



Outdoors

Ottawa County Parks

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER | SPRING 2024

Contact us: ocparks@miOttawa.org



Events & Updates

Art for the Parks

Apr 27, 5-8 pm • Hemlock Crossing
Support the Ottawa County Parks Foundation and local artists. A \$10 donation is suggested to attend the show. All donations and 10% of artists' sales will benefit the Foundation.
ottawacountyparksfoundation.org



Grand Explorers' Trail Race

Jun 22, 8 am • Grand River Park
The Ottawa County Parks Foundation and Ottawa County Parks are excited to host this fun, family-friendly 5k, 10k, and 1-mile kids' fun run/walk. Learn more on page 3!
Register at grandexplorerstrailrace.com



Get Lakeshore Ready!

Prepare for the summer season by purchasing your 2024 permit online! Permits are required at lakeshore parks from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day. Flip to page 2 for more info!
Purchase at ottawacounty.cmrpay.com



Kelly N. Rice - President
Jane Longstreet - Vice President
Linda McAffrey - Secretary
Roger Belknap
Joe Bush

Bruce Greenlee
Lukas Hill
Allison Miedema
Jim Miedema
Paul Sachs

Activities and programs are brought to you by the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners.

Joe Moss, Chair
Sylvia Rhodea, Vice Chair
Roger Belknap
Roger Bergman

Jacob Bonnema
Gretchen Cosby
Rebekah Curran
Lucy Ebel

Allison Miedema
Kendra Wenzel
Doug Zylstra

We want to hear from you!

Strategic Plan Public Survey

Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission is developing a strategic plan to drive future efforts. OCPRC is seeking input from community members and Ottawa County Park visitors through a brief public survey to help set priorities.

Please take a few minutes to complete the survey by scanning the QR code or by visiting: miottawa.org/strategicplan

The survey closes April 10, 2024.



It's Time to Step it Up!

Step it Up! is a free, 8-week program designed to help you stay active and explore new parks. Participants of all fitness levels are invited to join. This program is supported by the Ottawa County Parks Foundation.

Registration opens on April 8 and walks begin on April 30. Visit us online to sign up for alerts: miOttawa.org/stepitup

Step it Up! participants can look forward to:

- Weekly guided group walks
- Discovering new parks
- Meeting new people
- Motivation by logging activity
- Incentive prizes



New Recreation Software



In late February, the Parks department upgraded its recreation software to a more user-friendly system. Flip to page 1 for more information.

news.miottawa.org/recsoftware

News & Updates

New Recreation Software - Getting Started with WebTrac

WebTrac is our new online registration system. This system will allow you to register online for programs, reserve a facility, and much more. To enroll in programs or book a reservation, you'll need to create an online account in WebTrac with a unique username and password.

How do I create an account?

1. Visit miottawacountyweb.myvscloud.com
2. Click Sign in/Register in the top right corner.
3. Select "Don't have an account? Sign Up Now."
4. Enter required information highlighted in red.
5. Add family members.
6. Click "I'm not a Robot" and then **Save**.
7. Check your inbox for a verification email.

What will happen to my PerfectMind account?

Your previous account with us in PerfectMind will be closed and any associated information will be deleted. You **MUST** create a new account in WebTrac to register for programs and book a reservation.

For more information, visit: miottawa.org/onlineregistration

[Login to: miottawacountyweb.myvscloud.com](http://miottawacountyweb.myvscloud.com)

Rosy Mound Expansion

Lake Michigan Coastal Greenway

Progress continues toward a possible 127-acre expansion of the 164-acre Rosy Mound Natural Area. In December 2023, the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board recommended a second grant of \$1,642,000 to assist with funding the acquisition.

The 127-acre property is a former sand mine to the northeast of Rosy Mound and has been a high priority target for the Parks Commission since the first parks plan in 1989. This property features 108 acres of designated critical dune. If acquired, it would create a 291-acre park and potentially double the size of the hiking trail system. Beyond a trail system expansion to ensure access and protect sensitive features, other uses for the expanded area are yet to be determined. Following the possible acquisition, a public master plan update process would be undertaken.



Motor Vehicle Permits

As of 2023, we no longer offer a sticker or hangtag. Purchase your permit online or at a pay station on-site.

