 18, 1–6 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Fee: \$20 Geauga residents, \$24 out-of-county
Use your creativity! A basic pattern will be provided, then you'll design and weave your basket. Some experience recommended. Due to program preparation expenses, a refund may not be processed if cancellation occurs within 5 days of the program. **Registration required.**



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.

1 Tour Welton's Gorge



Monday, December 1, 7–8 PM (Virtual)
Curious about Welton's Gorge, but haven't yet been able to visit with a naturalist? Join us for this virtual tour to discover the amazing flora and fauna of this magical place without even getting your feet wet. Sign up and we will email you the Zoom link to attend before the program (so please be sure your email address is correct in your account). **Registration required.**

4 Art Workshop: Wood Carving-Santa Ornament (2-Night Class)

Thursday, December 4, 3–5 PM & 6–8 PM
Thursday, December 11, same hours as first session
Holbrook Hollows

Fee: \$45 Geauga residents, \$50 out-of-county

Award-winning wood carver Robert Stadlander leads this two-night class to carve a Santa-head ornament. Adults only. One-time fee covers both sessions' instruction and materials, including a basswood block to carve. Supplies and tools provided, or bring your own tools if you have them. Tools and additional carving blocks will also be available for purchase. **Registration required;** please choose just one session, afternoon or evening.

Please check our website for changes or cancellations before attending.

Since we can't send emails about non-registration programs, please remember to mark your calendar or set an alarm to attend.

Fully Accessible

Nature Scopes

4 Full Moon Hike: The Bear Moon

Thursday, December 4, 6–7:30 PM
Observatory Park

Take a hike to enjoy Nature at night and find out how bears are getting ready for the winter, then observe the rising full moon using park telescopes, weather permitting. 🗺️

6 Holiday Greens Workshop

Saturday, December 6,
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) wreath, 2) table arrangement with candle or 3) door swag. Visit our website under News & Updates for photos resembling each project and more specific project descriptions. A variety of ribbon, evergreens and pinecones will be provided, and bring any accents you may wish to add, as well as pruners and a plastic bag to protect your car seat from water. **Registration required.** 🗺️

6 Fire-Building Techniques

Saturday, December 6,
10 AM–Noon & 2–4 PM
Sunnybrook Preserve

With cold weather on the way, it may be good to practice some fire-building skills. You'll begin with fire basics, see modern and practical ways of fire building, then gather your own supplies to see if your fire can burn long enough to roast a marshmallow or two. **Registration required.** Wheelchair/stroller accessible. - Volunteers needed



Photo by Sonny Williams

6 Greens for Giving

Saturday, December 6, 11 AM–Noon,
Noon–1 PM, 1–2 PM & 2–3 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Join Geauga Park District for this make-and-GIVE event to create 300+ evergreen decorations to be given to seniors along with Geauga County Department on Aging's home-delivered meals and the Geauga Veterans Foodbank. All supplies provided. Brighten a senior's holiday season with your thoughtful creation! **Registration required;** please choose just one session. 🗺️

9 Inclusive Experience: Evergreen Creation

Tuesday, December 9, 10–11:30 AM
The West Woods, Nature Center

A special program for adults in the developmental disability community! Join us to create an easy but impressive evergreen centerpiece to take home. Caregivers should plan on assisting. **Registration required** by phone only. 🗺️

10 Virtual Lunch & Learn: Butterfly Gardening

Wednesday, December 10, Noon–1 PM
(Virtual)

Enjoy a virtual presentation about butterfly gardening during your at-home or at-work lunch break to help beat the winter blues and start planning your gardens for spring! Naturalist Karie will share her passion for native plants and pollinator gardening and loves to answer any questions you may have. Sign up and we will email you the Zoom link to attend before the program (so please be sure your email address is correct in your account). **Registration required.**

12 Earthquakes in Ohio

Friday, December 12, 7–8 PM (Virtual)

