



Seedlings

Volume 10, Issue 1

Winter is Here at the Genesee County Parks



Snow at the Genesee County Park & Forest

Winter has finally arrived and we are ready for a season filled with snowy fun! We want to take a moment to celebrate 2024. Together with our team of amazing staff and volunteers, we were able to reach over 4,000 people during field trips and education programs, support wildlife habitat through projects like bird nest boxes, and much more.



Interpretive Nature Center

Just before the snow came in, we finished painting the Interpretive Nature Center porch. With over 25 steps to paint, this was no small feat. Thank you to all of the parks staff and volunteers who spent many hours painting!

Wildlife at the parks is preparing for the cold season ahead. Bird feeders located near Pavilion A and the Interpretive Nature Center have been active with songbirds like Dark-eyed juncos, Black-capped chickadees, and Tufted titmice.



White-throated Sparrow

While at the Nature Center at dusk, volunteers and park staff were treated to the amazing experience of hearing coyotes howling. You never know what you'll find during this winter season at the Genesee County Parks!



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Yes! WE'RE OPEN

Interpretive Nature Center Hours October–May:

Thursday–Friday:
10 am–4 pm

Saturday–Sunday:
12–4 pm



Winter is Here at the Genesee County Parks

One of the keys to surviving a Western New York winter, and the cold, dark days that come along with it, is getting outside to enjoy nature! We are excited for a lot of winter fun coming up in 2025.

Available for you to enjoy are endless winter recreation opportunities including hiking, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and more! Pavilions are available to rent with warm fireplaces to beat the chilly days. Our Interpretive Nature Center remains open year-round. Stop by Thursday—Sunday to check out our nature displays or rent a pair of snowshoes! Both adult and children's sizes are available.

Programs are offered throughout the winter including a First Day Hike on New Years Day and Moonlight Snowshoe Hikes! A guide will lead you through field and forest, introducing you to new trails, discovering wildlife, and enjoying time in nature! More information about our winter guided programs can be found on our website: www.geneseeny.gov/parks

Genesee County Park & Forest is proud to be included in the Outside Chronicles Winter Hiking Challenge! This fun challenge encourages participants to explore new trails and discover the love of hiking. Extra points can be earned by hiking at Genesee County Park visiting our Nature Center or by volunteering with our friends group, the ACORNS! Learn more on the Outside Chronicles website: www.outsidechronicles.com/winter/



Winter Fun!
Sledding, Snowshoeing,
Hiking, Pavilion Rentals
and more

Winter fun sledding at the Genesee County Park & Forest



Cross-country Ski tracks in the snow

A photograph of two people snowshoeing in a snowy field. One person is wearing a purple jacket and the other is wearing a red jacket. They are both using poles and are smiling.

Snowshoe Rentals
Rental Fee: \$5

Hours:
10am - 3pm Thursdays and Fridays
12pm - 3pm Saturdays and Sundays

Snowshoes are available to rent at the Genesee County Park & Forest Interpretive Nature Center through the months of December—March, weather permitting!

Wildlife Trails and Tracks

Throughout the year, mammals can be secretive and often unseen by your average hiker. Winter snow brings the exciting opportunity to learn more about what mammals live in a given area. Trails and tracks left behind by animals tell a fascinating story about what their lives are like!

Even an unexperienced hiker can appreciate and enjoy the stories that are told through a pattern of tracks in the snow! Using the power of observation, which, with practice, can become a very useful skill, you can obtain a lot of information simply from looking at tracks and noticing key features.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- If you can make out a clear individual track, **how many toes** does the footprint have? White-tailed deer have two-toes, while animals like bobcat, rabbits, fox, and coyote have four. A track with five toes might belong to a skunk, a fisher, or even a black bear!
- **How large is the footprint?** When comparing animals like bears and skunks, the size of the footprint becomes very important in narrowing down your search. Use a ruler or some other tool of measurement like a coin or a glove to make an estimate about the size of the footprint.
- If you see multiple footprints, does the animal seem to have a **pattern of walking**? Take a look at the sequence of steps and where the feet are placed. Different types of animals have different ways of moving. For example, rabbits and squirrels have a bounding type of movement called "galloping" which allows their larger back feet to land in front of their smaller front feet. Animals in the dog or cat family often trot, and may practice "perfect stepping" by placing their back feet exactly into the track of their front feet.
- **Where** did you find the track? Are you in forest? Is a body of water nearby? Are there any other observations about the surrounding plants, animals, or patterns in the snow that might give you a clue to the track makers identity?