Purchase online at ottawacounty.cmrpay.com

Motor Vehicle & Boat Launch Fees

Ottawa County Parks collects parking fees from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day at the following parks:

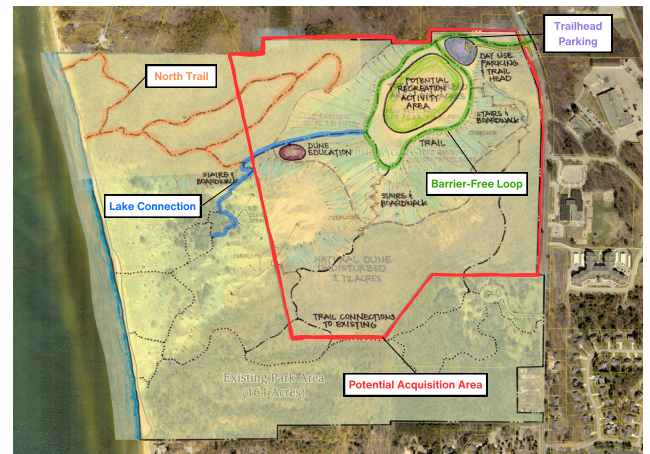
Olive Shores	North Beach Park
Tunnel Park	Rosy Mound Natural Area
Kirk Park	Riverside Park (boat launch only)
Kouw Park	Windsnest Park

Daily Motor Vehicle Fee	\$8 per vehicle
Annual Permit	\$25 per vehicle

- Discounted to \$15 per vehicle for Ottawa County residents
- Discounted to \$9 per vehicle for Ottawa County resident seniors age 60+
- Discounted to \$10 for Port Sheldon Township residents and \$4 to Port Sheldon Township Seniors (this discount is subsidized by Port Sheldon Township)

Other Discounted Permits

Active Bridge Card holders in Michigan can receive a free Ottawa County Parks annual motor vehicle permit. Limited to one permit per household.



Expanding Horizons Along the Macatawa Greenway



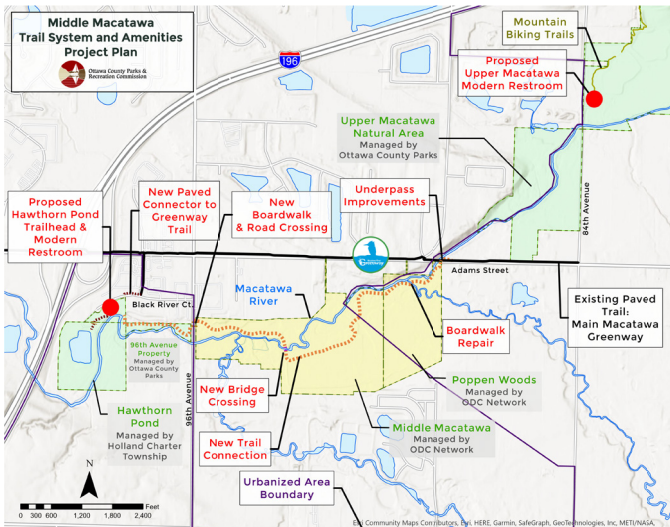
Macatawa River Greenway

Several projects are underway to further develop and connect the Macatawa Greenway. A key area of focus lies between Hawthorn Pond and Upper Macatawa Natural Area, where Macatawa Greenway partners have acquired the necessary land to create a continuous route between both parks.

In coordination with Holland Township and the ODC Network, plans include establishing a 2.1-mile natural surface trail through Poppen Woods, Middle Macatawa, and 96th Avenue properties, with bridge crossings over the Macatawa River to enhance connectivity for trail users. The goal is to complement this trail expansion with amenities such as a trailhead and modern restroom at Hawthorn Pond.

In December 2023, the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board proposed a \$300,000 grant to support this project. Detailed engineering work is set to begin this spring, with construction likely starting in late 2024 or early 2025. Detailed engineering is expected to commence this spring with construction possible in late 2024 or early 2025.

Learn more at news.miottawa.org/uppermacatawaproject



Grand Explorers' Trail Race

Grand River Greenway

Run through two beautiful Ottawa County Parks in one race! Join us for a 5k, 10k, or 1-mile kids' fun run/walk on June 22 at 8 am. This trail race is grand: Grand River, Grand Ravines, grand bridges, and grand views! The course starts at Grand River County Park winding you through a natural surface trail until you hit the recently completed Idema Explorers Trail segment that leads you along the Grand River to Grand Ravines County Park.

