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Ottawa County Parks &  
Recreation Commission  
12220 Fillmore Street  
West Olive, Michigan 49460



Fall  
2011

## OUTDOORS OTTAWA COUNTY

The quarterly newsletter of the  
Ottawa County Parks & Recreation Commission



Photo by Ed Post

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266,012

That's how many pounds of the invasive garlic mustard were pulled and bagged from woods and other natural areas this spring in Michigan. This information is compiled by the Stewardship Network. The West Michigan Cluster of the Stewardship Network won this year's Garlic Mustard Challenge by leading all other clusters with a total of 52,258 pounds! The Ottawa County Parks Stewardship Crew and volunteer groups greatly contributed to this total. The photo shows volunteers from Grand Haven Stamping Products with garlic mustard they pulled at Pine Bend.



Thanks Volunteers!

### Holland Harbor Fishing Access Open House Thursday, September 15

The Ottawa County Parks & Recreation Commission is pleased to announce the opening of its newest Historic Ottawa Beach Park on Lake Macatawa in Holland. The Holland Harbor Fishing Access includes a system of docks and boardwalks that provide fishing access to a location known as "the cove." Improvements also include parking, benches, and interpretive signs. The Open House will be held from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and will begin with a brief dedication ceremony followed by refreshments and a chance to view the new park facility. Watch for more details on the park's web site or call 616-738-4810 for details. Directions to Holland Harbor are in this newsletter.

### Park Project Updates

- ◆ **Olive Shores** - All approvals have been received to proceed with this park project in Port Sheldon Township. Construction of improvements is expected to begin soon after Labor Day with completion scheduled by Memorial Day, 2012. Olive Shores is a 20.5 acre site with beautiful forested dunes and 738 feet of Lake Michigan beach. Improvements will include dune stairs, trails and a boardwalk to provide access to Lake Michigan, a 50 car parking lot, modern restrooms, picnic facilities, and a connecting bike path.
- ◆ **Eastmanville Bayou** - Following an extended delay due to permitting issues, construction is underway to complete improvements at this site on the south side of the Grand River near the 68th Avenue bridge. This Open Space property extends 1.75 miles along the river both east and west of the bridge. A connecting pathway under the bridge will link riverfront trails. In addition to trails for hiking and cross-country skiing, the project includes a 40 car parking area, a small boat launch accessing the bayou, picnic facilities, interpretive displays, rustic toilets, and a canoe/kayak dock on the Grand River. Construction should be completed by mid-September. The approximate \$240,000 project is funded through the county parks millage.
- ◆ **Macatawa Green Space** - This large EPA funded restoration project at the former Holland Country Club property was bid over the summer and was started in August, 2011. The original intent was to complete the restoration project this fall followed by the construction of park improvements including trails, disc golf, picnic areas, and other facilities. This initial time table was deemed to be too aggressive and it was determined that the restoration project would need to move slower to ensure there was adequate time to establish vegetation on the restored river banks before spring flooding. The restoration project has been extended into 2012 with park improvements to follow in the fall of 2012. The Parks Commission regrets the delay but recognizes the importance of protecting the fragile floodplain environment.

Connecting trail under  
the 68th St. bridge



### Marne Bog and Extension of the Musketawa Trail

In 1988, the Michigan Natural Features Inventory completed a detailed inventory identifying high quality natural communities in Ottawa County. The Marne Bog, located near the Musketawa Trail in Wright Township, was one of 15 sites determined to be "notably significant" and worthy of protection as a "relict conifer swamp and bog." Bogs are wetland areas characterized by acidic soils that often support a diversity of unique plants. The conifers found at this site include tamarack and Northern white-cedar.

In 2004, the Parks Commission accepted a donation from two different landowners of 40 acres that comprised the majority of the 25-acre bog. Because this property lacked legal access, it has not been open to the public. Efforts to work with an adjacent landowner to acquire additional bog property along with public access were unsuccessful.

