Nature's Notebook

WINTER 2022 ISSUE

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THE POWER OF THE PRESERVES



Natalie Brunson is an avid trail runner and forest preserve advocate. We asked Natalie to talk about her experience in the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County. **Here is her story.**

"When I moved to Rockford, Illinois, I had some requirements. I wanted to have a good YMCA, snow, reasonably priced housing, and greenspace. I got all of my requirements, but when it comes to our greenspace, the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County really deliver. We have 44 forest preserves run by the county and you can see what they all offer on their website. They offer camping, biking, hiking, splashing, snowshoeing, horseback riding, shelter rentals, kayaking, tubing, running, birdwatching, fishing, and probably even more things that I don't even know about. Several of the preserves have paved paths. All of the preserves have abundant wildlife and more plants than you can imagine. Each one is so very different and they change with the season. They are really well cared for, with trails that are easy to navigate and ample parking. Many feature water and several have playgrounds.

I preach to everyone who will listen that they should check them out. I even had prizes made so when my friends visit them all they get a prize from me. I personally tube or kayak from the preserves every summer. I bike on the paved paths (weather permitting). I run in them year-round. Some of my favorites are Pecatonica Wetlands, Pecatonica River, Four Lakes, Seward Bluffs, and Oakridge. I am also a trail steward for Four Lakes Forest Preserve. Sometimes I bring my family for impromptu clean-up days to various preserves and we pick up trash during our hikes.

My kids have grown up in these preserves. I hope that more people will visit, realize the treasure we have, and grow to love them and want to protect them as I do!"



Photo by Forest Preserve Deputy Tim Speer

preserves during the day, but remember, preserves close 1/2 hour after sunset.

Help me out by having your vehicles out on time, and avoid getting locked

"Please enjoy your

-Forest Preserve Deputy Speer

in. Thank you and

see you on the

trails!"

Status

Break out your snow boots, snow shoes, or cross country skis and experience the winter wonder of your forest preserves! Walk-in use is welcome at all forest preserves, however, not all parking lots and roadways will be cleared. Once roadways become snow or ice covered, vehicle access to preserves will be limited. Hard paths such as the Kishwaukee Recreation Path and the paved path at Headquarters Forest Preserve are cleared and accessible year round.

Remember, be prepared! Check weather conditions, dress appropriately, and pack water, snacks, & first aid essentials!

Winter Birding: what to look for

Grab your gloves, wool socks, and binoculars - head out to your forest preserves this winter and take in the sights and sounds of the birds that stick around for the colder Photo courtes of Robert C season! Below is a quick guide to some common birds you may see in Winnebago County. For a full list, visit www2.illinois.gov/dnr.

Red-Headed Woodpecker (Melanerpes erythrocephalus)

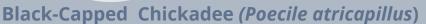
The red-headed woodpecker is a common winter resident in Illinois. They live in woodland edges, open areas with scattered trees, as well as deciduous and coniferous woodlands. You may also see them take up homes in telephone poles. Red-headed woodpeckers are quick! They feed by catching insects while flying.



Blue jays are permanent residents in Illinois. They are often found in woodlands and residential areas, where they find ample food supply. They eat nuts, corn, fruits, insects, and the occasional dead animal. Blue jays have a reputation of being aggressive towards other birds and can mimic other birds' calls, as well.

Source: Illinois Department of Natural Resour



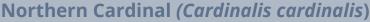


The black-capped chickadee is a permanent resident of the northern half of Illinois. They live in woodlands, shrubs, and thickets. They often build nests in cavities in trees or fence posts, abandoned woodpecker holes, and other natural cavities. They eat insects, seeds, acorns, and berries. A black-capped chickadee call can be recognized as "chick-a-dee-dee".

American Robin (Turdus migratorius)

The American robin typically migrates south for winter, however, some may stay to overwinter in Illinois. In colder months, the American robin moves to wooded areas where it can feed on fruit. Once warm weather arrives, they eat earthworms and insect larvae from the thawed ground.

Source: Illinois Department of Natural Resources



This permanent resident is also the state bird of Illinois! The northern cardinal can be found in woodlands, thickets, brushy/weedy areas, and residential areas. You may recognize the northern cardinal's "whoit, whoit, whoit" call. This bird eats insects, grains, fruits, and seeds.

