

ELKHART COUNTY PARKS

FALL / WINTER '24-25

# COMPASS GUIDE



**RIVER  
PRESERVE**

**BOOT  
LAKE**

**OX  
BOW**

**COBUS  
CREEK**

**CORSON  
RIVERWOODS**

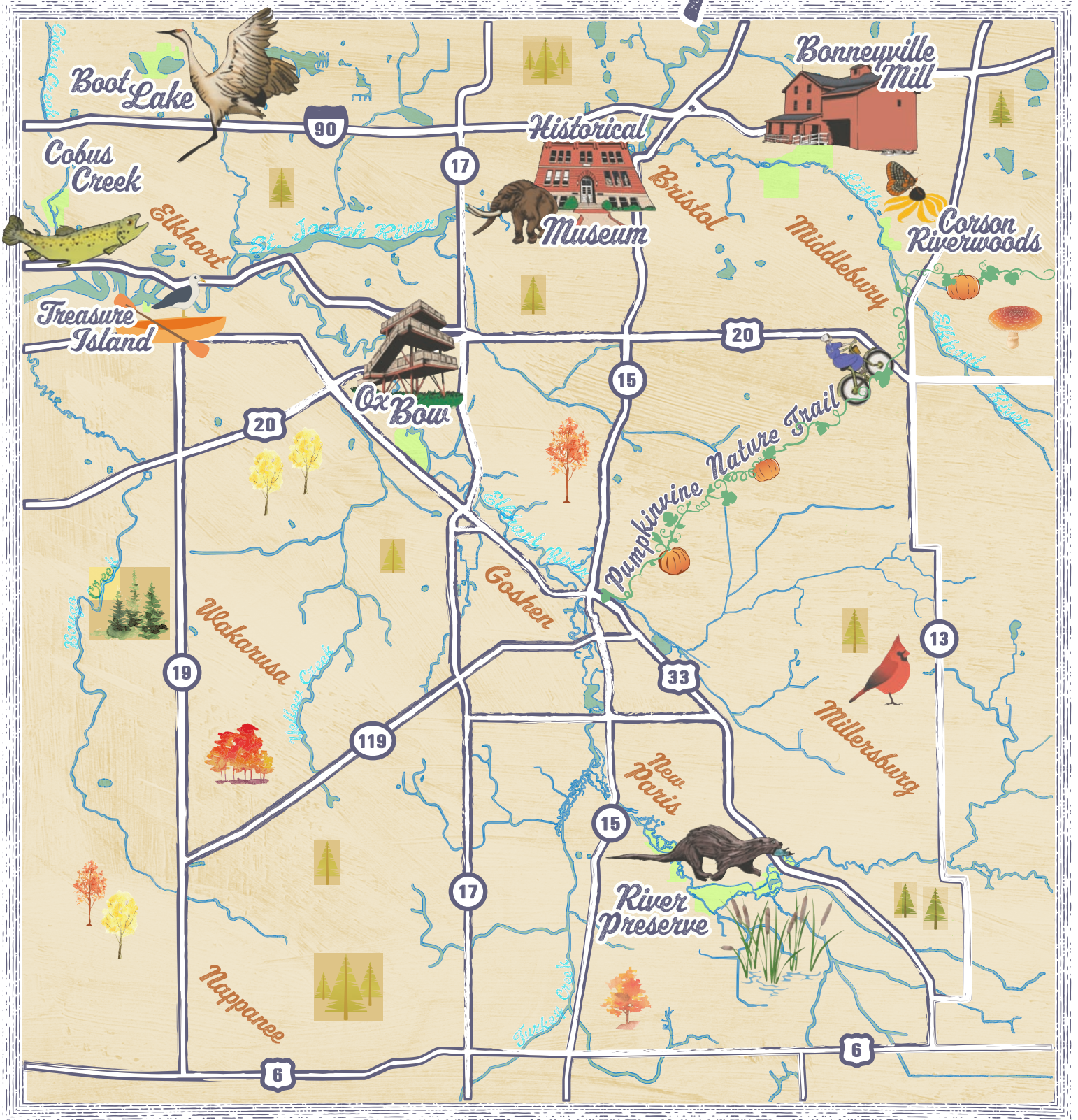
**BONNEYVILLE  
MILL**

**PUMPKINVINE  
NATURE TRAIL**

**HISTORICAL  
MUSEUM**



# EXPLORE THE *Elkhart County Parks*







## Ox Bow

23033 C.R. 45 • GOSHEN, IN

ACRES: 200



PLAN  
YOUR  
VISIT



## Bonneyville Mill

53373 C.R. 131 • BRISTOL, IN

ACRES: 222



## River Preserve

17477 C.R. 46 • NEW PARIS, IN

ACRES: 358



## Boot Lake

51430 C.R. 3 • ELKHART, IN

ACRES: 300



## Cobus Creek

30680 C.R. 8 • ELKHART, IN

ACRES: 84



## Pumpkinvine Nature Trail

COUNTY-WIDE • SEE WEBSITE FOR ACCESS POINTS

MILES: 16.5



## Elkhart County Historical Museum

304 W. VISTULA ST. • BRISTOL, IN

🕒 TUES-SAT • 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.



## Treasure Island

56226 ARMOUR AVE. • ELKHART, IN

ACRES: 4



## Corson Riverwoods

12773 C.R. 12 • MIDDLEBURY, IN

ACRES: 82

## 🕒 HOURS

[ SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE ]

NOTE: BOOT LAKE NATURE PRESERVE CLOSSES 1 HR BEFORE ALL OTHER PARKS

**JAN / FEB / NOV / DEC**

9 a.m. – 6 p.m.

**MAR / OCT**

9 a.m. – 7 p.m.

**APR / SEP**

9 a.m. – 8 p.m.

**MAY / JUN / JUL / AUG**

9 a.m. – 9 p.m.