Get the latest on Northeast Ohio's earthquakes and learn how to locate one using a seismograph. Sign up and we will email you the Zoom link to attend before the program (so please be sure your email address is correct in your account). **Registration required.**

13 The Sky Tonight Planetary Show

Saturday, December 13, 4–5 PM
Observatory Park, Robert
McCullough Science Center

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

14 Paracord Holiday Ornament

Sunday, December 14, 1–3 PM, 4–6 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 Solomon's Dragon knot to create a charming wreath ornament. Adults only. This is an intermediate decorative knot we'll work through step by step. **Registration required.**

14 Ansel's Cave Hike: History Written in Rock

Sunday, December 14, 1–3:30 PM
The West Woods

Hike with a naturalist to Ansel's Cave to discover its history written in rock – a rare opportunity to go into this restricted area! Dress for the weather and wear sturdy foot gear. Hike is 3 miles over hilly terrain with a stream crossing.

14 Research in Our Parks: Survey Results

Sunday, December 14, 2:30–3:30 PM
(Virtual)

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

18 Elderberries: Winter Evergreens

Thursday, December 18, 1–2:30 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Seniors, join Naturalist Nora to learn interesting facts about the common evergreen trees in our area and tips on how to make a delightful evergreen decoration for the holidays. Refreshments sponsored by Home Instead. Elderberries is a collaboration with the Geauga Department on Aging and UH Geauga Medical Center. **Registration required.** 🗺️

18 Maple Town Tune Traders

Thursday, December 18, 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. Program cancelled in event of snow; check park website the day of program for an update. 🗺️

19 Early Morning Hike

Friday, December 19, 8–9 AM
Frohring Meadows

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

20 Coffee with the Birds

Saturday, December 20,
9:30–10:30 AM & 11 AM–Noon
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. 🗺️

Photo by Sonny Williams



Adventure/Discovery Arts Astronomy Kids Seniors

20 Big Tree Hike!

Saturday, December 20, 1–3 PM
The West Woods, Affelder House

Hike our newest trail, the *Tulip Trail*, to meet our state-record tuliptree, one of the tallest trees in the state of Ohio! Hike is about 3 miles over rolling hills. Prepare for variable weather and potentially icy trails. Limited parking, so carpooling highly recommended! **Registration required.**

20 Nassau Astronomy Night with CVAS

Saturday, December 20, 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 Winter Solstice Hound Hike

Sunday, December 21, 12:30–1:30 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Dogs and their humans, join us for a Winter Solstice Hound 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, who must be able to fully control dog, kept on leash at all times (8 ft. max). Dogs must be non-aggressive to people and other dogs. Walkers without dogs are welcome, too!

21 Winter Solstice Celebration!

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

Celebrate the longest night of the year as we explore the roots of our modern holiday celebrations indoors and out – no registration required! 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. Dress for the weather, as much of the program is outside. No dogs. Program is open-house format, ending at 10 PM. Shuttles from ASM will run from 6:30-10:30 PM.



27 Scout Day: Webelos "Earth Rocks" Adventure

Saturday, December 27, 2–4 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Webelos, work toward your Earth Rocks Elective Adventure. Program both indoors and outdoors; dress for the weather. **Registration required** for scouts only, but adult leaders must attend.

27 Scout Day: Brownies "Space Science Adventure" Badge

Saturday, December 27, 7:30–9 PM
Observatory Park, Robert
McCullough Science Center

Brownie Girl Scouts, join us at this International Dark Sky Park to work toward your Space Science Adventure Badge. Dress for the weather. **Registration required** for scouts only, but adult leaders must attend.

30 Nature Explorers: Nature Journaling

(Ages 9-12 w/adult)
Tuesday, December 30, 1–3 PM
The West Woods, Nature Center

Nature Explorers, let's learn the art of Nature journaling, including sit-spots, sound maps and other journaling techniques. Journal materials provided. **Registration required** for all attending.

