

Nature's Notebook

SPRING 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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Jack-in-the-pulpit ▶
(Arisaema triphyllum)

UPPER LEFT: Spring azure butterfly (*Celastrina ladon*)



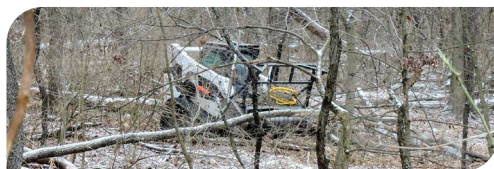
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out in the field

Kishwaukee Gorge North Restoration Project Update

Work to restore Kishwaukee Gorge North Forest Preserve kicked off earlier this year as part of the \$50,000 subgrant awarded to the FPWC by The Morton Arboretum's Chicago Region Trees Initiative (CRTI) to improve our community tree canopy. As of February, twenty-three acres have been cleared of invasive species like honeysuckle, buckthorn and autumn olive through forestry mowing and hand cutting. As the weather warms up, the next step will be to treat any invasive resprouts before planting shagbark hickory and oak saplings in April.



Interested in getting involved in conserving Kishwaukee Gorge North Forest Preserve? Join us on Saturday, April 26 to plant trees in the heart of the preserve! Learn more on page 3.

Front Cover: Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) by Jen Boeke
Back Cover: Wild lupine (*Lupinus perennis*) by Madysen Nardi



Migratory Musings

by Mike Eickman

Sand Bluff Bird Observatory Open House

Saturday, May 10
7:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Migration, the ongoing movement of birds, occurs every spring and fall. You might say spring is up and fall is down. In the spring, birds migrate north up to the breeding grounds and in the fall, down to the tropics or milder climates.

Here at Sand Bluff Bird Observatory, we notice the Slate-colored Juncos and American Tree Sparrows leaving for the northern U.S. and Canada where the tundra and boreal forest are their habitats. They may hang around until the later part of March.

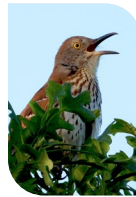
Near the end of February, we have larger flocks of American Robins returning, followed by many different species of sparrows. Fox Sparrows, Song Sparrows and Swamp Sparrows come back in early April. For the Fox Sparrows, it is a rest stop on their journey to nest in Canada, while the Song and Swamp Sparrows disperse in our area and in the northern tier states.



Hermit Thrushes start showing up early April, followed by Swainson's, Gray-cheeked and Wood Thrushes. The Gray Catbird, our most numerous species, arrives in late April.

When the weather starts to warm and the bugs start to appear, the insect-eaters make their presence known.

Eastern Phoebes and Eastern Wood-Pewees lead the way before the Genus *Empidonax* Flycatchers (Willow, Alder and Acadian) come through.



Many of the tropical migrants are the last to arrive in late April and early May. These are the Wood Warblers, a bird with over 50 species.

These colorful birds are on everyone's bird list. Orioles, Scarlet Tanagers and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks are favorites of all birders.

At Sand Bluff Bird Observatory, we are ready for the spring birds to arrive. Our nets are up and ready to capture and band new birds, while recapturing birds from past seasons. We are open to the public Thursday, Saturday and Sunday mornings from 7:00 a.m. until noon. No appointment necessary, weather permitting. We hope to see you there!



Sand Bluff Bird Observatory

Colored Sands Forest Preserve
10602 Haas Rd, Rockton, IL 61072
www.sandbluff.org | (815) 629-2671

Kayla Lindquist: Song sparrow (inset)

Paul Lindquist: Prothonotary warbler / Wood warbler (inset)

featured programs

For a complete list of programs, visit www.WinnebagoForest.org/Events.



Red Trillium
(*Trillium erectum*)

April Guided Bird Hike

Friday, April 11 | 8:30 a.m.

Pecatonica Wetlands Forest Preserve, Pecatonica



Arbor Day Tree Planting

Saturday, April 26 | 10:00 a.m.

Kishwaukee Gorge North Forest Preserve, Cherry Valley

Meet at far parking lot (overflow parking along the road).

Help us plant 110 trees to improve our community tree canopy and conserve Kishwaukee Gorge North Forest Preserve!