## 🏠 OFFICE

[ CLOSED WEEKENDS + COUNTY HOLIDAYS ]

🕒 **MON-FRI**  
8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

🏠 **LOCATION**  
211 W. Lincoln Avenue  
Goshen, IN 46526-3280

📞 **PHONE**  
574-535-6458

## 📍 TRAIL INFO

ELKHART  
COUNTY  
PARKS  
.ORG





# Our Mission

INSPIRING CONNECTIONS with CULTURE and NATURE

## ELKHART COUNTY PARKS

211 W. Lincoln Ave.  
Goshen, IN 46526-3280

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**DIRECTOR** / Ronda DeCaire

**DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF PARK**

**OPERATIONS** / Bernard J. Cunningham IV

**DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF INTERPRETIVE SERVICES** / Donny Aleo

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**VICE PRESIDENT** / Karin Frey

**SECRETARY** / Karen Mackowiak

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**DISTRICT 3** / Darryl J. Riegsecker

**DISTRICT 4** / David L. Hess

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**AT LARGE** / Thomas Stump

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**MEMBER** / Bob Barnes

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**MEMBERS** / Judy Ferrell, Larry Ford, Patricia Frank, Carol Rayl

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**PRESIDENT** / Wayne Stubbs

**VICE PRESIDENT** / Dan Boecher

**TREASURER** / John Thompson

**SECRETARY** / Rita Parsons-Rice

*Worth Sharing*

amanda5\_a\_33  
Boot Lake Nature Preserve

We appreciate these happy thoughts posted by Instagrammer, Amanda:

*“Saw these beauties @ my fav nature preserve. Mental health walks in the woods saving my sanity since forever...”*

#ELKHARTCOUNTYPARKS

## CONNECT WITH US!

[elkhartcountyparks.org](http://elkhartcountyparks.org)

  @elkhartcountyparks

### PRODUCTION TEAM

**EDITORS** / Donny Aleo, Annie Aguirre, Krista Daniels, Marlene Lantzer, Julie Parke

**ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTORS** / Ronda DeCaire, Courtney Franke, Andy Langdon Jenifer Blouin Policelli

**CREATIVE DESIGN** / Annie Aguirre

THE COMPASS NEWSLETTER IS A BIENNIAL PUBLICATION OF THE ELKHART COUNTY PARKS.



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ON THE COVER / AUTUMN MILKWEED / PHOTO BY MARY WENDZONKA



Greetings  
from the

# ELKHART COUNTY PARKS

Fall colors and sparkling snow will soon be upon us. These natural wonders always bring beautiful backdrops to the Elkhart County Parks. Sometimes, our staff stops in awe of the magic that is around them with such scenery. We like to call these 'spark moments' or moments that left you in awe of something you experienced even if it was for only a brief moment.



Whether it is exploring the Historical Museum with a grandparent, smelling the last flowers of the season at DeFries Gardens, or watching a child visit the giant caterpillar along the Pollinator Playpath at Corson Riverwoods – we all relish in those small moments that allow us to take a step back from our busy lives to embrace today.

Our great calendar of events invites you to get outside or visit one of our facilities to create your own sparks and embrace the moments that the trails, parks, and places have to offer. We hope you join us soon.

Sincerely, *Ronda*  
RONDA DECAIRE  
DIRECTOR OF PARKS

## Welcome to the Team! Post

Welcome to the four newest  
Elkhart County Park employees



Jenifer Blouin Policelli is our new Curator of Education. She joined the team at the Elkhart County Historical Museum in April. She previously served as the director of Sturgis Historical Museum and has worked part time for the Kalamazoo Preservation Commission and the Penn Township Trustees.



Vincent Gresham stepped into the role of the department's first Natural Resource Coordinator in August. He has almost 20 years of experience in the interpretation and natural resource field including at Rum Village Nature Center, Potato Creek State Park, and Stantec. He has an array of skills to assist the team in protecting our greatest asset – the natural habitats that exist throughout the park system.

Tyler Ellis, Park Services joined the River Preserve County Park team in July to assist with maintaining the largest park along with the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail. Tyler worked several seasons at Madeline Bertrand County Park and continues to enjoy learning in a full-time position. He is also an avid disc golfer.



James Holtzclaw was recently offered the Interpretive Naturalist position. He has a background in environmental education and a variety of experiences from places such as Wolf Gap Education Center, Russell Cave National Monument, and South Cumberland State Park. He is excited to learn about the flora and fauna of Indiana and share his passion of the outdoors.







# TSPY

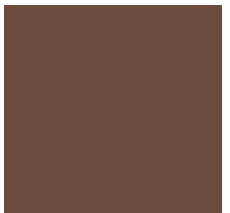
AT DEFRIES GARDENS

*What can you spot as you stroll through DeFries Garden?*



*Visit our blog for a little history on each of these items.*

[ELKHARTCOUNTYPARKS.ORG/BLOG](http://ELKHARTCOUNTYPARKS.ORG/BLOG)





# OCTOBER

sun

mon

tue

wed

thu

fri

sat

**OCTOBER UPDATES:**  
PARKS CLOSE AT 7 PM  
FACILITY RENTALS OPEN  
FOR RESERVATION

6

7

**WORLD HABITAT DAY**  
FROM LUSH GREEN FORESTS TO ROLLING PRAIRIES, GO OUT AND EXPLORE OUR REGION'S PRECIOUS ECOSYSTEMS

13

14

**PARK BOARD MEETING**

20

21

**TRAIL TREKKERS: OWL PROWL**

27

28

**DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS KICKOFF**

1

**NATURE NUTS: SEEDS**

2

**WED. BIRD WALK**

**NATURE NUTS**

3

**TALES & TREATS**

**OWL PROWL**

4

**BOOKS & BOOTS**

5

**BIKE HIKE**

**FOREST BATHING**

11

10

**WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY**  
LIFE'S MESSY. REMEMBER TO GO EASY ON YOURSELF AND OTHERS.

9

16

17

**OPEN HOUSE AT THE SCHOOLHOUSE**

18

**SPOOKY NIGHT HIKE**

19

**FEATURE GRAIN DAY**

**OWL PROWL**

25

24

23

22

**NATIONAL COLOR DAY**  
MAKE COLORFUL ART OR FIND YOUR FAVORITE COLOR ON A NATURE WALK.

26

**HALLOWEEN CAMPFIRE & HAYRIDE**

29

**COMMUNITY OFRENDA**



**REGISTER ONLINE**

31

HALLOWEEN



# NOVEMBER

*sun*

*mon*

*tue*

*wed*

*thu*

*fri*

*sat*

NOVEMBER UPDATES:  
PARKS CLOSE AT 6 PM  
(NOV-FEB)  
MILL CLOSES FOR  
SEASON (NOV. 10)



