

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF
DARKE COUNTY PARKS
Winter 2023-2024

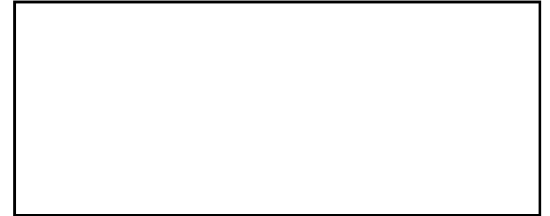
Nature Notes



Darke
County Parks

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www.darkecountyparks.org

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CANDLELIGHT WALK

Friday, Dec. 1: 6:00pm - 9:00pm
Historic Bear's Mill

Ring in the Holiday Season with a calming night-time walk in and around Historic Bear's Mill. This annual Candlelight Walk will once again be held on the first Friday of December from 6-9pm, offering hot chocolate, coffee, water and popcorn to warm this early December night. Once you arrive, follow the luminaries to the festivities. The Bear's Mill store will be open that evening for holiday shopping. Start your December weekend off on Friday at Bear's Mill and continue it on Saturday evening at Shawnee Prairie for the Winter Wonderland!

Registration is **NOT** required for this event: However, Parking is very limited and we ask that you carpool if possible.

WALKIN' IN A WINTER WONDERLAND

Saturday, Dec. 2: 6:00pm - 9:00pm
Shawnee Prairie Preserve
Registration Required

Join us once again and take an evening stroll through our winter wonderland! Over-600-luminaries will light your way along the wooded trails, allowing for a peaceful winter's night in nature. Maybe follow the "will-o-wisps" to encounter over 100 woodland spirits?! Around the Log House, chat with Santa, listen to music of Christmas past, and enjoy a warm drink and snack while you warm up by the campfire. The Nature Center will host a children's craft as well as gingerbread cookie decorating. The gift shop will be open, offering a selection of unique gifts or that perfect stocking stuffer!

Registration is Required: In order to allow us to accommodate all during this popular evening event. Parking will take place at our walk-in parking entrance, look for signs. Handicap parking will be available at the Nature Center.

Visit darkecountyparks.org or call 937-548-0165 to register today!

Discovery Awaits...



December

PROJECT FEEDERWATCH

Tuesdays & Wednesdays 9-11am
Shawnee Prairie Preserve FREE

CANDLELIGHT WALK OPEN HOUSE

Dec. 1, 6-9pm Historic Bear's Mill; FREE
Enjoy Bear's Mill annual candlelight walk
and open house. *NO Registration Required*

WALKIN' IN A WINTER WONDERLAND

Dec. 2, 6-9pm Shawnee Prairie Preserve;
Registration Required FREE
Hundreds of luminaries brighten the
trails.

CONSERVATION KIDS: OWL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

Dec. 7, 4:15pm Bish Discovery Center
Registration Required Ages: 8-11 FREE

GNOME ORNAMENT WITH *TOUCH OF GLASS*

Dec. 7, 6:30pm Shawnee Prairie Preserve
Register thru Touch of Glass Fee: \$20

PARENT & PRESCHOOLER ADVENTURES: "CANDY CANE HUNT"

Dec. 13, 10am 2-5 Year Olds
Registration Required \$4

WINTER WELLNESS: CALM & CREATE

Dec. 13, 6pm Bish Discovery Center
Registration Required Fee: \$10

NATIVE ANIMAL ENCOUNTER

Dec. 16, 10am Shawnee Prairie Preserve
FREE

FULL COLD MOON HIKE

Dec. 27, 6pm Worth Family Nature Preserve
Registration Required FREE

NATURE CENTER, BISH DISCOVERY CENTER,
AND HISTORIC BEAR'S MILL
CLOSED - DEC. 25

January

NATURE & BISH DISCOVERY CENTERS
CLOSED - JAN. 1

HISTORIC BEAR'S MILL
CLOSED - JAN. 1-5

PROJECT FEEDERWATCH

Tuesdays & Wednesdays 9-11am
Shawnee Prairie Preserve FREE

CONSERVATION KIDS: TURTLE-Y AWESOME NEW YEAR!

