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Email questions to Courtney Cheers - ccheers@lowellschools.com

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Volume 11 , Issue 4

December 2015

CALENDAR

December

5	Making Life Essentials@ WWC 2-4 pm Make and Take Class
5	Holiday Art and Craft Sale @Lowell High School
6	WWC Open 1-4 Guided Sunday Walk @2 pm
12	WWC Luminary Walk! 6-8 pm
13	WWC Open 1-4 Snowshoe Rentals 1-4 PM
20	WWC Open 1-4 Snowshoe Rentals 1-4 PM
22	WWC Closed—Dec 21—Jan 1 Christmas Break—Trails open!

January

2	Audubon Christmas Bird Count @WWC 7:30-5PM
3	WWC Open 1-4 Snowshoe Rentals 1-4 PM
4	Nature Journaling & Phenology Class 1 @WWC 6:30—7:30
10	WWC Open 1-4 Snowshoe Rentals 1-4 PM
11	Nature Journaling & Phenology Class 2 @WWC 6:30—7:30
17	WWC Open 1-4 Snowshoe Rentals 1-4 PM
18	Nature Journaling & Phenology Class 3 @WWC 6:30—7:30
24	WWC Open 1-4 Snowshoe Rentals 1-4 PM
27	Tiny Trekker Registrations Due!
31	WWC Open 1-4 Snowshoe Rentals 1-4 PM

February

6	WWC Winter Fest! Family Fun from 10am—4pm!
6	Stewardship Network Class Winter Tree & Shrub ID 10am—12pm @ WWC
7	WWC Open 1-4 Snowshoe Rentals 1-4 PM
14	WWC Open 1-4 Snowshoe Rentals 1-4 PM
15	WWC Closed—Feb 15th Mid Winter Break-Trails open!
21	WWC Open 1-4 Snowshoe Rentals 1-4 PM
28	WWC Open 1-4 Snowshoe Rentals 1-4 PM

Luminary Hike

December 12th

6:00-8:00pm



Come and celebrate a December WWC tradition! As you meander through the forest on a candle-lit path, you'll enjoy the serenity of the forest at night. At the cabin, enjoy hot cider and make your way to the wetland observation deck to look for the Geminid Meteor Shower.



Back at the Center, warm up inside with some hot chocolate while making a nature ornaments, stringing popcorn, homemade fire starters, or winter constellation books.

This event is free and open to the public; however, a donation of \$5 is suggested at the door.

For more information or to VOLUNTEER for this event: email ccheers@lowellschools.com or call 616-987-2565

If there is snow on the ground, snowshoers are welcome. If you don't have your own, snowshoes can be rented for \$4/person.

Peak viewing will be December 12th and 13th!!



NATURE JOURNALING & PHENOLOGY CLASS

3 CLASS SERIES: JANUARY 4th, 11th, 18th

6:30—7:30 PM @WWC

Embrace Winter! Join Courtney (WWC Director) and Susan (WWC Naturalist & Artist) for a 3 class series introducing Nature Journaling and Phenology. Nature Journaling helps us discover a whole new way of seeing the world around us. It is a path to record our observations, perceptions, and feelings about the world around us and our personal connection with it. Phenology is the study of the changes in nature through the seasons. We will share with you how to be a citizen scientist, observe, and journal in your own backyard and beyond!



COST: \$25 for all 3 classes (includes materials & journal) or \$10 per class (journals available for \$7)

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED. CLASS SIZE LIMITED TO 20 PARTICIPANTS. Registrations due JAN 2nd!

Email ccheers@lowellschools.com to reserve your spot.

(or call 616-987-2565)

CENTER HOURS

Mon – Fri 7:45-3:45pm
Sunday 1:00 – 4:00pm
(Some exceptions may apply.)

Get Outside! TRAILS ARE OPEN!

...dawn to dusk, 365 days a year



Trail Guidelines

A few simple rules will make everyone's trip to the WWC an enjoyable experience.

For the protection of the land and everyone's enjoyment, Please:

- ⇒ **Stay on the trails**
- ⇒ **Do not pick wildflowers and plants**
- ⇒ **Do not use bicycles or motorized vehicles**
- ⇒ **Respect all living things**
- ⇒ **Water is OK, but please refrain from picnicking, eating or littering**
- ⇒ **Dogs are welcome, only if they are leashed at all times. Please clean up all animal waste and dispose at trash bin by the barn.**
- ⇒ **Horses are welcome, only on the Corncob Corner Trail (prairie loop). Horse traffic is not allowed on the preserve or wooded trails.**

⇒ **Remember...**
You are nature's guest!

Thank You!