Several white-tailed deer stand in the snow-covered forest



Black Bear Tracks



Little pairs of tracks in a "hopping" pattern suggests a small songbird like a Sparrow or a Dark-eyed junco.



Multiple track patterns in the snow

Once you have some practice noticing and observing tracks, we recommend taking the next step and using a good field guide! We have several available to borrow at the Interpretive Nature Center.

Stop by before your next walk in the woods to try your hand at track identification!

Introducing Junior ACORNS

A new program for young people who want to make a difference

The ACORNS (Association for Conservation of Recreational and Natural Spaces) are the volunteer friends group at the Genesee County Parks! Together with Genesee County Parks, Recreation & Forestry staff, ACORNS connect people with nature through outdoor learning, exploration and fun. You can join them by becoming a Junior ACORN!

Junior ACORNS are young people ages 7 – 16 who care about nature and want to make a difference at the Genesee County Parks. They help at the parks by learning about plants, animals, forestry, aquatic ecosystems, and much more!



FOR KIDS AGES 7 - 16 YEARS OLD

The ACORNS are the all-volunteer friends group at the Genesee County Parks. Our mission is to connect people with nature through outdoor learning, exploration, and fun. Junior ACORNS are young people who care about nature and want to make a difference.

Join us all year for guided walks, volunteer opportunities like planting trees and caring for wildlife habitats, and fun activities at the parks!

GENESEE COUNTY PARK & FOREST
11095 BETHANY CENTER RD
EAST BETHANY, NY 14054

REGISTER NOW

Program Fee
\$25



Junior ACORNS receive a hat and a free ACORNS family membership!

 585-344-1122  www.geneseeny.gov/parks  

What do Junior ACORNS do?

Junior ACORNS attend programs led by our experienced volunteers and parks staff and earn points by completing volunteer projects, exploring our parks, and having fun! At the end of the year, Junior ACORNS are invited to join a celebration at the Interpretive Nature Center.

How do I become a Junior ACORN?

You can become a Junior ACORN by registering on the Genesee County Parks webpage. Complete the registration form by answering a few questions about yourself and why you want to be a Junior ACORN! Parents and guardians are welcome to help their child complete the form.

Visit our website to learn more and register today!

www.geneseeny.gov/parks

Introducing Junior ACORNS

A new program for young people who want to make a difference

When are the Junior ACORNS Programs?

Jr. ACORNS programs are held from 10AM – 1PM. Snacks will be provided! A parent or guardian, at least one adult per 5 youth, must accompany Jr. ACORNS for the duration of each program.

Do I need to attend all four of the Junior ACORNS programs?

No! You may not be able to attend every program throughout the year and that is okay! Your goal as a Jr. ACORN is to earn 50 points in 2025. You earn points by attending Jr. ACORN's programs, volunteering at the parks, ACORNS events, or attending parks programs! There are lots of different types of activities—we hope that each Jr. ACORN can find something that they are excited about.

What is the program fee?


The cost for participating in the Juniot ACORNS program is \$25 per child. This fee covers the cost of all four programs! Junior ACORNS will receive a free hat, ACORNS family membership, snacks during programs, and a coupon to attend a free Parks program.