For more details and to register, visit: grandexplorerstrailrace.com

Ottawa County Parks Foundation Annual Report

Thanks to the support of our generous donors, the Ottawa County Parks Foundation enjoyed a successful year.

The Ottawa County Parks Foundation is an independent 501(c)3 non-profit organization formed to benefit the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission. The Foundation relies on private donations and grants to do its work.



Some of the projects funded by the Parks Foundation in 2023:

- Supported parks programs in 2023 that connected over 1,000 people with nature.
- Thanks to a grant from the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation, the Parks Commission completed a Parks for All pilot with 4th graders at Grand Haven, Spring Lake, Coopersville, and Allendale Schools. The Parks Foundation provided the matching funds for the grant.
- Improved accessibility in Ottawa County Parks by providing spaces for those with reduced mobility levels to rest.

With your support, the Ottawa County Parks Foundation will be able to use private funds to leverage Ottawa County Parks millage dollars for public benefit. Scan the QR code to read the full report.



Education & Outreach

Earth Day Extravaganza

Celebrate Earth Day by volunteering in our parks! Join us to remove invasive species and clean up litter. Participants are welcome to come and go at any time during the events. Look for the volunteer-staffed table in the main parking lot at each location—all equipment and instructions will be provided! Find dates, times, and locations below.



Learn more: news.miottawa.org/earthday24

Public Volunteer Opportunities

Here's what you should know about workdays:

- Register at: miottawa.org/OCPEvents
- Bring work gloves, insect repellent, and appropriate attire for the outdoors.
- All tools, drinking water, and snacks will be provided.
- All ages welcome; 16 and under must be with an adult.
- Workdays will be cancelled for rain/snow.



Questions? Contact us: (616) 443-4260

Beach Cleanup	Apr 6	10 am-12 pm	Kirk Park
Beach Cleanup	Apr 6	1-3 pm	Olive Shores
Beach Cleanup	Apr 13	10 am-12 pm	Black Lake Boardwalk
Beach Cleanup	Apr 13	1-3 pm	Tunnel Park
Earth Day Cleanup	Apr 21	2-5 pm	Bend Area 
Earth Day Cleanup	Apr 21	2-5 pm	Tunnel Park
Earth Day Cleanup	Apr 21	2-5 pm	Pigeon Creek
Earth Day Cleanup	Apr 22	2-5 pm	Hager Park
Earth Day Cleanup	Apr 22	2-5 pm	Olive Shores
Earth Day Cleanup	Apr 22	2-5 pm	Grose Park
Garlic Mustard Pull	May 11	9-11 am	Pigeon Creek
Garlic Mustard Pull	May 11	12:30-2:30 pm	Ottawa Sands 
Garlic Mustard Pull	May 25	9-11 am	Eastmanville Bayou 
Garlic Mustard Pull	May 25	12:30-2:30 pm	Stearns Creek 
National Trails Day	Jun 1	10 am-12 pm	Connor Bayou 

National Trails Day Cleanup with Friends of Ottawa County Parks




June 1, 10 am-12 pm • Connor Bayou

Join the Friends of Ottawa County Parks for a cleanup at Connor Bayou for National Trails Day on June 1. Water, snacks, tools, and trash bags will be provided. This is a great family activity! Registration is encouraged but not required.



Join FOOCP for an Open House!

These open houses are hosted by the Friends of Ottawa County Parks who will be available to answer any questions you may have.

4/28	1-4pm	Grand Ravines Lodge 
5/5	1-4pm	Grand Ravines Lodge 
5/12	1-4pm	Grand Ravines Lodge 
5/19	1-4pm	Pine Bend Weaver House
6/16	1-4pm	Pine Bend Weaver House



Ottawa Conservation District Spring Native Plant Sale

June 1, 9 am - 1 pm • Hemlock Crossing

The Ottawa Conservation District native plant sale offers a wide assortment of Michigan-grown native flowering plants, shrubs, and more! Get started on your own native garden this spring during the in-person browse-and-buy sale on Saturday, June 1st at Hemlock Crossing Nature Center.

Learn more: ottawacd.org/native-plant-sales



Get Ready for Some Summer Fun!

Get ready to soak up the sunshine with our Early Sprouts and Nature Buds summer day programs. Early Sprouts is designed for children ages 4-5 with a caregiver, and Nature Buds is designed for ages 6-8. Secure your spot as soon as you can!

