

Exploring Winter's Quiet Beauty

The year's coldest season gives us some of the brightest days, quietest moments, and a whole different world to explore.

Mice and voles of the open meadow scurry through their labyrinths of tall grasses and weeds. Falling snow creates a cover that keeps them warm and safe from view of hawks, foxes and other predators. The small animals go undetected by snowshoers and skiers in the meadow, crunching the snow overhead while crossing the glittering terrain. But in the treetops, owls are listening. The hunters of the sky can hear their food, even under two feet of snow. Owl species are seen in the daytime more often during the winter, including one of our most celebrated winter visitors, the Snowy Owl. Winter brings many snow birds to our area, depending on the food supply in climates farther north. Flocks of siskins, common redpolls, white-winged crossbills and occasionally evening grosbeaks and pine grosbeaks visit our forest in the winter.

Near the bird feeding station, footprints and tracks in the mud and snow open up a secret world. Every move of wild animals has been recorded, like a story book just waiting for you to read. As you follow deer tracks through the trees, you come to a secluded spot in the forest, with 5 rectangular shapes marking the snow — deer beds. Stepping closer and inspecting the shapes of the beds more carefully, you see that one corner of each bed has a small built-up pile of snow — where the deer's rump and back were resting. Looking at each bed in turn, you notice that the deer were all facing different directions, minimizing their group effort for keeping watch while chewing their cud.



White-tailed Deer are ready to disappear into the trees.



Coniferous trees have special adaptations to restore water flow in their branches after a freeze.

A breeze moves through the forest, which you hear before you can feel — the whisper of wind through pine needles, getting louder as it approaches. Looking up you see sunlight bouncing off the needles, each covered in a thick wax coating for protection from harsh winter weather.

This season is full of special gifts, which we will be exploring with moonlight snowshoe hikes, an Owl Prowl, and guided hikes every Saturday afternoon from 1 to 3 pm! Guided group snowshoe hikes are available by reservation on

Saturday mornings from 10 am to noon. Snowshoes are available for rent at the Interpretive Nature Center Thursday—Saturday 10 am to 3 pm and Sunday 12 to 3 pm. See page 4 for details, visit our website and follow us on Facebook to share more of nature's treasures.



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Fun Facts About Winter:

1. Pink snow is found in high alpine regions and coastal polar regions due to cryophilic algae.
2. North Dakota holds the record for the largest number of snow angels made simultaneously in one place: 8,962.
3. The largest snowball fight in the world had 5,834 participants, in Seattle on January 12, 2013.

Interpretive Nature Center Winter Hours:

Thursday—Friday:
10 am—4 pm

Saturday—Sunday:
12—4 pm



Create-A-Critter and GCC Photo Club Exhibit

Nature, Hot Glue, Photography, and Imagination!



Showing off her owl and reindeer.



Hot glue puts it all together!



Beans make the perfect eyes and nose. Among the creations of the day: A reindeer, a hula girl, and a jellyfish!



Gerard Geuss uses black and white contrast at Back Pond.

"The Land of Our Land"

GCC Photography Club Show

On exhibit now at the
Interpretive Nature Center

Take in the beauty of Western New York's landscapes with a photography show, created by the GCC Photo Club. See how location, light, weather and creativity come together in capturing landscapes. Artists' interpretations are included in the captions. Enjoy the views and just breathe...



Kah Chan captures Letchworth Falls in colorful autumn splendor.

Help Your Feathered Friends In Winter — By Amy Jessmer

It's no secret that once winter arrives many birds disappear, but where do they go? Unlike many of our furry friends they do not hibernate, they migrate to escape winter. Migrating is the seasonal movement of animals from one area to another in search of food, mates, or breeding habitat. Some birds migrate 40,000 miles or more twice a year in search of these livable areas!

However not all birds migrate away from snowy areas, some come from areas of harsher winters such as Canada to New York State. Crow, Tufted Titmouse, Black-capped Chickadee, Blue Jay, White-breasted Nuthatch, Cardinal, Downy Woodpecker, (and many more) are year-round residents here in New York.