31 New Year's Eve Nature Celebration!

Wednesday, December 31, 11 AM–1 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. Program mostly indoors, but may be partially outdoors if weather permits. **Registration required** for all attending beginning December 2 at 10 AM for Geauga County residents, December 9 at 10 AM for out-of-county residents.

RECURRING PROGRAMS

2 16 30 Geauga Walkers

Hike & Holiday Lunch
Tuesday, December 2, Noon–2:45 PM
Veterans Legacy Woods

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.

Tuesdays, 1–2:30 PM
December 16, Welton's Gorge
December 30, Claridon Woodlands
A naturalist-led hike for active seniors of approximately 2 miles. Other hikes held weekly in Geauga County and surrounding areas. Call Geauga Senior Center for full schedule: 440-279-2167.



Photo by Sr. Julie Boehmlein

7 8 Timbertots: Evergreen Artists!

(Ages 3-5 w/adult)
Sunday, December 7,
10–11:30 AM, 1–2:30 PM
Monday, December 8,
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! 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; dress for the weather. Register required for all attending including adults and siblings. Supplies may not be available for older or younger siblings.

Please check our website for changes or cancellations before attending.

Since we can't send emails about non-registration programs, please remember to mark your calendar or set an alarm to attend.

Fully Accessible

Nature Scopes

7 8 Nature Journaling: Winter Tree ID

Sunday, December 7, 1–3:30 PM & Monday, December 8, 9–11:30 AM
Big Creek Park, Meyer 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 identifying trees in winter. Partially outdoors. Taking photos is optional. Fees, which include the purchase of a new journal, pen and other supplies, are as follows: first-time participants pay \$20 (Gauga residents) or \$24 (out-of-county residents); those who attended before, but not within the calendar year, pay \$10 (Gauga residents) or \$12 (out-of-county residents); those who attended within the calendar year pay nothing. **Registration required** by phone only.

12 13 Ho Ho Ho Hiking with Santa & Buddy the Elf

Friday, December 12, 10–11:30 AM
Saturday, December 13, 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, Mrs. Claus and Buddy the Elf! Santa is also available after the hike for photos and wish lists. **Registration required** for all attending.



12 13 Night Sky Viewing

Friday, December 12, 8–11 PM & Saturday, December 13, 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. No registration required.

For October archery programs at Chickagami Park, please arrive 15 minutes early to walk the quarter mile to the range.

Archery Practice (Ages 9+)

Sunday, October 12, 1–1:30 PM & 1:45–2:15 PM

Chickagami Park, Archery Range

Take the next step in improving your aim through a 30-minute practice session. Must have participated in an Introduction to Archery program to register. Children must be accompanied by adult. Wear close-toed shoes. **Registration required.**

Archery Games for Families

Sunday, October 12, 2:30–4 PM
Chickagami Park, Archery Range

Take the next step in improving your aim through playing archery games. You must have participated in an Introduction to Archery program to register. Families with children ages 9+ accompanied by an adult. Wear close-toed shoes. **Registration required** for all participating.

Introduction to Archery for Families

Sunday, October 19, 10–11:30 AM
Chickagami Park

Families with children ages 9+, learn the basics of target archery together. Participants must be age 9 or older, 50" or taller, and wear closed-toe shoes. No younger children. **Registration required** for all participating.

Introduction to Archery for Adults

Sunday, October 19, 2–3:30 PM
Chickagami Park

Learn the basics of target archery with other adults. Wear close-toed shoes and arrive at least 15 minutes early for the .25-mile walk to the archery range. **Registration required.**

Archery Games for Kids

(Ages 9-16)
Sunday, October 26, 12:30–2 PM
Chickagami Park, Archery Range

Kids ages 9-16, take the next step in improving your aim through playing archery games. Must have previously participated in our Introduction to Archery program to register. **Registration required** for child/teen only, but adult must attend.