JUNIOR ACORNS


EARN 50 POINTS
IN 2025



Attend a Junior ACORNS Program

10 Points


- Saturday, March 15th: Orientation and Trail Ranger Training
- Saturday, April 12th: Wildlife and Animal Stewardship
- Saturday, June 14th: Aquatic Ecosystems at DeWitt Recreation Area
- Saturday, August 16th: Native Species at the Outdoor Learning Center



Volunteer at the Parks

5 Points


- Pick up litter at Genesee County Park & Forest or DeWitt Recreation Area
- Care for Ruby the Turtle
- Complete one hour of trail monitoring
- Bluebird and Purple Martin Nest Box Monitoring



Attend Summer Camp

15 Points


- Attend Environmental Science Summer Camp or Camp Hard Hat at the Genesee County Park & Forest



Volunteer with the ACORNS

5 Points

- First Day Hike
- Guided Dog Walks
- Stick Hike
- Earth Day Cleanup
- Music in the Park
- Genesee County Fair
- Run for the ACORNS
- Tree Planting



Attend a Parks Program

5 Points

- Guided programs (hikes, crafts, talks, and more) offered year-round.
- Junior ACORNS will receive a coupon to attend one free program!



Orientation & Trail Ranger Training Saturday, March 15th 	Wildlife & Animal Stewardship Saturday, April 12th 
Aquatic Ecosystems at DeWitt Recreation Area Saturday, June 14th 	Native Species at Outdoor Learning Center Saturday, August 16th 

Junior ACORNS 2025 Schedule

Winter Programs at the Genesee County Parks 2025

First Day Hike

Saturday, January 1st | 10:00 am — 12:00 pm

Start the New Year on the right foot with a walk in the woods! Options for a shorter or longer hike will be available. This program is free!

Registration appreciated but not required, please call 585-344-1122.

Meet at Pavilion B.

Moonlight Snowshoe Hikes

Saturday, January 11th | 4:30 pm - 6:00 pm and

Saturday, February 8th | 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm

Join Genesee County Parks for a winter walk underneath the (almost) full moon! Enjoy the tranquil beauty of the forest by moonlight on a journey through meadows, along creeks, and into woodlands. Snowshoes may be used, weather permitting, and are provided or you may bring your own. No previous experience needed, snowshoeing lesson included! Hike concludes with refreshments by a warm fire.

Cost is \$5/person or \$15/family.

Meet at Pavilion B.

Winter Hiking Challenge

Saturday, January 25th | 10:00 am - 12:00 pm

This winter, Genesee County Park & Forest is proud to be included in the Outside Chronicles Winter Hiking Challenge! This fun challenge encourages participants to explore new trails and discover the love of hiking. Join the Genesee County ACORNS for a fun hike along the challenge route, starting and ending at the Interpretive Nature Center. This program is free.

Groundhog Day Walk

Saturday, February 1st | 10:00 am — 11:30 am

It's Groundhog Day – again! Legend has it that if a woodchuck sees his shadow on Groundhog Day, we'll have six more weeks of winter. Join us for a short walk through field and forest, we'll learn about Groundhog Day and other ways to predict the weather. This walk will begin with a short story time inside at the Interpretive Center. All are welcome; children must be accompanied by an adult.

Cost is \$5/person or \$10/family.

Meet at the Interpretive Center.

Great Backyard Bird Count

Sunday, February 15th | 9:00 am - 10:30 am

Join the Genesee County Parks for the Great Backyard Bird Count! The GBBC is an annual community science event sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Birders around the world will be counting birds throughout the weekend. Our observations will help scientists understand bird populations in the wintertime. Join us for an easy-paced walk, we'll spend time watching birds visiting feeders so dress warm!

Beginners are welcome. Field guides and binoculars will be available to borrow.

Meet at Pavilion B parking lot.

Cost is \$5/person or \$10/family.

Through the Years: Stories from the Oldest County Forest in NYS

Saturday, February 15th | 1:00 pm—2:30 pm

Letchworth State Park Humphrey Nature Center

In partnership with the Letchworth State Park Humphrey Nature Center Winter Lecture Series, join us for a presentation covering stories and tales from throughout the Genesee County Park & Forests history! This program is free.