As you can imagine, living here in the winter can be truly trying at times. To help our feathered friends here are some things you can easily do at home to get you and your family closer to nature:



A White-breasted Nuthatch will collect from feeders and store food in trees for later use.



Tree Sparrow



Multiple species enjoy open style feeders.

Dos and Don'ts of feeding Birds

- Open feeders with trays will attract multiple species of birds with similar eating habits, but to attract a more diverse group use different feeders
ex: mesh socks attract goldfinches.
- Do not allow your feeder to go empty and stay empty for long. Birds are smart and will not associate this feeder as a good food source therefore you will not receive many birds.
- Using Birdseed with a lot of cracked corn, milo and or wheat is not a good choice because it has very little nutritional value for birds. Also oftentimes birds discard of these options anyway.
- Protect your feeders from furry friends that will raid your seeds. Putting up a simple sheet of metal often prevents squirrels from joining in on lunch hour.
- Clean your feeders regularly. Birds are like you and won't eat off of dirty plates.

Birds that Migrate To New York State in Winter:

Common Redpoll: *Acanthis flammea*

Pine Siskin: *Spinus pinus*

Red Crossbill: *Loxia curvirostra*

Snowy Owl: *Picoides pubescens*

Snow Bunting: *Bubo scandiacus*

Tree Sparrow: *Spizella arboarea*

Evening Grosbeak: *Coccothraustes vespertinus*

Pine Grosbeak: *Pinicola enucleator*

Common Merganser: *Mergus merganser*

White-winged Crossbill: *Loxia leucoptera*

For more information on residential birds and helpful birding hints:

<http://www.birdfeeders.com/blog/seasonal-bird-feeding/resident-birds/>

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/62201.html>

<http://birding.about.com/od/birdfeeders/tp/Top-10-Bird-Feeding-Mistakes.htm>

www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/.../BirdNote01_WinterFeeding.pdf

The Unique History of Snowshoeing — By Amy Jessmer

As many of you know, snowshoeing is the sport that uses really silly looking shoes to aid you in walking in the snow. The idea of snowshoeing is that the surface area of your foot is increased by the snowshoe, making it possible to walk closer to the top of the snow instead of stepping all the way through it. Although today we use this as a fun healthy family activity and as a sport, snowshoeing did not start off that way.

The first set of snowshoes was used for survival and for hunting and gathering nearly 6,000 years ago. The Inuit people and Natives located in Central Asia constructed shoes of modified slabs of wood. Some of their descendants migrated to North America and brought their snowshoes with them. Modifications were made over time, using ash wood and rawhide laces. There were three different diverse modifications to the shoes, each for a different purpose. The first was a oval shaped "bear paw" shoe design, used to walk in forested conditions. The second was a "modified bearpaw" which was used for traveling over deep powder-covered areas that were open and susceptible to high winds. The third was the "beavertail" which was a combination of the "bear-paw" and the elongated snowshoes which was used for maneuverability and deep powdery snow conditions.

The sport of snowshoe racing was developed in the 1800s by running enthusiasts and has been used in club and college sports for years. Fast-forward to the 1960's where snowshoe manufacturers started offering man-made laces and decking

for the shoes, primarily made out of neoprene. This was an improvement because neoprene laces did not stretch when they became wet, the way rawhide does. However the snowshoes with wood frames had bindings that broke, or easily fell off. This led to the creation of aluminum framed snowshoes in 1972. Snowshoe designs evolved into new and improved snowshoes that were oval in shape and offered polypropylene decks that improve durability and made the snowshoes lighter. This design proved useful for foresters, rangers, trappers, hunters, guides, and athletes. Slight modifications have been made to give us modern day snowshoes. These include simple and durable bindings making snowshoeing accessible, easy and fun for all ages. Thanks to modern materials and design, snowshoeing is a healthy and fun activity for the whole family.