Archery Games for Adults

Sunday, October 26, 2:30–4 PM
Chickagami Park

Take the next step in improving your aim through playing archery games. You must have participated in an Introduction to Archery program to attend. Wear close-toed shoes. **Registration required.**



ARCHERY FOR EVERYONE



Photo by Sonny Williams

Introduction to Archery for Families

Sunday, December 28, 1–2:30 PM
The Rookery, Great Blue Heron Lodge
Families with children ages 9+, learn the basics of target archery together. Participants must be age 9 or older, 50" or taller, and wear closed-toe shoes. No younger children. **Registration required** for all attending.

Archery Games for Adults

Sunday, December 28, 3–4:30 PM
The Rookery, Great Blue Heron Lodge
Take the next step in improving your aim through playing archery games. You must have taken our Introduction to Archery program to attend. Wear close-toed shoes. **Registration required** for all attending.

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

Monday, December 29, 12:30–2 PM
The Rookery, Great Blue Heron Lodge
Kids ages 9-16, 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 Adults

Monday, December 29, 2:30–4 PM
The Rookery, Great Blue Heron Lodge
Learn the basics of target archery with other adults. Wear close-toed shoes. **Registration required.**

Planning to Reserve a Facility for 2026?



Our lodges, shelters and campsites will be reservable for 2026 beginning on the following dates:

October 1 (Wednesday) at 8 AM
for Geauga County residents

November 3 (Monday) at 10 AM
for out-of-county residents

Due to high call volumes, reserving online is highly recommended. Plan for "Opening Day" accordingly on our website under *News & Updates*, then *2026 Facility Reservations*.



Flight



...is the inspiration for our next community art show!

Calling All Artists:

Nature that takes flight is your new inspiration — birds, insects, bats, and animals with wings that take to the air.

We humans are grounded creatures long inspired by the ability of animals to fly. It seems a freedom like no other, doesn't it? The freedom of movement loaded with the ability to experience aerial views from above.



Geauga Park District's community art shows are always inspired by Nature. This one is scheduled to open in March 2026. Watch for the application process and final dates to be posted to our website very soon.

Device-driven? Try Agents of Discovery



Opportunities for app-based fun for the whole family (or just you) continue at The West Woods, with all-new missions local **Agents of Discovery** can solve — plus, a grab-bag of cool Agents-themed rewards! This free game shows you around the park, featuring wildlife and wild things to note as you walk certain trails. Explore the app now by downloading it on your smartphone and creating a free account, then head to the park sometime soon to play.



Bird in the Hand Snowshoe Borrowing RETURNING SOON TO THE WEST WOODS...

Come October, we're always excited to recreate our **Bird in the Hand Feeding Station** along the Discovery Trail, 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 isn't always consistent or generous with the white stuff, we're holding out hope that this season will be a good one for this wonderful sport. Borrowing is free for Geauga residents.

Find details about both opportunities on our website under *Activities*, then *Birdwatching* or *Snowshoeing*.



ADVENTURES in Geocaching

Check out the new fall geocache
at The Rookery
in Munson Twp.

N 41° 30.096'
W -81° 16.853'

*A long-standing silo hints at old hay bales.
Woodcocks and railroads highlight the main trails.
No more an old junction or farm fields that function.
Today this wetland paradise
can sometimes be muggy and a bit buggy.
So, the wildlife love it and birds soar above it.
But no need to cry this bridge will keep your feet dry.
No troll to fear here, though the geocache is near.
You might think to look just under foot.*

Expires January 1, 2027. Find details on our website under Activities.

Introducing our New Park Board Commissioner



Geauga Park District is pleased to welcome its newest Board of Park Commissioners member: **John A. Ralph**. Geauga County Probate/Juvenile Court Judge Timothy J. Grendell swore him into office for a term ending December 31, 2025.

John is a dedicated advocate for children and families through entrepreneurship.

"It is an honor to be appointed by Judge Grendell to the park board," he said. "I'm amazed that in over 30 years of living in Geauga County, how many organizations and families I've been involved with use the park system. My primary focus is on protecting children and families, particularly through court initiatives."