REGISTER  
ONLINE



**BOOKS & BOOTS 1**  
**CORN HUSK DOLLS**

**HOLIDAY AT THE MILL 2**  
**DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS FAMILY DAY**

**3**  
DAYLIGHT  
SAVINGS ENDS  
ENJOY 1 HOUR  
OF EXTRA SLEEP  
(BEGINS AT 2 A.M.)

**4**  
WATCH FOR  
TURKEYS  
EXPLORE THE  
PUMPKIN VINE TRAIL  
FOR A CHANCE TO SEE  
WILD TURKEYS

**5**  
NATURE NUTS:  
DEER

**6**  
WED. BIRD  
WALK  
NATURE  
NUTS

**7**

**8**

**9**

**10**  
LAST DAY TO VISIT  
BONNEYVILLE MILL.  
[PARK REMAINS OPEN]  
THE HISTORIC MILL  
WRAPS UP FOR THE  
SEASON NOV. 10 -  
SEE YOU NEXT SPRING!

**11**

**12**  
PARK BOARD  
MEETING

**13**

**14**

**15**  
FULL  
MOON -  
BEAVER MOON -  
NAMED AFTER THE  
AQUATIC ARCHITECT  
BUSBY BUILDING  
DAMS THIS MONTH

**COLLECTIONS TOUR 16**  
**MUSHING 101**

**17**  
NATIONAL TAKE  
A HIKE DAY  
KICK YOUR CABIN  
FEVER WITH A SCENIC  
HIKE OUTDOORS.

**18**  
TRAIL TREKKERS:  
NATURE HIKE

**19**  
HIKING  
CLUB

**20**

**21**

**22**

**BLACKSMITH HOOKS 23**  
**SANDHILL CRANE TRIP**

**24**

**25**

**26**

**27**

THANKSGIVING  
DAY

**29**

**30**



# DECEMBER

sun

mon

tue

wed

thu

fri

sat

1

2

3

4

5

6

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26

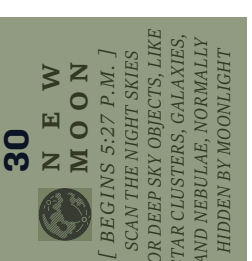
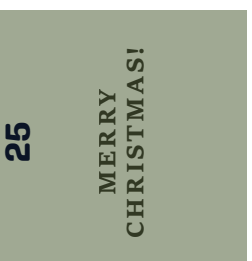
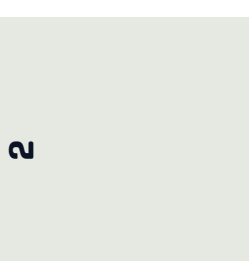
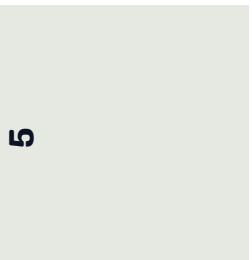
27

28

29

30

31



REGISTER ONLINE



**NEW MOON**  
[ BEGINS 5:27 P.M. ]  
SCAN THE NIGHT SKIES FOR DEEP SKY OBJECTS, LIKE STAR CLUSTERS, GALAXIES, AND NEBULAE, NORMALLY HIDDEN BY MOONLIGHT



# JANUARY

sun

mon

tue

wed

thu

fri

sat



REGISTER  
ONLINE



**1**  
WED. BIRD WALK  
FIRST DAY HIKE

**2**  
GAMEDAY AT THE MUSEUM

**3**  
BOOKS & BOOTS

**4**  
CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT  
GUIDED GALLERY EXPERIENCE

**5**

**6**

**7**  
NATURE NUTS  
WINTER WALKING CLUB

**8**  
NATURE NUTS: SNOWFLAKES

**9**

**10**  
LEARN & BURN

**11**

**12**

**13**  
PARK BOARD MEETING

**14**  
WINTER WALKING CLUB

**15**

**16**

**17**

**18**  
SURVIVAL FINDING KINDLING

**19**

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY

**21**  
WINTER WALKING CLUB

**22**

**23**

**24**  
BLUEBIRD BOXES

**25**  
DUTCH OVEN PIZZA LUNCH

**26**

**27**  
TRAIL TREKKERS: WOODPECKER WALK

**28**  
WINTER WALKING CLUB

**29**  
N E W M O O N  
[ BEGINS 7:35 A.M. ]  
SCAN THE NIGHT SKIES FOR DEEP SKY OBJECTS, LIKE STAR CLUSTERS, GALAXIES, AND NEBULAE, NORMALLY HIDDEN BY MOONLIGHT

**30**

**31**

**31**



# FEBRUARY

sun

mon

tue

wed

thu

fri

sat



REGISTER  
ONLINE



**2**  
GROUNDHOG DAY  
OKAY, CAMPERS,  
RISE AND SHINE,  
AND DON'T FORGET  
YOUR BOOTIES  
'CAUSE IT'S  
COOOOLD OUT  
THERE TODAY!