 Bear Paw



 Modified Bear Paw



 Beaver Tail



Original 3 styles of snow shoes: Bear Paw, Modified Bear Paw, and Beaver Tail

<http://www.snowshoemag.com/2007/01/01/from-bear-paws-to-beaver-tails-the-history-of-snowshoes-from-the-first-edition-of-snowshoe-magazine/>



1960's snowshoes made with neoprene

https://encrypted-tbn1.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcTx_WkPvEu195d0h5oCzzy16y816-aq0x0v512oQDmiPHhOKUd



Modified bear paw snowshoes for daily travel.
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/03/27Indian_Moccasins_Seller%27%2C_oil_paintings_by_Cornelius_Kriehoff.jpg

Genesee County Park & Forest offers rentals, guided Saturday hikes, moonlight hikes and special group hikes by reservation. This is a great opportunity for family and friends to learn and have fun in the outdoors!

Please visit our website or call. 585-344-1122

<http://www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/parks/eventsprograms.html>

Saturday Snowshoeing and Winter hike:

1:00—3:00 pm

Each hike will be lead with a Naturalist! Hikes will go snow or no snow. Snowshoes are provided or bring your own. 5\$/person, max fee \$15/family.

January:

9th: Animal Tracking,
16th: Winter 's Trees,
23rd: The Secret Life of Deer,
30th: Forest Then and Now

February:

6th: Birds in Winter,
13th: Life Under Ice
20th: Nappers and Snackers,
27th: Winters End, Spring Signs.



Family fun snowshoeing

Photo credit: C. Margot Champéry Tourisme, 2009.

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Raquette02.JPG>

<http://www.snowshoeracing.com/history.htm>
<http://www.gcnosnowshoes.com/en/snowshoe-history>
<http://snowshoes.com/learn/article/origin-of-snowshoeing>

Meet the ACORNS

(Association for the Conservation OF Recreational and Natural Spaces)

The ACORNS is the volunteer group formed to support the Genesee County Parks by assisting with environmental programs and park maintenance, offering recreational opportunities and promoting the parks.



ACORNS Board of Directors:

Julia Garver, President
Mary Yunker, Vice-President
Barbara Easton, Treasurer
Jim Schmitt, Secretary
Charlie Augrom
Daisy Klein
George Squires

Members as of January 2016:

Norm Argulsky
Sarah Balduf
Josh Bachorski
Nancy Baker
Barbara and Mike Easton
David and Marcia Gann
Julia Garver and Joe Ruh
Nancy Gerspacher
Brandi Giambrone
Lynn Glarner
Peggy Grayson
Sheila and Paul Hess and family
Hans Kunze
Sam and Esther Leadley
Tami and Pete Loftus
Bill and Connie Moon
Terri and Michael Muehlig

Dave and Val Patten
Mary Jane Pearce
Jim Schmitt
Claire and Ron Sloat
George Squires
Sandy and Dave Steele
Jim and Laurie Taille
Mary Yunker

If your name is not on this list, it is time to renew your membership! If you renew by January 31st you are entitled to 2 free snowshoe rentals. Please mail your membership to:

ACORNS
P.O. Box 787
Stafford, NY 14143

The Membership form is available at the ACORNS website:

<https://acorns.shutterfly.com/membership>

Join us for ACORNS Volunteer Days on the 3rd Tuesday of every month from 10 am-1 pm. ACORNS meetings are held every 4th Tuesday evening of the month at the Highway Department, 53 Cedar St in Batavia, at 5pm.

ACORNS website: <http://acorns.shutterfly.com>



RUN FOR THE ACORNS 2016

Sunday, October 2nd

ACORNS is looking for a few great volunteers to help out and have fun! Contact us at