In recent years, Ottawa County became involved in the project to extend the Musketawa Trail eastward to link with the White Pine Trail and other regional trails in Kent County. The Musketawa Trail is owned by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) through its Forest Management Division. The portion within Ottawa County is managed by Ottawa County Parks. Kent County Parks, working closely with the MDNR, secured federal funding assistance to extend the Musketawa Trail east into Kent County.

Controversy arose related to the trail extension project when the owner of a feedlot operation adjacent to the proposed trail route claimed the trail activity would harm his business. The agricultural community strongly backed the feedlot owner and urged the trail sponsors to find an alternate route. When the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners took a position in support of the feedlot operation, Ottawa County Parks began working with the Ottawa County Planning and Performance Improvement Department to find an alternate route.

It was readily apparent that the landowner who had been contacted previously regarding the additional bog property also owned the most desirable alternate route for the trail. Following further contact, this landowner agreed to sell. Ottawa County Parks, with financial support of the Board of Commissioners, purchased 89 acres with the intent to retain 43 acres to expand the Marne Bog property and connect it to the Musketawa Trail. This will also provide an alternate trail route to bypass the feedlot.

Pending final approval of the MDNR, the plan is to sell the balance of property, with the exception of the alternate trail route, to area farmers to keep it in agricultural production. The feedlot operator will pay for the alternate route and gain ownership of the old trail route running past his farm.



### Memory Grove at Eastmanville Farm

Eastmanville Farm in Polkton Township was the site of the former Ottawa County poor farm. The park's master plan calls for a "memory grove" that will provide historic information about the site and reflect on the long history of the property as a home for indigent people. Many families still have ties to the property through relatives that lived a portion of their lives there. The Memory Grove will be a small plaza in a grove of mature trees west of the park entrance. The project, scheduled for completion in early 2012, will include parking, benches, a planter, and interpretive signs that tell the history of the property including stories about the residents and their lives on the working farm.



This poor farm building was built  
in 1886 and razed in 1997.



Friends of  
Ottawa County  
Parks

Friends of Ottawa County Parks is a non-profit organization dedicated to connecting people with nature, recreation and community by partnering with Ottawa County Parks. New members are always welcome.  
[www.friendsofocp.org](http://www.friendsofocp.org)

### Friends members were busy this summer with the following activities:

- ★ Greeted visitors at several parks on National Trails Day
- ★ Assisted with the Sneak Preview event at the Grand River Ravines property
- ★ Helped parks staff remove spotted knapweed at the Rosy Mound Natural Area
- ★ Worked on new flower beds at the Weaver House
- ★ Funded the purchase of puppets for the Nature Education Center
- ★ Held the Friends Summer Membership Picnic at Grand River Ravines

### Think about becoming a Friends member and participating in these upcoming activities:

- ★ Friends will have a booth in the KidZone at the annual Salmon Festival in Grand Haven on Saturday, September 17. Volunteers are needed to help kids make "fish prints" as well as to provide Ottawa County Parks information.
- ★ The Annual Membership Meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 21 in the main conference room (upper level) of the Fillmore Complex. A short business meeting will be followed by a parks update with parks director John Scholtz, a program by stewardship supervisor Melanie Manion, and a visit from Nature Education Center staff and their puppet friends to show how they engage children in learning about nature. The Ottawa County Fillmore Complex (Olive Township) is on Fillmore St. just west of 120th Ave.

### Parks Projects Fund

The Friends Board of Directors has established a Projects Fund that will provide money for future parks projects. Top on our wish list is to provide field trip sponsorships for some school groups so they can participate in programs at the Nature Education Center. You are invited to help us with this worthwhile endeavor by donating to: Friends of Ottawa County Parks, P.O. Box 84, Lamont, MI 49430.