**3**



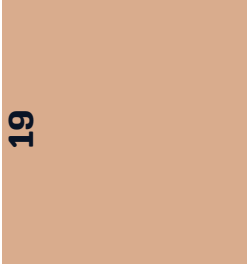
**6**



**9**



**16**



**23**





# MARCH

sun

mon

tue

wed

thu

fri

sat

**MARCH UPDATES:**  
PARKS CLOSE AT 7 PM

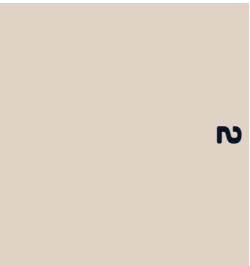


**REGISTER  
ONLINE**

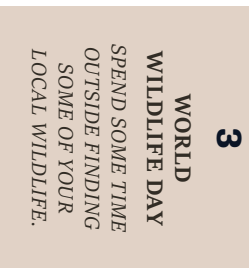


**GUIDED GALLERY  
EXPERIENCE**

1



2



3

**WORLD  
WILDLIFE DAY**  
SPEND SOME TIME  
OUTSIDE FINDING  
SOME OF YOUR  
LOCAL WILDLIFE.



4

**NATURE NUTS:  
WIND**



5

**WED.  
BIRD  
WALK**

**NATURE  
NUTS**



6

**LISTEN FOR  
SPRING PEEPERS**  
ON RAINY NIGHTS  
NEAR WETLANDS,  
LISTEN FOR THE LOUD  
PEEPS OF THESE  
TINY FROGS.



7

**BOOTS  
& BOOKS**

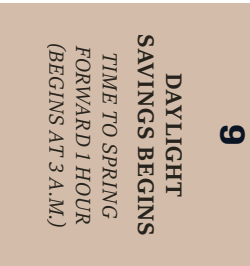
**SANDHILL  
CRANES HIKE**

**OLD-TIME  
COUNTRY DANCING**



8

**SURVIVAL:  
ORIENTEERING**



9

**DAYLIGHT  
SAVINGS BEGINS**  
TIME TO SPRING  
FORWARD 1 HOUR  
(BEGINS AT 3 A.M.)



10

**PARK BOARD  
MEETING**



11



12

**PLANT A  
FLOWER DAY**  
WITH SPRING  
AROUND THE CORNER,  
TODAY IS THE DAY TO  
START PLANTING.



13



14

**FULL  
MOON** -  
PINK MOON -  
SYMBOLIZES THE  
PINK WILDFLOWERS  
THAT BLOOM IN  
EARLY SPRING.



15



16



17

**ST. PATRICK'S DAY  
SCAVENGER HUNT**



18

**HIKING  
CLUB**



19



20

**A MUSICAL JOURNEY THRU  
MESTIZO AMERICA**



21

**TIMBERDODDLE  
TREK**



22



23



24

**TRAIL  
TREKKERS**



25



26



27



28



**SETTING THE  
MILLSTONES**

29

**SPRING  
BIKE RIDE**



30



31





# ASK A NATURALIST

WINTER WONDERINGS

• BY KRISTA DANIELS, INTERPRETIVE NATURALIST •

**Q** Is it true that a woolly bear caterpillar can predict the harshness of the winter?

**A** Unfortunately, this is not true. The woolly bear, or woolly worm, can have differing coverage of brown vs. black, but that tells more about their age than the weather. A woolly bear is the larva of the Isabella tiger moth and they go through complete metamorphosis. This process of going from egg to adult can take a short time or even years, which is the reason we find varying proportions of brown vs. black in these caterpillars. In fact, each time a woolly bear molts, they gain brown, so the older they are, the wider the brown is. The only possible weather correlation might be that a harsh winter may kill off some of the older hibernating woolly bears, meaning the majority of the caterpillars that are found might be younger, blacker ones. So, not a prediction of the weather to be, but maybe a confirmation of weather that has already passed.

**Q** I have a large hornet nest in my yard. When is it safe to take it down?

**A** If the nest can be avoided until the first hard freeze of winter, that is best. The bald-faced hornets who make this large, paper nest are very protective of their home, especially in the fall. This behavior is because their last brood contains males and future queens, giving them a very important reason to be extra vigilant. Once the cold of winter approaches, the newly mated queen will seek cover in leaf litter or just underground, waiting to start a new colony the following year. The remaining workers and older queens will eventually starve and/or freeze to death as the season progresses. That first freeze will finish any survivors off, making it completely safe to remove the nest.

**Q** Do groundhogs really come out on Groundhog's Day?

**A** In most cases, in early February and in Elkhart County, groundhogs are not out and about. Groundhogs are one of our few, true hibernators and, therefore, most likely still curled up in their winter slumber at that time. If you do happen to see one on a mild February 2<sup>nd</sup>, it is likely a male seeking out the location of still hibernating females, so he is ready when breeding time comes along.

**Q** Why do the leaves stay on some of the trees all winter long?

**A** This phenomenon is called marcescence and is commonly seen on American Beech and oaks in our area. Normal deciduous tree behavior in the fall is that a layer of cells (abscission layer) are produced between the twig and the end of the leaf stem causing the leaves to fall. *Marcescence* is the absence of this layer until the spring. It is still not completely understood as to why some trees do this, but there are a few hypotheses. One is that the dried leaves hide and deter nibbling of young twigs and buds when grazers are searching for food, thus protecting the tree's future growth. Another is that the leaves that drop in the spring instead provide a mulch and moisture barrier giving the tree a leg up in the forest as the growing season begins.



**HAVE A NATURE QUESTION?**

SHOOT US AN EMAIL AT  
[PARKSINFO@ELKHARTCOUNTY.COM](mailto:PARKSINFO@ELKHARTCOUNTY.COM)



# NATURALIST'S

BY KRISTA DANIELS  
INTERPRETIVE NATURALIST



## OCTOBER

Look on the tip of willow tree branches near wetland areas for a small pinecone-shaped growth. These growths are actually **GALLS** (or insect homes) caused by a small, non-biting midge. These midge flies lay eggs on the willow buds, and the larva spend the winter inside the galls before emerging in the spring.



## JANUARY

26 years ago, during this month, **NORTHERN RIVER OTTERS** were released by the IDNR into the Elkhart River just upstream from Benton. Because of this successful reintroduction program years ago, their tracks, scat, and slides have become a more common sight along the river.

## NOVEMBER

The seeds inside the long, dark, curling pods from the **HONEY LOCUST TREE** require a trip through and animal's digestive tract to germinate. Look for seed pods on the ground with chew marks from squirrels, mice, opossum or deer.



## FEBRUARY

Look for a mass of sticks fashioned into a large nest high in the trees or a broken, hollow tree top and you just might spot a nesting **GREAT HORNED OWL**. They nest early to allow their young to have a competitive advantage for territory, food, and more family training time with mom and dad.



## DECEMBER

**BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES** are mini masters of winter survival. They increase their downy feathers by 25%, eat 10% of their body weight each day, and go into regulated hypothermia when needed. All these amazing techniques help them store, use, and conserve energy during cold weather more efficiently.

A low, wet woods comes alive this month with high-pitched sounds of the Spring Peeper, the sustained trill of the American Toad, and the scurry of feet from chipmunks in search of a mate. Around the spring equinox (March 20<sup>TH</sup>) you can also watch the aerial display of the **AMERICAN WOODCOCK** in the evenings along the edges of the woods. Each week will bring new sights and sounds!