Jan. 4, 4:15pm Bish Discovery Center
Registration Required Ages: 8-11 FREE

PREPARING FOR TOTAL ECLIPSE 2024

Jan. 9, 6pm Shawnee Prairie Preserve
Registration Required FREE

PARENT & PRESCHOOLER ADVENTURES: "SNOWFLAKES, SNOWMEN, SNOWBALLS"

Jan. 10, 10am 2-5 Year Olds
Registration Required \$4

WINTER WELLNESS: YOGA & TEA

Jan. 17, 6pm Bish Discovery Center
Registration Required Fee: \$10

NATIVE ANIMAL ENCOUNTER

Jan. 20, 10am Shawnee Prairie Preserve
FREE

POTTERY OWL WORKSHOP WITH *ME & PJ*

Jan. 23, 6:30pm Bish Discovery Center
Register thru Me & PJ Fee: \$40

FULL WOLF MOON HIKE

Jan. 25, 6:30pm Rutzong Preserve
Registration Required FREE

February

PROJECT FEEDERWATCH

Tuesdays & Wednesdays 9-11am
Shawnee Prairie Preserve FREE

CONSERVATION KIDS: SOMEONE SSSPECIAL

Feb. 1, 4:15pm Bish Discovery Center
Registration Required Ages: 8-11 FREE

DOWN TO EARTH BOOK CLUB: "THE YEAR WITHOUT SUMMER: 1816" BY WILLIAM & NICHOLAS KLINGAMAN

Feb. 5, 1pm Shawnee Prairie Preserve
Registration Required FREE

NATIVE ANIMAL ENCOUNTER

Feb. 17, 10am Shawnee Prairie Preserve
FREE

PARENT & PRESCHOOLER ADVENTURES: "WE LOVE NATURE"

Feb. 21, 10am 2-5 Year Olds
Registration Required \$4

WINTER WELLNESS: REIKI & ART

Feb. 21, 6pm Bish Discovery Center
Registration Required Fee: \$10

FULL SNOW MOON HIKE

Feb. 23, 7pm Eidson Woods Preserve
Registration Required FREE

ICE AGE EXPLORATION WITH OHIO GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Feb. 24, 1pm Shawnee Prairie Preserve
Registration Required Fee: \$5

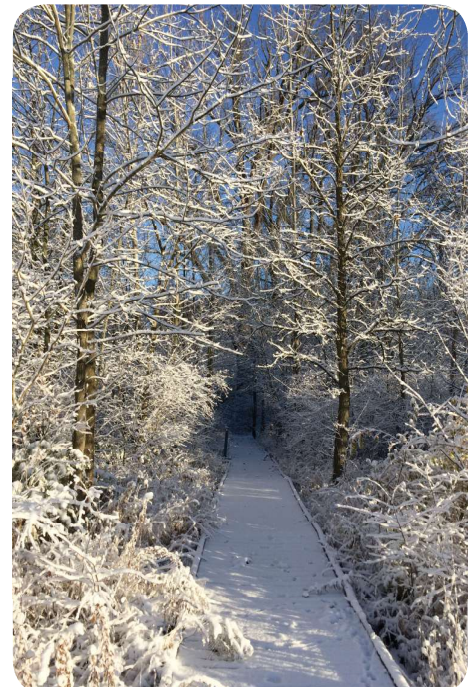
SCAN THIS QR CODE
TO REGISTER NOW



THANK YOU! DIRECTOR ROGER VAN FRANK

FOR 20 YEARS OF DEDICATION TO THE
DARKE COUNTY PARK DISTRICT

Enjoy your retirement!



Yours To Discover...

A Word from the NEW Director

Welcome to winter! While this season can be far from a favorite for many, I've always found this to be a season of beauty. The crisp frost on the prairie grass, the crunch of snow underfoot and the brilliant red of a cardinal are uniquely winter and I've been fortunate to have experienced this and more over the last 16 years here with Darke County Parks.

As I move into my new role with the district, I'm very excited to continue what we've been working and growing towards these past many seasons. Last year we celebrated 50 years. We've come a long way and have done a lot of good. I look forward to guiding the district into the start of its next 50 years as we look to evolve while continuing to meet the needs of the community.

I am fortunate to be guiding an amazing staff, several of which I've worked with my entire career. We all work together very well (most of the time!) and I think it shows throughout the district. Like all close-knit groups, there are disagreements and "off-days", but this staff is amazing and extremely passionate about their roles and that shows in all that they do.