STAFF

Courtney Cheers—Director
Shelley Winkels—Naturalist
Susan Stanek—Naturalist
Nancy McIntyre—Naturalist
Shannon Goodwin— Naturalist
Shelia DeVries—Naturalist
Rachel Johnson—Naturalist

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Around the Center...



Tiny Trekkers



Winter Nature Series

Tiny Trekkers is a nature program for children 3-6 years old and their parent, grandparent or caregiver. It includes a series of four 1.5 hour classes every WEDNESDAY OR THURSDAY. Each class will have a different nature-related theme and include a story, exploration hike and art project!

Class Dates: FEB 3 & 4 - Week 1

FEB 10 & 11 - Week 2

FEB 17 & 18 - Week 3

FEB 24 & 25 - Week 4

Cost is \$20 per child for the 4-week series. Children older than 6, under 3 and families are welcome to attend. There is a \$10 per child fee for siblings 3yrs and older.

10 spots per WED afternoon session (1-2:30 pm.)

10 spots per THURS morning session (10-11:30 am)

10 spots per THURS afternoon session (1-2:30pm)

Space is limited! Registration deadline is **JANUARY 27th !**

RSVP Courtney by email: ccheers@lowellschools.com or call [616-987-2565](tel:616-987-2565)

Happy Holidays

As 2015 comes to a close, I want to comment on the year's many accomplishments and thank everyone who gave so much to the WWC during the past year. The WWC is truly fortunate to have so much support.

****Thanks to our many volunteers; for leading programs on the trails, tremendous teacher support, chaperoning our school programs, combating invasive species, helping with special events, tending gardens, assisting with maintenance, planting native plants, counting birds, building exhibits, and helping out with a zillion other things.**

****Thanks to our students for engaging and helping take care of your outdoor classroom; thanks to our wonderful Lowell community for supporting the WWC.**

****Thanks to our partner organizations; The Land Conservancy of West Michigan and The Wege Foundation for your support and efforts in helping keep the Wege Natural Area beautiful!**

****Thanks to the WWC Staff for another year of hard work and commitment to getting our kids outside and exploring the natural world. Not only are you amazing naturalists, you are adaptable, knowledgeable, flexible, and passionate!**

Together we accomplished a great deal in 2015! Thank you for making it successful and inspiring. I wish you the best this holiday season, and I hope to see you often, out on the trails and around the WWC.

With Gratitude & Appreciation,
Courtney Cheers—Director



Nature Discovery... Observations On The Trail...

Phenology: What is it?

Phenology is the study of changes in nature through the seasons.

It is your record of when the first frost occurs, the lake or stream freezes, or cardinals first arrive at your feeder. Comparing these observations year to year provides us insight into the natural world's cycles and helps scientist discover if, how, and why, our environment is changing.

Join Us!

Nature Journaling & Phenology—3 Class Series

**** Jan. 4th**—Intro to Nature Journaling and Phenology

**** Jan. 11th**—Getting started w/ drawing and sketching and beginning your journal

**** Jan. 18th**—Ongoing Journal and Technology on the Trail

6:30—7:30 pm @ WWC

Cost: \$25 for all three or \$10 per class.

Registration is Required

Email: ccheers@lowellschools.com

The **Wittenbach/Wege Center** will be participating in Nature's Notebook and we encourage you to join us as we initiate a Phenology Project in our outdoor classroom!

Phenology and Climate Change:

The ways in which the world is responding to climate change are not well understood. Phenology is a great indicator of current and future climate impacts on people, plants, animals and our natural areas.

Citizen Science websites for entering Phenology are designed to encourage a closer observation and analysis of our natural world. Compare your observations with others in your community, in other parts of the state, and over time. The sites below link you to fellow nature observers.

****Perfect for observations in your backyard! **Earth Alive**** is an online data base of phenological observations. www.naturenet.com/EarthAlive

****USA-National Phenology Network: Nature's Notebook:** is a national, online program where amateur and professional naturalists regularly record observations of plants and animals to generate long-term data sets used for scientific discovery and decision-making. www.usanpn.org/naturesnotebook

Along the Trail...

New Observation Deck Overlooking the Wetland **THANK YOU ... Jarett Maughan**

for choosing to complete your Eagle Scout project at the Wittenbach/Wege Center.



Jarett worked with the Land Conservancy of West Michigan and the Wittenbach/Wege Center to re-purpose and reset a deck looking over our beautiful wetland. This was a BIG job and we extend our sincere thanks and gratitude to Jarett and his troop for contributing to our outdoor classroom and this beautiful community resource!

The deck is located west of the cabin (downhill). Make sure to stop and take in the view and a few deep breaths the next time you pass by.