Mid-Winter Break Adventures

Wednesday, February 19th - Friday, February 21st

10:00 am - 12:00 pm each day

Beat the cabin fever and join us for a series of outdoor adventures at the Genesee County Park & Forest during Mid-Winter Break! Each day will focus on a different nature topic and will include an outdoor adventure and indoor take-home craft.

Attend just one day or all three!

Wednesday, February 19th: Tricky Trees

Thursday, February 20th: Animal Adaptations

Friday, February 21st: Snowshoeing

\$5/person, \$10/family each day.

Meet at Interpretive Center.

Winter Programs at the Genesee County Parks 2025

Junior ACORNS

Saturday, March 15th | 10:00 am—1:00 pm

Calling all park lovers and future naturalists! The ACORNS are the volunteer friends group at the Genesee County Parks. Together, we connect people with nature through outdoor learning, exploration and fun. You can join our mission by becoming a Jr. ACORN. This program is the first in a series of four Jr. ACORNS programs. We will focus on orientation and park ranger training.

Visit our website to learn more and register today!

Early Spring Woods Walk at DeWitt Recreation Area

Saturday, March 22nd | 10:00 am—11:30am

Join us for a springtime walk along the water at the DeWitt Recreation Area! We'll enjoy the early springtime plants, animals, and other nature discoveries.

Meet at Pavilion 2.

\$5/person, \$10/family.



Walking at DeWitt Recreation Area



Green Frog

Amphibian Adventure

Saturday, March 29th | 5:30 pm—7:00 pm

Hear the chorus of spring and learn about amphibians and how to help them. We will head into the wetlands and woodlands on a night hike to visit frogs and salamanders in their habitat! Dress for the weather, rain or shine!

Meet at Interpretive Nature Center.

\$5/person, \$10/family.



More Information and Registration at:

www.geneseeny.gov/parks



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 visit our website www.geneseeny.gov/parks or contact the Conservation Education Program Coordinator at Claudia.Nusstein@geneseeny.gov or (585) 344-1122.

Winter Program Flyers 2025

Genesee County Parks, Recreation & Forestry

MID-WINTER BREAK ADVENTURES



Wednesday, Thursday & Friday
February 19th, February 20th & February 21st

10:00AM - 12:00PM EACH DAY | GENESEE COUNTY PARK & FOREST

Beat the cabin fever and join us for a series of outdoor adventures at the Genesee County Park & Forest during Mid-Winter Break. Each day will focus on a different nature topic and will include an outdoor adventure and indoor take-home craft.

Attend just one day or all three!

SNOWSHOEING | OUTDOOR ADVENTURES | CREATIVE CRAFTS

FOR MORE INFORMATION www.geneseeny.gov/parks



GENESEE COUNTY PARKS, RECREATION & FORESTRY

EARLY SPRING WOODS WALK

AT DEWITT RECREATION AREA

Saturday, March 22nd | 10:00 – 11:30 am






Photo Credit: Mark Gutman



Program Fees help support the park!
Cost for attendance is
\$5 per person or \$10 per family.



FOR MORE INFORMATION www.geneseeny.gov/parks (585) 344-1122

GENESEE COUNTY PARKS, RECREATION & FORESTRY

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

Saturday, February 17th | 9:00 – 10:30 am

Join the Genesee County Parks for the Great Backyard Bird Count! The GBBC is an annual community science event sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Birders around the world will be counting birds throughout the weekend. Our observations will help scientists understand bird populations in the wintertime. Join us for an easy-paced walk, we'll spend time watching birds visiting feeders so dress warm! Beginners are welcome. Field guides and binoculars will be available to borrow.

Meet at Pavilion B parking lot near the Veterans Memorial.
Pre-registration encouraged. Program Fees help support the park!
Cost for attendance is \$5 per person or \$10 per family.