As we move forward, there will be changes; it's inevitable. But I hope that these changes will be explored by all with an open heart to see if it is indeed a better fit. We may try some things only to find that we need to change again, but growth is always good and we will continue to grow to serve this great community. I strive to guide the parks in what the public wants and needs. We will be exploring surveying techniques with the hopes to ensure that we're delivering on our mission.

My office door will always be open, and I hope to meet many of you in the coming months and years. If you plan to stop by, give me a call/email if possible, so I don't miss you. I have every intention of being actively in the field, and in the park itself as often as possible, whether to offer a hand to my staff or to experience the parks from the user's eye and as well as the managers eye. Thank you for your continued support and I'll see you on the Trails!



~ Robb Clifford, Director

A Word from the Director

Darke County Parks have been the GO-TO place for families to explore with no expectations. To rediscover what your favorite interests are whether it's photography, hiking, biking the trails, canoeing and kayaking our waterways, or attending our public programs. I am pleased to see the Park staff has continued to ramp up our program outreach. As I have often said, "If you miss a day in Darke County Parks you have missed a lot."

This is my final "Directors Corner" of my career with Darke County Parks. I will be retiring, at least for a while, from public service. It has been an absolute honor to have worked for the most professional Park Board of Commissioners, employees, Friends support groups, and Darke County community organizations. It is now time for newer and younger leadership to assume the Director role. I am thankful for the thousands that continue to support the park district financially and also give of their time. So, for one final time, I would like to close with a phrase I learned from another Park Director, "Remember the Benefits of Parks and Recreation are Endless!"

~ Roger M. Van Frank

Volunteer in the Spotlight



This quarter's volunteer in the spotlight is Marsha Bowman! Marsha has been volunteering for a little over a year and has been a huge help at the Bish Discovery Center. She keeps things running when program staff are offsite or unavailable. Now that she has retired from the Wayne Healthcare switchboard, her time is mostly spent enjoying hobbies like playing her mountain dulcimer and autoharp. She even posts music videos to her TikTok account (mbowman_202)! Marsha encourages others to volunteer in whatever way they can. She says, "Look at your schedule to see where you can carve out a few hours to give back doing something important to you." In 10 years, Marsha hopes to see "more natural areas preserved and the Bish Discovery Center reach it's full potential promoting sustainability and renewable energy."

Thank you, Marsha!

Thank You for Your Generosity

Grants Awarded:

Ohio History Connection, Harry Stephens Memorial, Greenville Rotary

Monetary / Material / Service Donations:

Whirlpool, Greenville Ace Hardware, Greenville Business & Professional Women, Ladybug Garden Club, The Hive Collective, Greenville Lowes, Versailles School District, Deb Shiverdecker, Roger Van Frank, Patricia Marchal, Letter Boxers, Darryl Mahaffie

In Memory of Pat McCarthy:

Darke County Birders, Amanda Miller, Louis & Paula Kutcher, John & Darlene Dillion, Debbie Brandt, Mike & Alice Hogg, Brenda Coblenz, Eileen Litchfield, Shelby Mullins, Michelle & Dan Young, Sandy Eardly, Judy Fellers, Vanatta Family, Regina Shieltz, Nancy Eardly, Mitzi Johnson, Denise Swart, Cynthia Ploch

In Memory of Karen Jo Maule:

Tina White, Sandy Hoying

In Memory of Harvey Crick:

Roger Van Frank

SPONSOR A BUCKET



Support Darke County Parks and sponsor a bucket! Each sponsor will have their name placed on a sap bucket along the trail during our Maple Sugarin' Event in March.

Details can be found online at DarkeCountyParks.org or scan the QR



VOLUNTEER UPDATES

Well, everyone, I think Winter is upon us and you know what that means... Christmas tree decorating and Luminary Events at Bear's Mill and the Nature Center! Not only do we have these holiday events, but we are also preparing for our Maple Sugaring event in March. Volunteers are recruited to help collect, boil, and bottle syrup! They also help to cook, prepare, and serve during the Waffle Breakfast. I will start calling volunteers to help as soon as the sap starts running.