Source: Illinois Department of Natural Resources





Photo Cour



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"SNOW" YOUR ANIMAL TRACKS

Winter is a great time to search for and identify wildlife tracks!

How well do you know your tracks?



Bobcat (photo courtesy of Robert Clark at Colored Sands Forest Preserve)



Gray Squirrel



White-Tailed Deer

For more wildlife track identification of native Illinois species, visit www.wildlifeillinois.org

2022 YEAR IN REVIEW: NURTURING NATURE

2022 was a great year for the FPWC staff and our volunteers that nurture nature! We value and appreciate our volunteers' dedication to protecting and preserving Winnebago County's natural areas!





FPWC Natural Resources Department

Our Natural Resources Department works diligently to conserve and restore vital habitat throughout your forest preserves. This year they:

- planted 1,024 trees
- restored 80 acres of native prairie
- collected 1,228 pounds of native seeds
- burned 1,396 acres

FPWC Volunteers

We had 120 active volunteers with a recorded 1,872 hours of service. The monetary value of these volunteer service hours add up to \$56,066. We hosted four R.E.A.P (Restoration.Education.Appreciation.Preservation.) Volunteer Workdays where volunteers assisted in collecting native seeds and planting greenhouse plugs.



• June 17, July 15, August 19, September 16





Community Science Volunteer Program

In 2022, 88 active volunteer Community Scientists put in 500 hours documenting and monitoring different plant and animal species.

- Budburst 187 observations
- BeeSpotter 31 observations
- Bluebirds 21 forest preserves monitored
- Frogs 27 volunteers
- Bats over 1,400 recordings

2023 UPCOMING EVENTS

Nature Center)

<u>January</u>

7	Snowshoe Hike (Klehm Arboretum)
9-30	Frosty Leaf Watercolor Workshop (Klehm Arboretum)
14	Conservation Crew Workday (Severson Dells Nature Center)
14-15	Second Weekends (Macktown Living History)
21	Winter Mindfulness Walk (Severson Dells Nature Center)
23	Conservation Crew Workday (Severson Dells Nature Center)
28	Family Shelter Building (Severson Dells Nature Center)

Megan Cain presents: Your Garden Can Feed You All Year

First Day Hike (Severson Dells Nature Center)

First Moon Tranquility Walk (Klehm Arboretum)

(Klehm Arboretum)

<u>February</u>

30

	Triffeer Tracer color class With Jerning Wathers
	(Severson Dells Nature Center)
11	Conservation Crew Workday (Severson Dells Nature Center)
11-12	Second Weekends (Macktown Living History)
18	Winter Mindfulness Walk (Severson Dells Nature Center)
26	Travelogue: The Colorado Rockies (Severson Dells Nature Center)
27	Conservation Crew Workday (Severson Dells Nature Center)

Winter Watercolor Class with Jenny Mathews

March

5	rravelogue: iceland, Land of Fire and ice
	(Severson Dells Nature Center)
11	Conservation Crew Workday (Severson Dells N
11-12	Second Weekends (Macktown Living History)

12 Travelogue: Yosemite, The Journey to Half Dome

(Severson Dells Nature Center)

Spring Mindfulness Walk (Severson Dells Nature Center)
Conservation Crew Workday (Severson Dells Nature Center)

Save the Date!

June 10 Hooked on Fun Kid's Fishing Derby (Four Lakes Forest Preserve)

Cover photo taken at Colored Sands Forest Preserve courtesy Robert Clark

forest preserves of winnebago county

Dreservesof winnebago county discover the nature of life.

Forest Preserves of Winnebago County **Board of Commissioners** tilly@winnebagoforest.or ibarnard@winnebagoforest.c Mike Eickman meickman@winnebagoforest.org Audrey L Johnson ajohnson@winnebagoforest.org glind@winnebagoforest neryl A Maggic cmaggio@winnebagoforest.org Jerry Paulson jpaulson@winnebagoforest.org For complete details on Forest Preserves of Winnebago County facilities, programs, and events visit our website at winnebagoforest.org