### Fall Saturday Stewardship Workdays

Invasive trees, shrubs and vines can cause serious damage to natural areas. They can also block recreational trails and scenic views. Ottawa County Parks needs your help in the fight against these destroyers of diversity. Each workday will end at noon. Please bring gloves, preferably leather, and insect repellent. All tools and snacks will be provided. Children 12 and older are welcome with adult supervision and advanced registration is not required. For more information call 616-738-4810, or 616-638-7065 the day of the event. Cancelled if raining! Directions to locations are in this newsletter.

Date	Time	Location
9/10	10:00 a.m.	Pigeon Creek Park
9/17	9:00 a.m.	Bur Oak Landing (Oriole Dr.)
9/24	10:00 a.m.	Grand River Open Space

Date	Time	Location
10/1	9:00 a.m.	Crockery Creek Natural Area
10/8	10:00 a.m.	Grose Park
10/15	9:00 a.m.	North Ottawa Dunes

## Fall 2011 Programs and Field Trips

- A program fee, vehicle parking fee, and/or advance registration is required for some programs and field trips. Check the program or field trip description for details.
- Space is limited on some programs and field trips.
- Directions to program locations are included in this newsletter.

For programs that require advance registration, call (616) 786-4847

Unless otherwise noted, programs and field trips will be led by naturalists Kristen Hintz (KH) or Chip Francke (CF). Look for the initials at the end of each description to see which naturalist is conducting the program or trip.

## Fall Interpretive Programs in the Parks

Fall is one of the best times of the year for outdoor activities. Bring the family and join one of these naturalist-led walks. The walks last about 90 minutes and are canceled if raining. There are no program fees and advance registration is not required. Be prepared for outdoor conditions.

### Searching for Galls Saturday, September 10 10:00 a.m. at the Nature Education Center

Galls come in many shapes, sizes, and textures. They are found on the leaves, stems, roots, buds, and flowers of many plants. Join this walk to search for these unusual formations and discover the special relationship between gall makers and their host plants. (KH)



### Fireworks of the Forest Sunday, September 18 2:00 p.m. at the Nature Education Center

Most forest flowers have bloomed by late spring, but one plant bursts with bright yellow flowers in fall adding color to the forest understory. Discover the wonders of witch hazel and the many uses of this beneficial shrub. (KH)

### Exploring Kirk Park Saturday October 1 10:00 a.m. at Kirk Park

The trails at Kirk Park meander through a mature backdune forest that offers spectacular views of Lake Michigan. At trip to see what's happening on the beach is also included *Hiking at Kirk Park is strenuous due to stairs up and down the dunes.* Meet in the parking lot. (KH)

### A Close-up Look at Fall Color

We are fortunate to live in one of the few regions on earth where trees put on a spectacular color display in the fall. Join these walks to enjoy the colors of autumn and to discover how and why leaves change color.

Fall Color Walk Dates	Times	Locations
Wednesday, October 19 (CF)	2:00 p.m.	Nature Education Center
Saturday, October 22 (KH)	10:00 a.m.	Nature Education Center

### The Secret Lives of Seeds Sunday, November 6 2:00 p.m. at Grand River Park

Seeds not only grow into new plants, but also provide food for many animals and even homes for small creatures. Join this walk to see a variety of seeds and discover the interesting adaptations these seeds have to get from one place to another. (KH)

### Plant Skeletons Walk Saturday, November 12 2:00 p.m. at the Nature Education Center

All that remains of the wildflowers and other plants we enjoy all summer are their "skeletons" of stems, leaves and seeds. This walk will focus on observing the many shapes and forms of these skeletons. Meet in the Nature Education Center. (CF)



### Feeder Watch Saturday, November 26 10:00 a.m. at the Nature Education Center

There should be lots of activity at the feeders for this indoor program that will help participants hone their identification skills as well as observe a variety of wildlife behaviors. Hot chocolate will be provided. Meet in the Nature Education Center. (CF)

## Beyond Bass - Amazing Fishes of Ottawa County

Over 100 species of freshwater fishes can be found in the lakes, rivers, ponds and wetlands of Ottawa County. Dr. Dan O'Keefe, Southwest District Extension