## MARCH



# WINTER WILDLIFE

• BY ANNIE AGUIRRE, MARKETING COORDINATOR •



*There's a quiet magic to crossing paths with an animal in winter. What starts as a normal hike can suddenly feel like a scene from National Geographic the moment you lock eyes. Then—in an instant—it's gone. Just a blur of tail or feathers. Seeing wildlife can feel like a game of luck, but if you slow down to observe like a naturalist, you'll soon master the art of wildlife watching.*

## Frequent Flying Squirrels

**Listen for:** High-pitched chirps after dusk in the tree canopy above you. Flying Squirrels are very vocal and make alert calls in response to a potential predator, such as an owl, or even you!

**Find them:** If your yard has a few hollow trees, you might have flying neighbors! At dusk, smear peanut butter on the bark of a few trees at eye level or higher. Do this for a few nights, then watch from a distance. These squirrels are very timid, so limit your sound and movement and only use red lights to avoid spooking them. With luck, you'll tempt a few to inch down the tree for a snack.

## Catch Coyotes At Dusk

**Listen for:** Whinny barks, yelps, and yips near dusk, as members of the pack emerge from dens.

**Find them:** During the day, walk along edges of fields, prairies, ditches, or scrubby habitat to find their tracks and scat. Return around sunset to watch for glimpses of them darting by. If you think you saw a cat with a bushy tail, check again – coyotes look quite small and slender in profile.



## Observe Hidden Owls

**Listen for:** Alarm calls of songbirds in wooded areas. Chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, jays, and crows all have a "neighborhood watch" on owls and will alert everyone if they spot one lurking nearby.

**Find them:** When the ground is clear of snow, walk slowly and quietly under dense conifer trees to scan for clusters of pellets (resembling wet clumps of laundry fuzz) and white paint-like droplets on the (called "whitewash"). If you see signs of both, you may spot an owl above you. Make sure to give it plenty of space to snooze.



## Detect Sneezy Deer

**Listen for:** Wheezy huffs (resembling a loud sneeze). Deer make this sound when startled, so limit your movements when heard to avoid spooking them.

**Find them:** In dense foliage. Near the end of winter, also look for "deer sheds" (fallen antlers) on the forest floor near logs or branches with exposed bark (caused by young bucks rubbing against them).



## Naturalist Tips

### Visit the same spot every time you go out. Pay attention to your surroundings.

When you step outside, observe everything you can and notice any changes. Ask yourself things like...

- *What's different today?*
- *Where is there less wind/more protection?*
- *What spots close by have the most sunlight and warmth?*
- *Where am I hearing wildlife?*
- *Which areas seem less disturbed by the presence of people?*

**Master the art of stillness.** Go slow, but don't "stalk" the wildlife you observe. Find the comfortable balance in between.

**Be ok with "dead days".** Sometimes, you just don't time things right...and that's okay! Wildlife will be there tomorrow.

### Pick your target species and research ahead.

The more info you have, the more you'll be able to figure out where to look and what signs to keep an eye out for.

- *What does it eat?*
  - *What do the tracks look like?*
  - *When is it most active?*
  - *What kind of habitat does it live in?*
  - *Where has it been seen before in my area?*
- [ Check out the *iNaturalist* app for local sightings ]

**Hike with a naturalist.** Check out our events calendar (pg. 7-12) for upcoming nature hikes!



## RECIPE

### "CHILLY" MAC SKILLET

[ SERVES 4 ]

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1lb Ground Beef
- 1lb Ground Pork
- 3-4 Large Peppers, Roughly Chopped (Use a mix of peppers for added heat & flavor)
- 1 Large Onion, Diced
- 4 Cloves Garlic, Minced
- 1 Box (1lb) Shell Pasta
- 1 Jar (24 oz) Tomato Sauce (Fire-roasted, Basil, or Garlic)
- 3 Cans (15 oz) of Beans, strained: (Use a colorful variety, such as Black, Kidney & Butter Beans)
- 3 Tb Olive Oil
- 3 Bay Leaves
- Chili Pepper, Garlic Salt, Cumin, & Ground Pepper (to taste)
- Grated Parmesan, Asiago, or Sharp Cheese (To Taste)

#### DIRECTIONS

- ▶ Heat 2 Tb olive oil in a large cast iron skillet or dutch oven over medium-high heat.
- ▶ Add onions and sauté for a min or so, until translucent. Next, add the garlic and cook for another min.
- ▶ Toss in peppers and cook on high 5-7 min until fork-tender.
- ▶ Clear the center of the skillet (or set aside mix if using a smaller pan), then add the beef and pork. Break up into clumps and cook well until meat is fully browned.
- ▶ Stir to combine with peppers. Strain the beans and add to mix.
- ▶ Reduce to low heat and carefully pour in the tomato sauce (this is a good point to break out the apron).
- ▶ Add the seasonings and bay leaves. Cover for 10 min, stirring occasionally to prevent bottom from burning.
- ▶ While the mix simmers, cook the shell pasta until al dente. Strain, then pour 1 Tb of olive oil in with pasta to avoid it from sticking.
- ▶ Remove the bay leaves from the mix, taste, and adjust seasonings.
- ▶ Toss in pasta with a handful of cheese, and devour with gusto!





# a Ripple in time



A while back, a few of our Interpretive Naturalists unearthed vintage editions of *The Ripple*, predecessor to *The Compass* you now hold in your hand. It's been a lot of fun taking a look back to see what's changed and what's stayed the same.

*The Ripple* got its start back in the winter of 1991 as a source of information for upcoming programs, along with interpretation of the region's cultural and natural history. Each season's issue featured a unique collection of creative material from the public and the Parks. Contributions ranged from illustrations and nature poetry, to historic journals and recipes from Bonneyville Mill.

We've fetched a few snippets from some of our favorite articles from the newsletter's early years. While some of the language is dated, the messages still resonate. Visit our blog to see more of these vintage gems in our "Nostalgic Naturalist" series, too!

## In Pursuit of the Prairie

In Elkhart County we are fortunate to have once had a large prairie area. The gently sloping grounds covered by tall coarse grasses were sought out by the early settlers as ideal locations for homesteading. In fact, the sight of the area later known as the Elkhart Prairie was what brought Col. Jackson and Mathew Boyd to settle here during the early 1800's.

The following account taken from an 1874 Elkhart County plat book describes Col. Jackson's reaction to the Elkhart Prairie:

"To that farmer soldiery a more pleasing landscape was never beheld; all were delighted, and Col. Jackson says he then and there made up his mind that whenever in the future the white man could be protected from the savage in a home here, this should be his. He afterward made that determination good."