FOR MORE INFORMATION www.geneseeny.gov/parks (585) 344-1122



Internships and Volunteer Positions Available

Meet New People, Help the Parks, Have FUN!!

Volunteers make park events and programs possible!!

- **Maintain exhibits at Interpretive Nature Center**
- * **Lead and assist recreation and outdoor education programs at the parks**
 - * **Guide park visitors**
 - * **Help with park improvement projects**
 - * **Monitor park wildlife**
 - * **Get experience**

Contact: Claudia Nusstein, Conservation Education Program Coordinator at (585) 344-1122 or email Claudia.Nusstein@geneseeny.gov

RSVP – Volunteering for 55 and 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 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. For more information call the RSVP Volunteer Placement Program at 585-343-1611 or visit the RSVP of Genesee County website

https://www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/office_for_the_aging/volunteer_opportunities.php

Scout Opportunities

Genesee County Park & Forest and DeWitt Recreation Area provide volunteer opportunities for Scouts of all ages. Scouts earn service hours by:

- 🌐 **Assisting with programs**
- 🌐 **Creating trail signs**
- 🌐 **Monitoring nest boxes**
- 🌐 **Maintaining and working in the ACORNS Outdoor Learning Center**
- 🌐 **Hosting duties and cleaning the Interpretive Nature Center**
- 🌐 **Providing turtle care**
- 🌐 **Participating in a number of other volunteer activities and events.**

Bronze, Silver, Gold Award projects and Eagle Scout projects also available.

Please contact Claudia Nusstein at (585) 344-1122 or email Claudia.Nusstein@geneseeny.gov

ACORNS Highlights from Fall 2024



Volunteers celebrate an amazing year at the annual volunteer appreciation lunch



Smiling faces at DeWitt Recreation Area



Registration team at the Run for the ACORNS



Lewis, Bonnie, Sarah and Mary visit the Lamberton Conservatory to learn more about turtles!



Pete and Rex lead the Guided Dog Walk at the DeWitt Recreation Area

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:

Chris Caputi President
Ashley McKeown Vice President
Julia Garver Treasurer
Kathy Woika Secretary
Ashley McKeown Membership Specialist
Chris Nickerson
Jerome Gentry
Lewis Tandy
George Squires
Pete Stanbridge

Members:

Gabe & Michelle Abdella
The Allen Family
Charlie Augrom and Lucy Sargent
Nancy Balbick
Sarah Balduf
Sam & Ann Barone
Jenna Benedict
Beth Berkemeier
Brian & Renee Burns
Melissa & Christopher Caputi
Sonya & Carl Christensen
Guy & Patricia Clark
Tom & Linda Clark
Adam Clark
The Dambra Family
Alea Delong
Barb & Mike Easton
Julia Garver & Joe Ruh
The Gentry Family

Barb Easton
Esther Leadley
The Lyaski Family
Cassandra Pettry & James Nesbitt
Shelia & Paul Hess
Bernard Hoerbelt
Brian Kemp
Jeff & Priscilla Langdon
Mary Lou & Jack Lemkuil
Kathy Lee
The Lewis Family
Krysia & Jon Mager
Kyle & Ashley McKeown
Mary Miller
Katie Mohler
Bill & Connie Moon
Jim & Claudia Morrison
Sharon Mosher
Christine & Brad Nickerson

The Nusstein Family
The Osborn Family
Pat Patota
David Rumsby
Jim Schmitt
George Squires
Pete Stanbridge
Sandy & Dave Steele
Lewis & Bonnie Tandy
Kristin Turturo
Chase & Bianca Vallance
The Vandenbosch Family
Evan Verbanic
Mitchell & Morgan Wardell
Kathie & Jack Woika
Kayrn Winters
Pam Zola

Remember to renew your membership for 2025!

To renew or become a member, please visit the ACORNS website or contact Ashley McKeown, ACORNS Membership Specialist at acornsoutreach@gmail.com Send renewals to ACORNS at PO Box 787 Stafford, NY 14143.