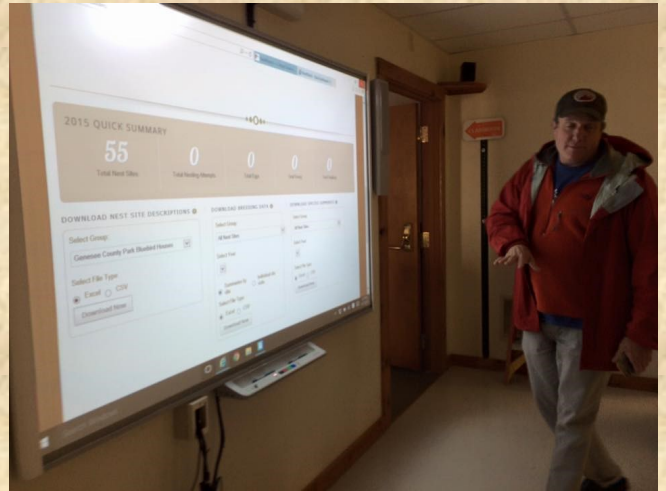
<https://runfortheacorns.shutterfly.com>



ACORNS Adventures

SMART Board Training

The SMART Board — Such a big screen, so many capabilities!! ACORNS and park staff completed SMART Board training this past November. Lin Bandemer, System Design and Sales Rep, presented the training in the activity room of the Interpretive Nature Center. ACORNS and park staff learned all things SMART Board including setup, internet connections, saving and storing information, and linking text, videos, photos and other objects into one presentation on the fly. All files and presentations may be saved as they are created and stored for future use. Presentations may also be recorded and played back at a later date!



Jerome Gentry shares the parks' NestWatch data with the group.

Park staff and ACORNS viewed and sampled science lessons that allow students to interact with content on the board, engaging them as they demonstrate their understanding and providing opportunities for games and links to multimedia information. Internet connections with the SMART Board allow for the linking and viewing of internet content, and the presentation of webinars for future programs.

ACORNS have special volunteer days once a month. Volunteer days include guest speakers, naturalist classes, volunteer work and activities, and in-house trainings. The highlights of this volunteer day included Jerome's presentation of the parks' NestWatch data on the big screen and the park's first ever game of SMART Board Nature Jeopardy! What is FUN for \$1000, Alex?

RSVP – A Volunteer Placement Program for People 55 & Older

The Genesee County Park has been partnering with the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) since 2002, where interested volunteers 55 and older have found meaningful volunteer activities close to nature and to their hearts. In Genesee County, over 325 older adults serve our community as RSVP members. Their volunteer experiences range from one-time events to weekly placements in one or more of our 20+ partner agencies. You can volunteer as little or as much as you desire at the Genesee County Park and with other agencies in our community who rely on volunteers to achieve their mission and goals. RSVP strives to connect volunteers with fruitful experiences based on individual interests and abilities, so that together we can improve the quality of life in our community.



Genesee County AmeriCorps provides support to Environmental Education at the parks through the Environmental Stewardship position with Genesee County Park & Forest. Thank you to our AmeriCorps volunteers for making so many fun and interesting events and programs possible!! For more information and to become a volunteer contact Kathy Frank, Program Director of the Genesee County AmeriCorps at (585) 344-3960
<http://www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/youthbureau/americorp.html>

Fun in the Forest 2016!!

Snowshoeing, Meteor Showers, and Alien Invaders!!

See what's new at the parks this year:

"The Land of Our Land"

GCC Photography Club Exhibit

On exhibit now at the Interpretive Nature Center
Take in the beauty of Western New York's landscapes with a photography show, created by the GCC Photo Club. See how location, light, weather and creativity come together in capturing landscapes. Artists' interpretations are included in the captions. Enjoy the views and just breathe...

Snowshoe Rentals Available:

Snowshoes are available for rent 10am – 3pm on Thursdays and Fridays, 12 pm – 3pm on Saturdays and Sundays from January 7th – March 27th, weather permitting. Cost is \$5/person, Call ahead to reserve your pair!

Saturday Snowshoeing and Winter Hike:

Explore a different topic each week with a Naturalist! Hikes will go, snow or no snow. Snowshoes are provided or bring your own. \$5/person, max fee \$15/family. Saturdays 1-3 pm.