The Elkhart Prairie was located in the area between St. Rd. 15 and U.S. 33, south of Goshen. The Elkhart River was its southern border. There were two smaller prairie areas east of Elkhart along the St. Joseph River and they were known as Pleasant Plain and Two Mile Plain.

Remnants of the Elkhart Prairie can be seen while visiting the River Preserve. This linear park borders the prairie along the Elkhart River. Although most of the area which was once a prairie is now farmland, it is easy to visualize how the land must have looked to prospective settlers during the early 1800's.

-Erin O'Hara & Tina Mellott



## Holiday Apple Strudel

- 1 cup shortening
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2-1/2 cups flour
- 1 tablespoon vinegar
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1 egg (beat slightly)

Combine the flour, salt and shortening together. Mix the vinegar and the milk together and add to the flour mixture. Add the beaten egg. Roll out on a floured surface, in a large enough circle to cover the bottom and go up the sides (2 inches) of a 12" Dutch oven.

### Filling:

- 12 cups thinly sliced, peeled cooking apples (4 pounds)
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 3 eggs
- 2 tablespoons condensed milk

Fill your pastry lined Dutch oven with the sliced apples. Mix cinnamon, sugar and salt together and sprinkle over apples. Bake with coals on top and bottom for approximately 15-20 minutes, then remove Dutch oven from fire and continue baking from top only until golden brown. This will take approximately 15-20 more minutes. Serve with half and half cream, ice cream or all by itself.



## Chickadee Crunch



- Raw beef suet
- Sunflower seeds
- Millet seed
- Pine cones

Put suet through a meat grinder, then melt it down in double boiler. Set aside to cool and harden slightly. Reheat. Take pine cones with string or wire attached and spoon warm suet over until well coated. Sprinkle immediately with millet, then push sunflower seeds under scales. Spoon warm suet over pine cones again, building up suet and securing sunflower seeds. Refrigerate until firm and hang from tree branches.



## Sorting Out Top Squirrel

In a recent conversation with a park visitor I was told of a squirrely situation that occurred at his home in Elkhart County. It seems that a new breed of squirrel was making its move on this concerned man's property. He observed the introduction and expansion of black squirrels where only fox squirrels had previously flourished. What would become of this squirrel scourge? Would the black squirrel chase out the fox squirrel?

Let's start by correctly identifying the "evil invader". Black squirrels are actually a color variation of grey squirrels. Historically speaking the grey squirrel was much more common in Indiana than the fox squirrel. The fox squirrel flourished only after logging and farming practices drastically changed the squirrel resources in Indiana. The reappearance of grey squirrels in Indiana is due partly to introductions of grey squirrels into city parks and residual populations throughout the state.

It is likely that neither of these squirrels will emerge as top squirrel. It is more likely that they will live together as they do in many other areas. If one squirrel does emerge as top squirrel it will not be due to its aggressive or invasive behavior but to its ability to deal more effectively with the resources that are present.

Courtney R. Franke, Naturalist



## The Call of the Wild

The call of the wild can be heard throughout Elkhart County. It breaks the silence of the night with staccato barks and a wail that quickly rises through two octaves. It's a haunting howl. It's the call of the coyote.

Yes, coyotes do live in Elkhart County, in fact they can now be found living in all areas of the state. Prior to the settlement of Indiana coyotes were restricted to the original prairie regions of the state, but with the continued elimination of Indiana's forests for farming coyotes have been able to consistently expand their range.

Coyotes weigh between 20-50 lbs. and measure 40-50 inches from nose to tail. They closely resemble a German shepherd but with the distinction of carrying their tail below the level of their back instead of curved upward.

In Indiana, coyotes mate in February, and it is believed that some mated pairs may remain together for life.

In April a litter of 5-10 pups are born in a den. As the pups grow, both parents share in their upbringing providing food and teaching the young to hunt. In autumn, the pups nearly

full grown, begin to wander off to stake out their own territories. By the end of their first year they are ready to start families of their own.

Mark Twain humorously described the coyote as "...a living, breathing allegory of want...always poor, out of luck and friendless...even the fleas would desert him for a velocipede." Though this may contain some element of truth coyotes also possess favorable qualities that have allowed them to persist in modern times. Besides being tough and wiry, coyotes adapt quickly to almost any habitat. They will also eat almost anything including rabbits, rodents, carrion, wild fruits and insects. Coyotes have been known to prey on livestock but in their defense it should be pointed out that usually only one or two coyotes in an area find livestock a favored source of food.

Throughout history many mysterious qualities have also been attributed to the coyote. The Aztec Indians of Mexico had several coyote gods, and the name coyote comes from the Aztec word *coyotl*. Among American Indian tribes the coyote was considered "good medicine" helping and guiding Indians through times of distress. The Cherokee called the coyote "the incarnation of the eastern dawn, bringing light and life and driving away the dark shadows." The coyote was thought of as a hero and a trickster and stories of him were told throughout North America - in Cheyenne tepees, Navajo hogans and Inupiak igloos.

Today the coyote serves as an example of the adaptability and diversity of our area wildlife. Its name still evokes images of the open prairie and its voice calls out to the wild in each of us.





# THE INDIANA BANANA

BY DONNY ALEO, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF INTERPRETIVE SERVICES



What's going on with so many names for the Midwest's only tropical fruit? The Indiana Banana, Hoosier Banana, Kentucky Banana, Missouri Banana, and poor man's banana? These are just a few of the regional names I came across while researching the Pawpaw tree (*Asimina triloba*). Custard Apple and Bandango were two of the many monikers that I hadn't heard before. I was thinking to myself, it must be a very special fruit with a special story, why else would it have so many regional locals claiming and naming the fruit as their own? Michigan has a river and village named after the Pawpaw, I find it interesting that these are both located near the northern range of distribution, not sure if this is a coincidence.

Although not related to the banana, the Pawpaw can vary in size and appearance. It often resembles a green, stubby banana. Typically, it has an oblong kidney shape, a custard texture, and a taste sometimes described as mango-like. The Pawpaw tree is a native understory tree to Indiana. It can often be found growing in groves in lowland woods and along stream banks. It can spread by root suckers or by seed.