ACORNS meetings are held every 4th Tuesday evening of the month except December.

Junior ACORNS receive a **FREE** family membership!

Information available on page 4 –5 of this newsletter and at geneseeny.gov/parks

Rex Introduces the Genesee County Park Dog Patrol

Hi! Rex here, I am a friendly German Shepard who loves walking at the Genesee County Parks. In each issue of the Seedlings Newsletter, I introduce you to a member of the Genesee County Park Dog Patrol. The GCP Dog Patrol highlights our furry friends who love spending time at the park.



Copper, a very good boy

This week, I want to tell you about a good and faithful friend to the park who recently passed away.

Copper was a founding member of the GCP Dog Patrol and my mentor. Everyone will miss seeing this gentle giant lumbering through the park. He made everyone, human and canine, a little happier just with his presence.

I knew something was wrong when I ran into Coppers human, Kathie, at the park. Kathie is a long-time park volunteer and loves to spend time on the trails or at the nature center. Kathie was very sad and I knew that Copper's struggles were over. I know I will see Copper again one day in the park on the other side of the rainbow bridge.

I was sad at the loss of my friend but I owed it to Copper to console his human. I made such a fuss of Kathie. She knelt down and hugged me and I licked her face! I leaned into her and tried to make myself big and tall like Copper. She smiled and laughed and I knew I had done my job.

This article is dedicated to all of the furry best friends who bring their humans so much joy and love to spend time at the Genesee County Parks. For more information about the dog events at the park, please call the park office at 585-344-1122!

Would your dog like to join Rex and the GCP Dog Patrol? Join Rex's monthly dog walks on Saturdays from April—November.

Save the date for:

April 5th, May 3rd, June 7th, October 4th

at Genesee County Park & Forest &

July 12th, August 2nd, September 6th and November 1st

at DeWitt Recreation Area



Wagging tails at a Guided Dog Walk

REX!

& THE GCP DOG PATROL



Illustrated by Calista Light.
Written by Pete Stanbridge.



The real Rex, Claudia the Conservation Education Program Coordinator and Beau, a Junior ACORN



Genesee County Parks Eliminates Lottery Process for Pavilion Reservations in 2025



The Genesee County Parks Department is excited to announce updates to its reservation process for park shelters and pavilions at Genesee County Park and Forest and DeWitt Recreation Area. The department launched an online reservation system last year and, with its success, has decided to discontinue the traditional mail-in lottery system. Starting January 1, 2025, park reservations for 2025 will open to the public. Visitors can reserve their preferred date and location online at <https://bit.ly/GenCoParksReserve> or in person via a paper form at the Genesee County Highway Department at 153 Cedar Street, Batavia, NY.

Reservation Details:

- Online Reservations: Visitors can use the online platform to secure their reservations quickly and conveniently.
- In-Person Reservations: Reservations can be made in person at the Genesee County Highway Department at 153 Cedar Street, Batavia, NY. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM.
- Eliminated Lottery System: Reservations will be confirmed immediately upon payment, simplifying the process.

"We are thrilled to provide both online and in-person reservation options for 2025," said Timothy J. Hens, Genesee County Public Works Commissioner. "The elimination of the lottery system and the addition of these flexible options will make planning park visits easier and more efficient for everyone."

For more information or assistance, please call (585) 344-8508, Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM—4:00 PM

Save the Date: Summer Camps Return to Genesee County Parks in 2025

Summer day camps will be back at the Genesee County Park & Forest in 2025! Save the date for two annual favorites, Environmental Science Summer Camp and Camp Hard Hat. Registration is expected to be available in early spring.

Subscribe to our newsletter to be notified when registration is available!



Environmental Science Camp: Monday, July 14th—Friday, July 18th



Camp Hard Hat: Monday, July 28th—Friday, August 1st

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

11095 Bethany Center Rd, East Bethany, NY 14054

Phone: 585-344-1122

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



Genesee County Parks,
Recreation & Forestry

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