GEMINID METEOR SHOWER

The December Geminids are a particularly reliable and prolific shower, one of the finest of the year. In 2015, the peak night could be the night of December 13 (morning of December 14). Try the nights before and after, too, anywhere from about the evening of December 12 to the morning of December 15. (Perfect viewing during the Luminary Hike!)

You need no special equipment – just a dark, open sky and maybe a sleeping bag to keep warm. Plan to sprawl back in a hammock, lawn chair, pile of hay or blanket on the ground. Lie down in comfort, and look upward.

Be sure to give yourself at least an hour of observing time. It takes about 20 minutes for your eyes to adapt to the dark. Be aware that meteors often come in spurts, interspersed by lulls.

Your local peak will typically be centered at about 2 a.m. local time, no matter where you are on the globe. That's because the constellation Gemini – radiant point of the shower – will reach its highest point for the night around 2 a.m. (your local time). As a general rule, the higher the constellation Gemini climbs into your sky, the more Geminid meteors you're likely to see.

It's fun to bring along a buddy. Then two of you can watch in different directions. When someone sees one, they can call out "meteor!" This technique will let you see more meteors than one person watching alone will see..

Wants and Needs...

The nature center would greatly appreciate donations of the following items, for use in environmental education programs or community activities at the WWC.

****Bird Seed and Feed**

****Display Cases or shelving units for nature items**

****Barn boards or other building materials straight and in good condition**

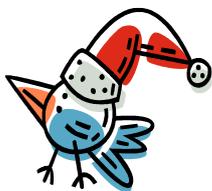
****Craft Supplies (paints, hot glue sticks, etc...)**

****Tree Cookies (2-3" diameter)**

****Hot Cocoa, Coffee, Tea**

Please contact the center at 616-987-2565 or email Courtney at ccheers@lowellschools.com if you can help with any of the above wants and needs. **THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!**

Along the Trail...

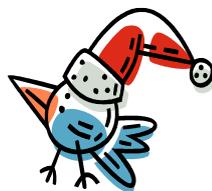


Christmas Bird Count Grand Rapids Audubon

Saturday, January 2nd - 7:30am—5pm

The Christmas Bird Count entices families, students, birders and scientists, armed with binoculars, bird guides and checklists to leave the comfort of a warm house during the holiday season to venture out in search of birds. Yes birds! This annual mission has been conducted for over one hundred years by dedicated people with the desire to both make a difference and to experience the beauty of nature. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this longest-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations and to help guide conservation action. You can get involved! **Come for all or part of the day!**

Field teams and local bird enthusiasts will depart from the Wittenbach/Wege Center at 8:00 a.m. returning around noon for lunch. Field teams depart at 8:00 AM with friends and knowledgeable birders. Return around noon for lunch. Joan Heuvelhorst has agreed to prepare a hot lunch as last year. Cost is \$5.00. Or you can BYO. At 5:00 PM we gather to tally section findings. Choose to participate part or all day. Participation in the count is free but donations are encouraged to support the National Audubon Program.



Let's have a great time gathering data that are useful for tracking



Snowshoe Rentals Available

Don't let the cold and snow keep you inside this winter. Come on out to the WWC to walk, snowshoe and ski our trails. Snow provides the perfect back drop for bird watching and animal tracking. We're the perfect place to burn off those extra calories consumed during the holidays.

The WWC has snowshoes available for \$4 per person in sizes from preschool through adult. Snowshoes can be rented during our normal business hours of Monday-Friday 8-4 pm and Sundays from 1-4 pm (some exceptions do apply so please call ahead to make sure someone is here). A minimum of 4 inches of snow is required for snowshoe rental. Cross country skiers are also welcomed but skis are not available for rent.



Recycling Efforts Earn \$\$\$ for WWC

The WWC participates in two recycling programs that help us support and earn money for educational programming at the center:

Planet Green & Terra Cycle.

YOU CAN HELP! IT'S EASY!! IT'S GOOD FOR THE WWC AND THE EARTH!!!

Bring any of the following items to the WWC during our open hours and we will take care of the rest. We earn money for each box we collect and send. It is that simple. It directly impacts our nature preserve, our community, and our earth.



****Battery Note**** The WWC no longer accepts batteries due to Kent County ending their battery recycling program. They are however accepting household and lead acid batteries during Community Clean Up Day which takes place every fall.

- Inkjet Cartridges
 - Laser/Toner Cartridges
 - Cell Phones & Accessories
 - GPS & Radar Detectors
 - Calculators
 - eBook Readers
 - iPods/MP3 Players
 - Digital/Video Cameras
 - PDAs
 - iPads/Tablets
 - Drink Pouches (like Capri Sun)
 - Fruit Pouches (like Go-Go Squeeze)
-

Your next newsletter will arrive in **January! (burr)**