Learn more and register at miottawa.org/OCPEvents



Hemlock Crossing

FLYING DRAGONS

JUN 26

**NATURE TAKES
SHAPE**

JUL 10

BEETLE SAFARI

JUL 17

Hager Park

**PASS THE ENERGY,
PLEASE**

JUL 24

EYE SEE IT

JUL 31

**POLLINATOR
PALOOZA**

AUG 7

Join the Ottawa County Parks Team

We are currently seeking to fill over 30 seasonal positions. Joining our team is a great way for college students, retirees, high school students, and others who enjoy working outdoors to learn from industry experts and gain valuable work experience.

Following a recent wage survey, the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners supported an increase of starting hourly rates for all seasonal positions. The majority of seasonal staff will now earn \$15.50 per hour, while a few select positions will start at \$18.50!

Apply online at miottawa.org/apply



BIKE CAMPS

2024

AN ADVENTURE-BASED, HALF-DAY BIKE CAMP

TEACHING YOUTH AGES 4-15
MOUNTAIN BIKE &
URBAN BIKE SAFETY,
SKILLS & CONFIDENCE
THROUGH EDUCATION,
FUN & ADVENTURES ON BIKES!



**LITTLES
BIKE CAMP**

AGES 4-6

**URBAN
BIKE CAMP**

AGES 7-13

**MOUNTAIN
BIKE CAMP**

AGES 7-13

**ADVANCED
MOUNTAIN
BIKE CAMP**

AGES 10-15

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER
GO TO WWW.VELO-KIDS.ORG

Velo Kids Summer Bike Camps

Velo Kids and Ottawa County Parks have partnered to provide adventure-based, week-long, half-day bike camps!

Urban Bike Camp	Jun 17-20	9-11:30 am
Mountain Bike Camp	Jun 17-20	1-3:30 pm
Urban Bike Camp Littles	Jun 17-20	9:30-11 am
Little Mountain Bike Camp	Jun 24-27	1-2:30 pm
Adv Mountain Bike Camp	Jun 24-27	9-11:30 am
Mountain Bike Camp	Jun 24-27	9-11:30 am
Adv Mountain Bike Camp	Jul 8-11	9-11:30 am
Urban Bike Camp GH	Jul 8-11	9-11:30 am
Color Wheels SCA	Jul 15-18	1-3:30 pm
Mountain Bike Camp	Jul 15-18	9-11:30 am
Bike & Art in Saugatuck	Jul 18-19	9-11:30 am
Urban Bike Camp Littles	Jul 22-25	9:30-11 am
Urban Bike Camp	Jul 22-25	9-11:30 am
Mountain Bike Camp	Aug 5-8	9-11:30 am
Bike & Kayak Camp	Aug 5-8	1-3:30 pm

For more information about the cost, camps, and registration, visit: velo-kids.org/summer-bikes-camps

Programs & Activities

Unless otherwise noted, registration closes 24 hours prior to the activity.



Ottawa County Parks
Foundation Community
Engagement Programs

Look for the monarch for
activities supported by the
Parks Foundation.



Into Nature

BIRD WALK **FREE**

Registration appreciated (ages 12+)


Immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of spring bird migration. *Geared towards beginners

4/3	8-10am	Hemlock Crossing	
4/10	8-10am	Upper Macatawa NA - West	
4/13*	10-11:30am	Hemlock Crossing	
4/17	8-10am	Grand River Park	
4/24	8-10am	Crockery Creek NA	
5/1	8-10am	Hemlock Crossing	
5/8	8-10am	Upper Macatawa NA - West	
5/15	8-10am	Grand River Park	
5/19*	2-3:30pm	Grand River Park	
5/22	8-10am	Crockery Creek NA	
5/25*	10-11:30am	Paw Paw Park - West	
5/29	8-10am	Hemlock Crossing	
6/16*	2-3:30pm	Hemlock Crossing	

WOODCOCK WALK

Registration required, Res-\$5 / Non-Res-\$6 (ages 12+)



Be introduced to the odd looking and behaving woodcock! After a short presentation, enjoy a short walk to watch the sun set to the twitter of displaying woodcocks.

4/5	7:30-9pm	Hemlock Crossing	
4/6	7:30-9pm	Grand River Park	

TWILIGHT HIKE

Registration required, Res-\$5 / Non-Res-\$6 (ages 10+)


Come experience your favorite parks in a whole new way as you explore them by the light of fading day!