The parks have so many things going on every month and we would love to have you as a volunteer this year. Choose the event you would like to help with and you can volunteer as much or as little as you want! Any amount of time that you can help with events is appreciated! Please contact me if you would like to volunteer. We couldn't do all that we do without your help!

~Kathy Cool, Volunteer Coordinator.

HISTORIC BEAR'S MILL

Do you know that dreaded feeling when you're approaching a big milestone birthday? A possible brighter side to these milestones are hints and clues that your family and friends will make a big deal out of it, throw a big party, and surprise you with gifts and pranks. Well, imagine what I will be going through next year when I turn 175 years old!

There have been many meetings of excited friends gathering inside and out to discuss their birthday plans for me. So far, I have gathered the following information: A Total Eclipse party on April 8th with Shannon Clark & The Sugar and Nacho Pig food truck, installation of the next Darke County Art Trail sculpture, release of a new grinding video for the public, publication of a new history book, new/one-time logos and products in the store, grinding stones will be re-dressed, special events, and more!

Also, the Millrace Project: Phase 2 will be completed, re-constructing about half of my foundation pillars and re-enforcing some of my floor joists.

I'm going to feel so young after this remodel project!

I hope to see you for one or more of these special birthday celebrations next year.

~Historic Bear's Mill

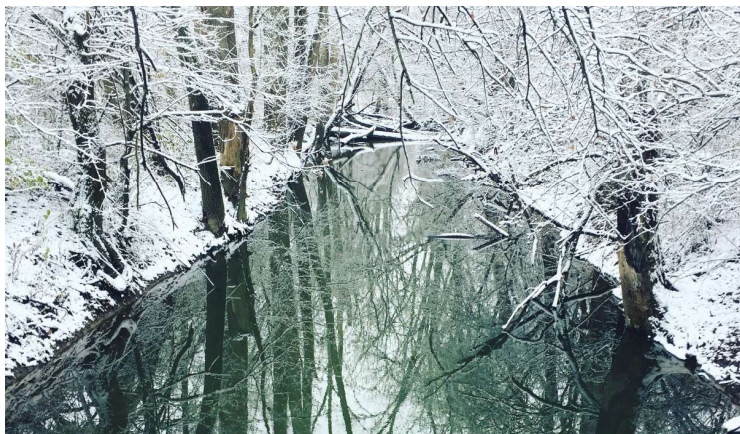


FRIENDLY GATHERINGS

Friends of The Parks

Consider becoming a Friend of the Darke County Parks and join other community-minded people who share our common goal to "Promote and support the mission of the Darke County Parks through volunteerism and fundraising". Through your annual dues, you help us purchase the supplies needed for projects such as the Waffle Breakfast and Apple Butter making, along with supporting staff educational development and funding public program needs. Join us at our monthly meetings. It's the best way to know what's going on in YOUR county parks. Meetings are the first Tuesday of each month 6:30pm at Shawnee Prairie Nature Center, unless otherwise stated below.

December 5, 6:00pm
January 2, 6:30pm
February 6, 6:30pm



DARKE COUNTY BIRDERS CLUB

The Darke County Birders Club is open to beginning and experienced birders alike. The club meets the 4th Tuesday of each month at Shawnee Prairie Preserve Nature Center. For more information, contact Steve Miller at 547-3340.

Dec. 16, 8am - Audubon Christmas Bird Count
(Meet at Nature Center)

Dec. 26, 6pm - MEETING: Christmas Carry-in

Jan. 2, 12pm - Start Your 2024 County Bird List walk

Jan. 17, 8am - Mystery Trip

Jan. 24, 7pm - MEETING: "Birding Botswana & Namibia"
Margaret Hensel

Feb. 7, 12pm - Cabin Fever Drive

Feb. 21, 8am - Birding Dayton Parks and Lakes

Feb. 27, 7pm - MEETING: "Arizona Trails" Regina Shieltz

OLDE THYME GARDENERS

The club has a strong interest in heritage gardening techniques of the 19th century. They maintain the heirloom garden at Shawnee Prairie Preserve. No special training is necessary to become a member. Meetings are held monthly on the second Tuesday, April-November at 12pm.

DARKE COUNTY PHOTO CLUB

The club was formed in 1995 to promote photography in & around Darke County. Whether a beginner or advanced photographer, all are invited to attend the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 7pm at the Shawnee Prairie Preserve Nature Center.