The Pawpaw tree was a staple for many indigenous groups and later was also relied upon by many early pioneers as they began to move in and settle Ohio Valley and Midwest. It made a resurgence as local food source during the great depression but soon after fell out of culinary vogue and was substituted by the

other common fruits you often find in your supermarket today. It can be eaten raw and/or baked into bread and pudding. George Washington apparently preferred his Pawpaw fruit chilled. Pawpaw fruit provides vitamin C, riboflavin, thiamine, B-6, niacin, and folate.

Pawpaw trees can be found throughout the Elkhart County Parks, their big tropical looking leaves are easy to spot once you know what you are looking for. Locate a tree in late fall, look up for fruit growing in a cluster, give the tree a gentle shake, collect your bounty as it tumbles to the ground. Please remember to practice sustainable harvesting, including never taking more than you need and always leaving some for others and nature.

## Recipes to Try



### Pawpaw Cookies

[ MAKES 2 DOZEN ]

- ¼ Cup Soft Butter
- ⅔ Cup Brown Sugar
- 1 Egg
- ½ Cup Almond Flour
- ½ Cup All-purpose Flour
- 1 Tsp Baking Soda
- ¾ Cup Puréed Pawpaw
- Parchment Paper

- ▶ Preheat the oven to 350°F and line cookie sheet with parchment paper.
- ▶ Cream butter and sugar until well-mixed, then mix in egg.
- ▶ Combine dry ingredients with egg mixture. Mix well, then stir in pawpaw puree.
- ▶ Drop dough in tablespoon-sized dollops onto cookie sheet and bake for 13 min or until lightly browned.
- ▶ Cool on rack for 15 min before removing from pan.



### Pawpaw Quick Bread

[ MAKES 2 LOAVES ]

- Butter or Non-stick Spray (For Greasing)
- 2½ Cups All-purpose Flour
- 2 Tsp Baking Soda
- ¼ Tsp Salt
- 2 Cups Sugar
- 1 Cup Butter (Softened)
- 4 Eggs
- ½ Tsp Vanilla
- 3 Cups of Pawpaw Pulp

- ▶ Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease a bundt pan or 2 standard-sized loaf pans (8x11) or 5 mini loaf pans. Set aside.
- ▶ Whisk together flour, baking soda, and salt. Set aside. Cream sugar and butter until light and fluffy. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add the vanilla and pawpaw pulp, then beat to combine. Add the dry ingredients and mix only until the flour is incorporated – don't overmix.
- ▶ Pour batter into prepared pans and place in the oven (If using mini pans, place them on a sheet pan first). Bake for 40-45 min for mini pans or 45-60 min for the bundt and larger loaf pans. Cake should be brown and should start to leave the sides of the pan.
- ▶ Cool on rack for 15 min before removing from the pan.





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# BONNEYVILLE MILL CELEBRATES 50 YEARS IN THE PARK

**BY COURTNEY FRANKE, MILL MANAGER**

**B**onneyville Mill began a new chapter of its existence on May 18, 1974. On that date, Elkhart County’s favorite mill started grinding as a part of the Elkhart County Parks and Recreation Department. That makes 2024 the 50<sup>th</sup> year that it has operated as an entity of the Elkhart County Parks Department. Here are some significant dates concerning Bonneyville Mill and its operation under the Elkhart County Parks:

- **1967** • The last year Bonneyville operated under private ownership. Frank Mauck was the last private owner.
- **1969** • Frank Mauck deeded Bonneyville Mill and land to Elkhart County Park and Recreation Board.
- **1974** • Bonneyville Mill began operation under the Elkhart County Parks after renovations were completed.
- **1976** • Bonneyville Mill is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- **1985** • John Jenny becomes new miller at Bonneyville Mill.
- **1994** • Bonneyville Mill starts annual Pancake and Sausage Breakfast. The cost was \$3.50 per person.

- **1994** • Bonneyville Mill hosts the national SPOOM (Society for the Preservation of Old Mills) conference. Milling in Michiana is the theme.
- **2003** • The Barn gift shop opens at Bonneyville. Total gift shop sales for that year are \$3,998.86.
- **2006** • Bonneyville Mill turbine water wheels are completely restored.
- **2019** • Bonneyville Annual Pancake Breakfasts resume after a number of inactive years. In March, Interpretive Naturalist, Courtney Franke, becomes new miller.
- **2024** • Bonneyville Celebrates 50 years of operation as a park with cake and punch.





# OFRENDA TRADITIONS

## OFFERINGS FOR THE DEAD

• BY JENIFER BLOUIN POLICELLI, CURATOR OF EDUCATION •

### WHAT IS AN OFRENDA?

Memorializing the dead is a universal experience across cultures. In parts of Latin America, though, festivals known as Día de los Muertos are about more than just memorializing the dead. Instead, it is an opportunity for descendants to invite the dead back into the homes and lives for an interaction. The celebrations take place mainly in Mexico. They also occur in parts of Central and South America and among Latinos living elsewhere, including right here in Elkhart County.

Indigenous cultures in Latin America have celebrated Día de los Muertos for millennia – over 3,000 years! Traditionally, the celebrations marked a time of joyful abundance as part of a harvest festival during the month of August. But this changed with the influence of Catholic Spanish colonizers who arrived in Latin America approximately 500 years ago. The differing cultural practices of the Indigenous people and the Spanish melded together to create something new. During this time, the celebration was moved to align with All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day in early November. Similarly, today Día de los Muertos exists alongside American celebrations of Halloween. In fact, there has been some blurring of the lines between the two. While some Latinos have embraced the mixing of traditions, it is important to note that Día de los Muertos is not "Mexican Halloween." It is an ancient practice with its own well-established traditions.

One of the special traditions unique to Día de los Muertos is the *ofrenda*. Ofrendas (literally translated to *offerings* in English) are homemade altars set up by descendants of the dead. They provide a place for the living and dead to meet, and they contain all kinds of symbolic items to entice departed souls back to the land of the living. Some tradi-

tional ofrendas contain seven levels, each corresponding to a step one must take in order to reach a restful afterlife. Each item on the ofrenda also carries a special meaning. Candles and incense, for example, provide an aroma that helps guide souls back. Food and water on ofrendas offer sustenance after a long journey from the afterlife. Family members may also leave photos of the deceased, marigolds, sweets, salt, and decorations as offerings on their ofrendas.