4/19	8:30-10pm	Crockery Creek NA	
5/17	8:30-10pm	Grand River Park	

LAKESHORE BIRDING **FREE**

Registration appreciated (ages 12+)

Join us to look for migratory waterfowl, gulls, and shorebirds.

4/20	8-9:30am	Grand Haven North Pier	
4/20	10am-12pm	Ottawa Sands	

AWARENESS, ART, & ACTION: VERNAL POOLS

Registration required, Res-\$10 / Non-Res-\$15 (ages 12+)

Explore ephemeral wetlands and the creatures that depend on them. Learn about these unique pools and how they reflect habitat quality. Create a nature journal entry based on observations and participate in a survey of vernal pools in parks.

4/20	1-3pm	Hemlock Crossing	
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WILDLIFE ENCOUNTER: WOODPECKERS **FREE**

Registration appreciated (ages 10+)

Find out the hows, whys, and whos of the area's seven woodpecker species. Then enjoy a walk to observe as many as we can find!

4/21	2-3:30pm	Hemlock Crossing	
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SPRING WILDFLOWER PHOTOGRAPHY

Registration required, Res-\$5 / Non-Res-\$6 (ages 18+)



Grab your favorite camera and come along for a walk through a forest in search of spring wildflowers. Learn tips for photographing flowers with an emphasis on caring for nature.

4/27	10-11:30am	Hager Park	
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BALD EAGLE WALKS

Registration required, Res-\$5 / Non-Res-\$6 (ages 10+)

Bald eagles frequent areas along the Grand River and have nested at Grand Ravines for many years. Join us on this hike to learn the story of the park's resident eagles and get a special private view into their nesting activities. *Four time slots

4/28	1-5:30pm*	Grand Ravines - North	
5/12	1-5:30pm*	Grand Ravines - North	

SPRING WILDFLOWER WALK **FREE**

Registration appreciated (ages 12+)

Woodland flowers, called spring ephemerals, bloom before the trees leaf out. Join to look for these spring beauties in our parks.

5/5	10-11am	Grose Park	
5/18	1-2pm	Rosy Mound	

BIG DAY BIRDING FIELD TRIP

Registration required, Res-\$20 / Non-Res-\$25 (ages 12+)

How many bird species can we find in Ottawa County in one day? Several county parks, as well as other locations, will be searched for waterbirds, raptors, songbirds, and more!

5/10	7am-4pm	Location details will be emailed	
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EARTH ENCOUNTERS: LAKE MICHIGAN DUNES

Registration required, Res-\$5 / Non-Res-\$6 (ages 8+)

Does "Lake Michigan Dune Complex" sound complicated? Through a combination of presentation, activities, and a dune-topping hike, we'll simplify things a bit and help you understand how dune complexes are formed and where can they be found.

5/11	3-5pm	Hemlock Crossing	
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GREENWAY BIRDING BLITZ **FREE**

Registration appreciated (ages 12+)

Celebrate migration by birding along the Pigeon River Greenway! Join us at one or more locations throughout the day.

5/18	7-9am	Windsnest Park	
5/18	9:30-11am	Pine Bend Park	
5/18	12-2pm	Hemlock Crossing	
5/18	2:30-4pm	Pigeon Creek Park	

GRASSLAND BIRDING AT JH CAMPBELL

Registration required, Res-\$20 / Non-Res-\$25 (ages 12+)

Join for special access to J.H. Campbell Generating Plant's vast grassland habitat in search of unique nesting birds!

6/8	6:30-10:30am	Hemlock Crossing	
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WHISTLE OF THE WHIP-POOR-WILL

Registration required, Res-\$5 / Non-Res-\$6 (ages 12+)

Introduce yourselves to this summer whistler of the woods!

6/14	8-10pm	Hemlock Crossing	
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Look for these symbols for ways to *Get to know your Greenways!*

Online registration:
miOttawa.org/OCPevents



The Idema Explorers Trail connects parks along the Grand River Greenway.



The Macatawa River Greenway connects parks along the Macatawa River.