As the owner of Innovative Management Company, a local home and property improvement firm founded in the early 1980s, John has observed substantial growth and enhancement across Geauga County.

Background & Interests

- He believes that keeping children active helps them avoid the court system, which is supported by the resources available through Geauga Park District. Geauga Park District offers various activities such as fishing programs, bike paths, a rock wall, and mountain biking courses, alongside many other social and physical activities. John is impressed by how many organizations utilize the park systems.

Community Involvement

- John is president of the Ohio Bailiff Association of Court Officers. His service extends to the Ohio Supreme Court, where he served on the Court Security Advisory Committee and was appointed by Justice Maureen O'Connor and Chief Justice Sharon Kennedy.
- His awareness of the parks' value began when Judge Henry appointed him as the president of the CASA program John served as the president of CASA for Kids of Geauga County (Court Appointed Advocates) and helped establish a nonprofit, Friends of CASA, which aims to raise funds to benefit children within the court system.
- John is a past member of Leadership Geauga, past president of Leadership Geauga Alumni, past board member of Fairmount Fine Arts, and past Red Cross board member, having been invited by Larry Dolan.
- He is one of the founders of the Geauga Farm Market, collaborating with Judge Grendell, Greg and Joyce Studen, and Bill Young. Additionally, he played a key role in founding Geauga Learn.
- John served in the United States Military, and as an Army Veteran, and also participated in the Congressional Military Academy interviewing team, appointed by Congressman Steve LaTourette and Congressman Dave Joyce.
- He was appointed by Judge Fuhry to serve as Commissioner of the Geauga Veterans Commission.
- He currently holds life memberships in the Chardon VFW, Newbury American Legion, and the NRA, and is affiliated with the Geauga Blue Coats.

"Thanks to the leadership of the Executive Judicial Team, Judge Timothy J. Grendell, Senior Magistrate Abbey King, and Magistrate Michael Hurst, and staff, we are all fortunate to enjoy the benefits provided by the Park District," John said.

Donations to
Geauga Park District
May 2025 through
July 2025

Thank You to All of Our Generous Donors

| | | |
|--|-----------------------|------------|
| Blackbrook Audubon Society | Unrestricted donation | \$200.00 |
| The Cleveland Foundation Lewis & Ruth Affelder Fund | Unrestricted donation | \$2,060.00 |
| The Cleveland Foundation Bessie Benner Metzzenbaum Fund | Unrestricted donation | \$2,000.00 |

What Do You Call a Dead Standing Tree?

A Snag! We all know trees are important when they are alive, converting sunlight and carbon dioxide into food for themselves to produce, leaves, flowers, fruits and seeds. In turn, they also release oxygen into the air for us to breathe. These processes sustain a variety of wildlife year-round — from the caterpillar that eats the leaf to the chickadee that eats the caterpillar to feed its young chicks to the turkey and deer that eat the acorns that fall from an oak tree each year. We even get delicious syrup from the maple tree.



But what about after the tree dies? What good is it then? Firewood?



Well, they say that once a tree has died, it is more alive than when it was alive. Consider all the wildlife we can see — and even more, what we can't see — and you will start to understand how this statement is true.



Whether the tree dies of old age, weather damage, insects or disease, its trunk becomes a haven for many kinds of bacteria, fungus and animals.



Fungus like the artist conch begins to grow on the outside of dead hardwood trunks like oak, softening those hard, woody fibers beneath the bark as it feeds on the tree. Insects like carpenter ants and boring beetles start eating their way through wood. Next come the woodpeckers that chisel into the trunk to feast on these insects or create a cavity for nesting. Over time, these holes get widened by other animals or weather and more wildlife like blue birds, rat snakes, wood

ducks, red squirrels and owls move in to roost or nest.

As the outer bark loosens and peels away, even more life moves into the tree. Gray Tree Frogs, Mourning Cloak Butterflies and Indiana Bats find refuge under its bark.

