

Nature's Notebook

AUTUMN 2025





discover the nature of life

The Forest Preserves of Winnebago County is dedicated to protecting, conserving, enhancing and promoting Winnebago County's natural heritage for the environmental, educational and recreational benefit of present and future generations.

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Halloween pennant dragonfly ►
(*Celithemis eponina*)
by Jen Boeke



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out in the field

New Natural Playground Opens at Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden

On August 18, FPWC joined Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden in celebrating the opening of the much-anticipated natural playground located in the Nancy Olson Children's Garden.



This new natural playground features a variety of unique wooden structures that are designed to encourage children of all ages and abilities to interact with their environment through natural elements and landscapes. The playscape will be open year-round.



The development of the natural playground was made possible by a \$389,900 grant administered by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources through the Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) program.

Front Cover: Sedge wren (*Cistothorus platensis*) by Kayla Lindquist

Back Cover: Kishwaukee Gorge North Forest Preserve by Renee Pixler

UPPER LEFT: Woolly bear caterpillar (*Pyrrharctia Isabella*)

FPWC Welcomes Daniel Olson as New Executive Director

We are very pleased to welcome Daniel Olson as the new Executive Director of the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County.

Dan has over 20 years of experience working in the parks and forest preserve industry in Illinois. Since 2017, he held the position of Director of Operations and Planning for the Champaign Park District in Champaign, Illinois. His responsibilities included 54 parks and trail systems, a natural areas and arbor crew, 15 facilities including two historic buildings, 33 playgrounds, splashpads and more.

"I believe parks, natural areas and recreational opportunities are a vital need of every community, not just an amenity."

Prior to the Park District, he worked for the Champaign County Forest Preserve District, most recently as the Executive Director and the Director of Natural Resources prior to that. During his time there, he helped acquire several parcels of land that were restored to prairie, savanna and forest. He also oversaw the Lake of the Woods Golf Course and campgrounds, an environmental education staff and the Museum of the Grand Prairie. Dan graduated

from Eastern Illinois University with a Bachelor's degree in Zoology.

"I believe parks, natural areas and recreational opportunities are a vital need of every community, not just an amenity," Dan says. "I am very excited to join the dedicated and talented team at the Forest Preserves. I have been following their initiatives and accomplishments over the past dozen years or more, and I am inspired to carry the mission forward for the community and visitors. The benefits and opportunities that natural areas offer have been an integral part of my life. I look forward to bringing those experiences to others."

Please join us in welcoming Dan to this new and exciting role!



featured programs

October Guided Bird Hike

Thursday, October 9 | 8:30 a.m.

Deer Run Forest Preserve, Cherry Valley

Learn about bird identification, helpful birding technology and nature journaling during this guided hike led by FPWC Wildlife Biologist, Liz!

Fox sparrow (*Passerella iliaca*)
by Courtney Celley / USFWS ▶



Fall Foliage Hike

Thursday, October 16 | 5:30 p.m.

Seward Bluffs Forest Preserve, Seward

Experience the incredible fall foliage that Seward Bluffs is famous for!
This guided hike will meet at the 16999 Comly Road entrance.

Winter Restoration Work Day & Hike

Saturday, December 6 | 9:00 a.m.

Hononegah Forest Preserve, Rockton

Join us for a restoration work day to remove invasive brush, followed by a guided hike!

Kishwaukee Gorge Volunteer Work Days

Every third Tuesday | 9:00 a.m.

Kishwaukee Gorge North, Rockford

Join the effort to restore Kishwaukee Gorge North Forest Preserve! Work may include removing invasive plants and collecting native seeds.

Made possible as part of the \$50,000 subgrant awarded to FPWC by The Morton Arboretum's Chicago Region Trees Initiative (CRTI).



◀ Red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)

Turkey tail mushroom
(*Trametes versicolor*) ▶

Legacy Tree Hike with Natural Land Institute

Saturday, October 18 | 1:30 p.m.
Deer Run Forest Preserve, Cherry Valley

Discover the variety of trees found at Deer Run Forest Preserve and their unique features during this guided hike led by Alan Branhagen, Natural Land Institute's Executive Director. Alan will also discuss NLI's Legacy Tree Program and the October Tree of the Month, located in the heart of Deer Run.



**For a complete
list of programs:**

WinnebagoForest.org/Events

▲ Thirteen-lined ground squirrel (*Spermophilus tridecemlineatus*) by Courtney Celley / USFWS

play the preserves

Atwood Homestead Golf Course Capital Improvements

This summer, several capital improvements were completed at Atwood Homestead Golf Course in Rockford thanks to the support of our golfers!

DRIVING RANGE

In addition to redoing the existing turf tee area of the driving range, a concrete strip with individual artificial turf tee boxes and several benches were also installed.



CART PATH & ROADWAY

Other capital improvements included repaving the cart path and the roadway nearby the clubhouse to ensure a smooth ride for golfers.



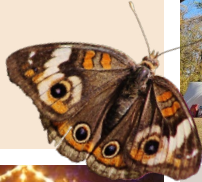
partner programs

Backpacking With Burpee

Fossils - Pecatonica River Forest Preserve
Saturday, October 4

Fall Foliage & Trees -
Hononegah Forest Preserve
Saturday, October 18

Animal Tracks -
Ferguson Forest Preserve
Saturday, December 6



▼ Common buckeye (*Junonia coenia*) by Anna Weyers / USFWS



Frenchman's Frolic @WoodlandRamblers



Eerie Autumn Lights @SusieQT

Macktown Living History

Frenchman's Frolic
October 16–October 18

Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden

Eerie Autumn Lights
October 2–October 26
Thursdays through Sundays

Rooted in Rockford:
Art and Tree Science Exhibit at
Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden
Through May 31, 2026

Walk With U

Roland Olson Forest Preserve
Saturday, October 11

Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden
Saturday, November 1

Headquarters Forest Preserve
Saturday, December 6



Walk With U @picnicking in the preserves

Natural Land Institute

OAKtober Hike 2025
Saturday, October 25

Holiday Open House
Tuesday, December 9



explore your preserves

discover the nature of life...

Henslow's sparrow, Seward Bluffs Forest Preserve by Paul Lindquist



11,645 acres • 100+ miles of hiking trails • 3 campgrounds • 3 golf courses

◀ Sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*)

...endless possibilities

contact us

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Go.WinnebagoForest.org/Preserves