Recreation & Health

NATURE JOURNALING

Registration required, Res-\$5 / Non-Res-\$6 (ages 18+)

Gather to learn new drawing and writing techniques specific to a theme while enjoying community connection. Journals are not provided. *Geared towards beginners

4/13*	2-3:30pm	Hemlock Crossing
4/20	10-11:30am	Hemlock Crossing
5/11	10-11:30am	Port Sheldon NA - North
6/22	10-11:30am	Stearns Creek

YOGA AT THE NATURE CENTER

Registration required, Res-\$10 / Non-Res-\$15 (ages 18+)

Come practice yoga at the Nature Center with a certified yoga instructor! Yoga mats not provided.

4/14	3-4pm	Hemlock Crossing
5/19	3-4pm	Hemlock Crossing
6/23	3-4pm	Hemlock Crossing

CONTAINER GARDENING FOR BUTTERFLIES

Registration required, Res-\$10 / Non-Res-\$15 (ages 18+)

Learn about common Michigan butterflies and the host plants necessary for caterpillars to grow and thrive in your own yard. After a short presentation, we will plant seeds in containers to start your butterfly garden, and learn about ways to attract butterflies to your yard.

5/7	7-8:30pm	Hemlock Crossing
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PADDLE THE PIGEON

Registration required, Res-\$25 / Non-Res-\$30 (ages 12+)

Join us on a leisurely guided kayak trip down the Pigeon River. Kayak is included in fee.

6/1	12:30-4:30pm	Hemlock Crossing
6/29	9:30am-1:30pm	Hemlock Crossing

Summer Fun

ON SELECT WEDNESDAYS

EARLY SPROUTS - AGES 4-5 (W/ CAREGIVER)

\$10/session • 9:30-11 am

Early Sprouts will engage caregiver and child with activities interacting in the outdoors. Caregivers will play an active role during the class.

NATURE BUDS - AGES 6-8

\$10/session • 9:30-11:30 am

Nature Buds will explore and engage with nature through activities that may include using dip nets in the wetland, catching insects, and searching for salamanders!

For dates, details, & to sign up, visit: miOttawa.org/ocpevents



Special Events

SOLAR ECLIPSE PUBLIC OBSERVATION **FREE**

Join the Shoreline Amateur Astronomers for an afternoon in the park viewing the solar eclipse event. The telescope will be equipped with a solar filter to allow for safe viewing of the sun.

4/8	2-4:30pm	Hemlock Crossing
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ASTRONOMY PROGRAMS **FREE**

Join the Shoreline Amateur Astronomical Association for an astronomy presentation at Hemlock Crossing followed by observatory and telescope viewing (weather permitting).

4/13	8-9pm	Spring and Summer Sky
5/11	8-9pm	Women in Astronomy
6/8	9-11pm	Public Observing

ART FOR THE PARKS

Support the Ottawa County Parks Foundation and local artists.

4/27	5-8pm	Hemlock Crossing
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GRAND EXPLORERS TRAIL RACE

Join the OCPF for a 5k, 10k, or 1-mile fun run/walk!


6/22	8am	Grand River Park 
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Kids & Families

WILDLIFE ENCOUNTER KIDS! WOODPECKERS

Registration required, Res-\$5 / Non-Res-\$6 (ages 5-10)




Find out why and how woodpeckers pound their beaks on trees and then go search the woods to observe our local woodpeckers.

4/7	3-4:30pm	Hemlock Crossing
5/5	3-4:30pm	Grand Ravines - Lodge 

TRAILSIDE STORYTIME **FREE**

Registration appreciated (ages 3-9)

Come spend an hour reading and learning about nature with your child or grandchild and go on an outdoor walk.

4/14	2-3pm	Hemlock Crossing
5/26	2-3pm	Upper Macatawa NA 
6/9	2-3pm	Grand Ravines - North 
6/30	2-3pm	Connor Bayou 

TUNED INTO NATURE

Registration required, Res-\$5 / Non-Res-\$6 (ages 2-4)

Kids can bring their favorite grown up to sing songs, dance, and learn about nature together. Adult must remain with child.

4/17	9:30-10:30am	Hemlock Crossing
5/22	9:30-10:30am	Hemlock Crossing

STORYWALKS **FREE**


We are partnering with local libraries to continue offering StoryWalks this spring. Pages from a featured book will be posted along a path for your family to read together. StoryWalks are self-guided and available during park hours.

Find a full schedule at news.miottawa.org/storywalks



Outdoors

SPRING 2024

This newsletter is printed on 10% post-consumer waste recycled paper 

Ottawa County Parks & Recreation Commission
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West Olive, Michigan 49460



explore your
Ottawa County Parks



www.Ottawa.org/Parks