Made possible by The Morton Arboretum's
Chicago Region Trees Initiative (CRTI)



Birdscaping Program & Hike with Natural Land Institute

Saturday, May 3 | 10:00 a.m.–Noon

Headquarters Forest Preserve, Rockford

Red-winged blackbird
(*Agelaius phoeniceus*)

Virginia bluebells
(*Mertensia virginica*)



Bluebell Seed Collection

Saturday, May 24 | 9:00 a.m.

Deer Run Forest Preserve, Cherry Valley

Preserve Pop Up with Rockford Public Library

Thursday, June 19 | 1:00–3:00 p.m.

Headquarters Forest Preserve, Rockford

Learn about all that the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County has to offer and explore the RPL Mobile Library's collection!



Spring peeper frog
(*Pseudacris crucifer*)

Calling Frog Hike

Friday, June 20 | 5:30 p.m.

Pecatonica River Forest Preserve, Pecatonica

Butterfly Hike with Natural Land Institute

Sunday, June 22 | 1:00–3:00 p.m.

Kieselburg Forest Preserve, Roscoe



Painted lady butterfly (*Vanessa cardui*)

find us at

Rockton Pelican Fest

Saturday 5/17

Downtown Rockton &
Nygren Nature Preserve

Garden Fair Weekend

Sat 5/31–Sun 6/1

Klehm Arboretum &
Botanic Garden

Family Nature Adventures

Saturday 6/28

Carl & Myrna Nygren
Wetland Preserve

preserve passport

Gray treefrog (*Hyla versicolor*)



Indian Hill Forest Preserve by Jeff Hargraves



COMPLETE MISSIONS

EARN POINTS

WIN PRIZES



Go.WinnebagoForest.org/PreservePassport

play the preserves

Seth B. Atwood Crosstown Classic



Enjoy 36 holes of stroke play with the field being flighted after round one—a fun and enjoyable format for all ability levels!

ROUND 1

Saturday, June 7

The Ledges GC, Roscoe

ROUND 2

Sunday, June 8

Atwood Homestead GC, Rockford

FEE: \$90 (ages 60+)–\$110

Registration opens April 1, 2025.

PlayThePreserves.com

special events

Learn more at WinnebagoForest.org/Events.

Hooked on Fun Kid's Fishing Derby

Saturday, June 14 | 9:00–11:00 a.m.
Registration opens at 8:30 a.m.
Four Lakes Forest Preserve, Pecatonica



Introduce your kiddos to the outdoor fun of fishing at Hooked on Fun! Young anglers learn how to fish under the guidance of Forest Preserve staff and volunteers while competing for the biggest fish.



partner programs

Backpacking With Burpee

Reading a Map & Compass -
Funderburg Forest Preserve
Saturday, April 5

Wildflowers - Oak Ridge Forest Preserve
Saturday, May 17

Birding & Bird Calls -
Colored Sands Forest Preserve
Saturday, June 7



@Picnicking in the Preserves



Macktown Living History

Sundays at Macktown
Sunday, April 13

Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden

Arbor Day Celebration &
Tree Giveaway
Friday, April 25

Garden Fair Weekend
Saturday, May 31–Sunday, June 1

Rooted in Rockford:
Art and Tree Science Exhibit at
Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden
June 7, 2025–May 20, 2026



Natural Land Institute

Wildflower Walkabout -
Deer Run Forest Preserve
Wednesday, May 7

Rockton Pelican Fest
Saturday, May 17

Wildflower Walkabout -
Pecatonica Wetlands Forest Preserve
Wednesday, May 21

Family Nature Adventures -
Nygren Wetland Preserve
Saturday, June 28

Walk With U

Blackhawk Springs Forest Preserve
Saturday, April 5

Hononegah Forest Preserve
Saturday, May 3

Roland Olson Forest Preserve
Saturday, June 7



BACKPACKING WITH BURPEE



explore your preserves

discover the nature of life...



Sandhill cranes by Pam Schultz

11,639 acres • over 100 miles of hiking trails • 3 campgrounds • 3 golf courses

Marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*)

...endless possibilities



contact us

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www.WinnebagoForest.org

5500 Northrock Drive
Rockford, IL 61103



Go.WinnebagoForest.org/Preserves



save the date

R.E.A.P. Day
Saturday, July 12

Winnebago County Amateur
Saturday, July 12
Sunday, July 13

Winnebago County Sr. Amateur
Thursday, September 11
Friday, September 12