I hope now you can see a snag for its potential to attract a wide variety of wildlife rather than just become a pile of firewood. Next time a snag appears in an area of your yard where it won't be a danger, consider leaving it, or part of it, for the wildlife! 🍃

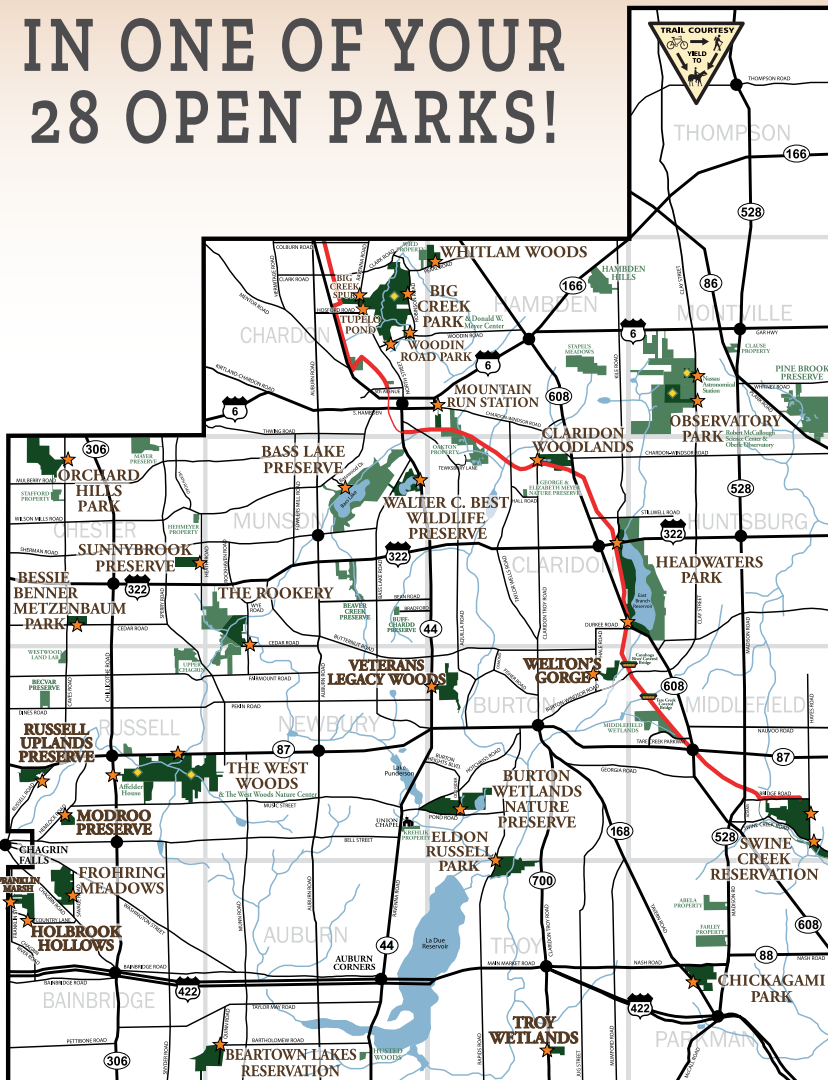




Geauga Park District
 9160 Robinson Road
 Chardon, OH 44024-9148

FIND YOUR ADVENTURE

IN ONE OF YOUR
 28 OPEN PARKS!



A unique, juried Nature-themed craft show



Geauga Park District
 invites you to find
 holiday decor &
 gift items for
 everyone on
 your list!

Friday, Nov. 7, 5-8 PM &
 Saturday, Nov. 8, 10 AM-4 PM

The West Woods Nature Center
 9465 Kinsman Road (Rt. 87) in Russell Twp.

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 Market**

Plus, shop
 handmade gifts
 and artwork
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www.geaugaparkdistrict.org

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Missing words in poem: near, acorns, cold, hunt, dinner, ground
 Answer to sentence: caching hidden acorns locations here