January: 9th Animal Tracking, 16th Winter's Trees, 23rd The Secret Life of Deer, 30th The Forest Then and Now
February: 6th Birds in Winter, 13th Life Under the Ice, 20th Nappers & Snackers, 27th Winter's End, Spring Signs

Snowshoe Trail Guided Groups

Make a memory this winter with your own guided snowshoe hike! Private Naturalist-led hikes are available on Saturdays in January and February from 10 am – noon by reservation only. Cost is \$5/person, minimum group fee is \$75.

Owl Prowl

Saturday, January 16th 7:00– 8:30 pm

January is a great time to listen for owl calls and the footsteps of other nocturnal wildlife. Anything can happen on an owl prow! For ages 4 and up. \$5/person, \$10/family.

Moonlight Snowshoe Hike and Winter Walk

Saturday, January 23rd and
Saturday, February 20th
7:00 – 9:00 pm

Enjoy the tranquil beauty of the forest by moonlight. Moonlight hike will go, snow or no snow! Hike concludes with refreshments by a warm fire in Pavilion A. This hike is for big kids, ages 18 and over. Snowshoes are provided, or you may bring your own. Cost is \$5/person, \$15/family.

Earth Day Celebration at DeWitt Recreation Area

Saturday April 23rd
9 – 2 pm
Free!

Stream Safari

Saturday, May 14th

1:30 – 3 pm

\$5/person, \$10/family

Pond Discovery

Saturday, June 11th

1:30 – 2:45

\$5/person, \$10/family

Alien Invaders!!

Saturday, June 25th

1:30 – 2:45

\$5/person, \$10/family

Conservation Ecology Camp

Week of July 12th–15th

Grades 6th–8th

Details to Follow!!

Pollinating Insects: Our many-legged friends

Saturday, July 23rd

1:30 – 2:45

\$5/person, \$10/family

Camp Hard Hat

BEA Exploration Camp

August 1st – 3rd

Meteor Shower in the Meadow

Friday, August 12th

8:00 – 9:30 pm

\$5/person. \$10/family

Get the best seats available for the Perseid Meteor Shower! Claim your spot in the forest meadow, far away from the streetlights and the noise. Watch nature's fireworks and hear the stories behind summer's constellations and other night sky folklore.

Run for the ACORNS

You're nuts if you don't!

Sunday, October 2nd

8 am – 12 pm

Grab a friend and run through the forest on a beautiful fall day!! This run/walk through the 430-acre park has a 5k trail and a 10k trail. Both trails take you over rolling hills, through the trees, and passing by peaceful ponds. This annual run supports environmental conservation education and outdoor recreation in Genesee County. All proceeds benefit the ACORNS group supporting the county parks.

Create-a-Critter

Saturday, December 3rd

1:30–3:30 pm

Unleash your imagination and share a seasonal tradition! Meet us in the activity room of the Nature Center for an eclectic spread of craft materials from nature. Hot glue and your creativity put it all together. Take some time for your favorite people -- your creation makes the perfect gift!

Programs take place at the Genesee County Park & Forest Interpretive Nature Center, 11095 Bethany Center Rd, East Bethany, NY 14054 unless otherwise noted. Pre-registration is required for all programs.

To register call (585) 344-1122. For more information visit our website at

<http://www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/parks/>, or contact Shannon Morley at

**Genesee County Park & Forest
Interpretive Nature Center**

11095 Bethany Center Rd.
East Bethany, NY 14054

Phone: 585-344-1122
Fax: 585-343-6611

Visit

www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/parks/

Saturday Snowshoeing: Winter's Trees

Sat. January 16th

1:00 - 3:00 pm

\$5/person, \$15 max/family

Registration required 585-344-1122

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to help us earn...***



*We are helping to keep the earth clean while earning new equipment and cash. You can help by saving **used cartridges** and **cell phones**! Just come by the Genesee County Park Interpretive Center and drop them off!*

Make a Difference!



Do you have nature-related books you no longer want or have room for? We are developing a lending library. Adults will be able to sign out books to take home and read! When you're done reading, bring them back and sign out some more.. (Magazines and encyclopedias not needed.)



**Genesee County Parks,
Recreation & Forestry**

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