This fall, the Elkhart County Historical Museum will host a community ofrenda, open to all who wish to memorialize someone who has passed on from their lives. Participants are invited to bring offerings that will honor their loved ones and help keep their memories alive. The ofrenda will be open whenever the Museum is open (9am–5pm) from October 29<sup>th</sup> through November 2<sup>nd</sup>. One piece of the Museum's mission is to "tell the ongoing story of Elkhart County." That means, in part, paying attention to the cultural practices and history of groups that have been left out of popular historical narratives. This includes groups like Latinos in Elkhart County who observe Día de los Muertos.

The opening and closing of the ofrenda will be bookended by programs designed to educate visitors about Día de los Muertos and highlight the Latino community of Elkhart County. On October 28<sup>th</sup>, we will host Goshen College's Nayo Ulloa for a presentation on the cultural and historical significance of Día de los Muertos. Mariachi Eco, Goshen's College's youth mariachi band, will open the program with a special performance. On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Museum will host a family craft and learning day that will allow participants to make traditional crafts, try a tasty treat, and admire the community ofrenda. We hope you will join us as we celebrate and learn more about Día de los Muertos!





## WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS TO YOU?

### ELKHART COUNTY RESIDENTS OFFER THEIR THOUGHTS

“Mi Abuela María, quien es matriarcal y tatarabuela con 4 generaciones, nos ha enseñado la importancia de comprender nuestra herencia y la importancia de la familia. Ella siempre enfatizó que al tener un altar de fotos de nuestros ancestros recordamos el trabajo y el tiempo que tomaron para cuidar nuestra familia; también recordamos las alegrías y dificultades que pasaron para mantener una familia unida. Cada año celebramos a nuestros antepasados como si todavía estuvieran vivos. Volvemos a contar historias familiares, comemos nuestra comida tradicional y aprendemos recetas transmitidas de generación en generación.”

“My Abuela Maria, currently a great-great-grandmother, has taught us the importance of understanding our heritage and the importance of family. She always emphasized that setting up the altar is about remembering their work, and how we came along as a family, and understanding the joys and hardships it takes to maintain a family. Every year, we celebrate the dead as if they are still living. We retell family stories, eat our traditional food, and learn recipes passed down from generation to generation.”

**-LUISA IXMATLAHUA, ELKHART PARKS & RECREATION**



“En Arizona y Sonora, mi familia celebraba el Día de los Muertos. Llevamos las comidas favoritas de los seres queridos fallecidos al cementerio y recordamos sus vidas con comida, bebidas e historias. En Sonora, nuestra familia pasaba toda la noche en el cementerio. Rezamos el Rosario y comimos, bebimos y contamos historias sobre nuestros familiares que habían fallecido. Hace pocos años, también tuve la oportunidad de participar en una celebración similar en China, el Día del Barrido de Tumbas o Qingming.”

“Spread across the Arizona/Sonora borderlands, my family celebrated Día de los Muertos when I grew up. We took the favorite foods of dead loved ones to the cemetery and remembered their lives with treats, drinks, and stories. In Sonora, our extended family spent all night at the cemetery. We prayed the Rosary and ate, drank, and again, told stories about our relatives who had passed on. A few years ago, I also got to experience a related holiday in China, Tomb Sweeping Day, or Qingming.”

**-DR. JULIA MARÍA SCHIAVONE CAMACHO, GOSHEN COLLEGE**





# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

• BY KRISTA DANIELS •  
INTERPRETIVE NATURALIST

|||||

This spring, we were grateful to a local girl scout group that inquired about the possibility of a tree planting at one of our parks. From there, plans began to form and many came together to make this idea a reality at Corson Riverwoods County Park. Our tree planting crew consisted of staff, the girl scout group and members of the Elkhart County Indiana Master Naturalist alumni group. All together, we spent 2 hours planting 234 small arborvitae at this, still developing, property. To top off a great day of service, the Indiana Toll Road donated pizza for the entire crew to enjoy. Thanks to all who made this epic day of tree planting a reality, and here's to many more opportunities to allow dreams and plans to take root!

|||||





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# Reserve



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[ELKHARTCOUNTYPARKS.ORG/RESERVE](http://ELKHARTCOUNTYPARKS.ORG/RESERVE)



## OX BOW

	TYPE	CAPACITY	OUTLETS	DEPOSIT	RATE
<b>*OX BOW HAUS</b>	ENCLOSED	50	✓	\$100	\$165
<b>FISHERMAN'S CAMP</b>	COVERED	75	✓		\$120
<b>COFFEE TREE</b>	COVERED	50			\$75
<b>HONEY LOCUST</b>	COVERED	75			\$95
<b>BLACK MAPLE</b>	COVERED	50			\$75
<b>COTTONWOOD</b>	COVERED	75	✓		\$125
<b>STABLE</b>	COVERED	110			\$125
<b>RED PINES CAMPFIRE</b>	OPEN AIR	50			\$25
<b>HICKORY HILL CHAPEL</b>	OPEN AIR	50			\$75

## COBUS CREEK

<b>COBUS SHELTER</b>	PARTIALLY ENCLOSED	100	✓	\$100	\$200
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## MUSEUM

<b>AUDITORIUM</b>	ENCLOSED	300	✓	\$250	\$350
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## BONNEYVILLE MILL

	TYPE	CAPACITY	OUTLETS	DEPOSIT	RATE
<b>BALDWIN ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE</b>	ENCLOSED	35	✓	\$100	\$150
<b>*BRIAR PATCH</b>	PARTIALLY ENCLOSED	150	✓	\$100	\$120
<b>FEEDLOT</b>	COVERED	150	✓		\$150
<b>MEADOW</b>	COVERED	50			\$60
<b>LOOKOUT</b>	COVERED	50			\$60
<b>KUM MOL RIE</b>	COVERED	100			\$85

## RIVER PRESERVE

<b>BAINERTOWN</b>	COVERED	50			\$50
<b>BENTON</b>	COVERED	25			\$30
<b>DEFRIES GARDENS</b> [ WEDDING CEREMONIES ]	OPEN AIR	50		\$250	\$225

\* UNAVAILABLE DEC. 1 - MARCH 14  
PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE. FOR PARK  
INFORMATION & HOURS, SEE PAGE 3.





**ELKHART COUNTY PARKS**  
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