Educator for Michigan Sea Grant, will immerse participants into the world of these fascinating animals. This two-part workshop will begin on Wednesday, October 5 at 7:00 p.m. with an indoor presentation on the ecology and identification of fishes at the Nature Education Center. On Saturday, October 8, Dan will lead the group on a three hour field trip beginning at 1:00 p.m. to capture, observe, identify, and learn about a variety of fishes in Ottawa County. Participants may have the chance to view spawning salmon and air-breathing gar in addition to netting and handling overlooked species such as brook silverside and banded killifish. **There is no fee, however, advanced registration is required and space is limited.** Transportation on the field trip is via personal vehicles. This workshop is for adults and children 12 and older.

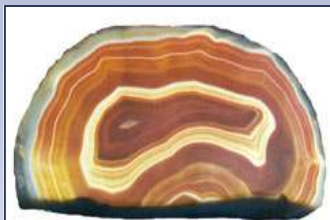
## Fall Fungus Field Trip Saturday, October 15

Fungi expert Dennis Dunlap will lead this popular field trip to look for and identify a variety of mushrooms and other fungi at several park locations in Ottawa County. The trip, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. will begin at the Nature Education Center for a hike at Hemlock Crossing. Transportation to other field trip sites is via personal vehicles. **There is no fee; however, advanced registration is required.** Please, no collecting on this trip. A letter with trip details will be sent in advance to those registered. This trip is for adults.



## Agates Inside Out

Sunday, November 20 1:00 p.m. at the Nature Education Center



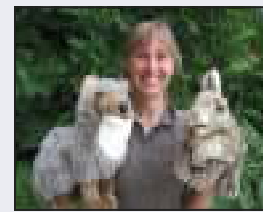
Karen Brzys loves agates and is owner and curator of the Gitche Gumee Agate and History Museum located in Grand Marais, Michigan. Karen will begin the afternoon with a one hour program titled **Agates Inside Out** that she hopes will help you to "think like an agate." Karen will cover what agates are, how they formed, and how to look for them. The story will be told in a non-technical manner using photographic images that were taken by award winning photographer Tom Shearer. Directly following the program, Karen will hold a book signing for her new book *Agates Inside Out* that includes many of the images from her program. Copies of the book will be available for purchase for \$24.95. Karen will also display and sell some of her mineral art including agates, agate sun catchers, plates, night lights, and yard ornaments. The sale will end at 4:00 p.m. Revenues from the book and art sale will benefit the Nature Education Center and the Gitche Gumee Museum. **There is no fee for the program, however, advanced registration is required.** For adults and older children.



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## Children's Puppet Show

Saturday, December 3 1:00 p.m. at the Nature Education Center



People cope with Michigan's cold winters in many different ways. What do animals do when the deep snow blankets the ground. Join the Nature Education Center's interpretive staff along with their puppet friends for this one hour program to find out how animals cope with winter's cold and snow. This indoor program is designed for K through 2nd graders. There will be an optional outdoor hike after the program, so dress appropriately. There is no fee and advanced registration is not required.

Saturday, September 24

## Raptor Watch at Mt. Pisgah

with Chip Francke



The platform at the top of Mt. Pisgah offers a great place to view raptors as they migrate south in the fall. Meet in the Black Lake Boardwalk parking lot at 8:30 a.m. for the hike to the top of the dune (*climbing stairs is somewhat strenuous*). Bring binoculars (some loaners available) and drinking water. You may stay as long as you wish and the raptor watch will end no later than noon. This program is for adults and older accompanied children and will be canceled if raining. There is no fee and advanced registration is not required.

Thursday Morning Bird Walks September 8, September 22, and October 6

September and October are peak months for fall bird migration. Beginning and experienced birders are welcome to join these 90 minute hikes to search for fall migrants. All walks begin at 9:00 a.m. at the Nature Education Center and are canceled if raining. Bring binoculars (loaners are available). There are no fees and advanced registration is not required. Meet inside the center. Walks are for adults and older children. (CF)



Birding the Pier Field Trip Saturday, October 29

The Lake Michigan shoreline serves as a migration corridor for both waterbirds and landbirds. This 4 hour adult trip will begin at 8:30 a.m. with a walk to the end of the south pier in Grand Haven followed by a search for birds on nearby Harbor Island. Transportation is via personal vehicles. **There is no fee (a state park passport is required), however, advanced registration is required.** A letter with trip details will be sent in advance. (CF)



## Pigeon River Kayak Trips

All trips are from 10:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Thurs., September 15; Sat., September 17; Thurs., October 6; Thurs., October 13; and Sunday, October 23.



Join naturalist Kristen Hintz to explore the natural history of the scenic Pigeon River. The 3.5 mile trips begin at Hemlock Crossing and end at Sheldon Landing. Transportation back to Hemlock Crossing is via carpool. Each trip includes a lesson on the basics of kayaking by staff from *Kayak-Kayak* in Holland. No kayaking experience is needed. **The fee is \$35 per person which includes a kayak, paddles, and life jackets. There are also a limited number of spaces for those bringing their own kayak for \$15 per person. Advanced registration is required for everyone.** A letter with trip details will be sent one week in advance to those registered.

## Fall Astronomy Programs and Sky Viewing

These Saturday programs, conducted by members of the Shoreline Amateur Astronomical Association, begin at 7:30 p.m. at the Nature Education Center with a one-hour indoor program followed by a two-hour outdoor viewing session (weather permitting). The indoor programs will be held rain or shine. For the outdoor viewing, telescopes will be provided. Bring a lawn chair and binoculars (if you have them). There are no program fees and advanced registration is not required. Programs are for adults and older children.

Date	Program
September 17	Introduction to Astronomy ...Planets and the Solar System
October 15	Legends and Lore of the Fall Constellations
November 19	Buying a Telescope and How They Work



## DIRECTIONS TO PROGRAM LOCATIONS

visit [www.miottawa.org/parks](http://www.miottawa.org/parks) for other park information.

- Bur Oak Landing** (Polkton Township) For the workday, meet in the Oriole Dr. lot at the south end of 104th Ave.
- Crockery Creek Natural Area** (Crockery Township) From the intersection of Leonard Rd. and Wren Dr., travel west on Wren Dr. to the parking area at the end of the road.
- Grand River Park** (Georgetown Township) From the intersection of Fillmore St. and 28th Ave., travel north on 28th Ave. to the park entrance.
- Grand River Open Space** (Tallmadge Township) Entrance off of Linden Dr. just south of M-45, on the east bank of the Grand River.
- Grose Park** (Chester Township) Take Hoover St. to 24th Ave. then travel south to the park entrance.
- Holland Harbor Fishing Access** (Park Township) On Ottawa Beach Rd. just before the entrance to the Holland State Park Beach
- Kirk Park** (Grand Haven Township) On Lakeshore Ave. about 2 miles south of Lake Michigan Dr. (M-45).
- Mt. Pisgah** (Park Township) Park at Black Lake Boardwalk located on Ottawa Beach Rd. near the Coast Guard Station.
- Nature Education Center at Hemlock Crossing** (Port Sheldon Township) From US 31, travel west on Croswell St. to West Olive Rd. Travel south on West Olive Rd. to the park entrance. The center is at the end of the park drive.
- North Ottawa Dunes** (Spring Lake Township and City of Ferrysburg) From US 31, take the Ferrysburg exit and go west on 3rd St. to Northshore Dr. Turn west on Northshore Dr. and travel about 1 mile to Coast Guard Park. The trail head is in the first Coast Guard Park parking area.
- Pigeon Creek Park** (Olive Township) On Stanton St. between 128th and 120th Ave. Meet in parking lot.



The activities and programs of this department are brought to you by the members of the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners

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