

# Outdoors

## Ottawa County Parks



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER | FALL 2022

Contact us: [ocparks@miOttawa.org](mailto:ocparks@miOttawa.org)  
Main Office: 616-738-4810 | Nature Center: 616-786-4847

## Events & updates

### CraneFest Bus Trip

October 9, 12-10 pm - \$75/person OR \$125/couple  
In early October thousands of Sandhill Cranes descend upon Big Marsh Lake near Bellevue, Michigan. CraneFest is a celebration of this spectacle and includes an Artist Village, live animals, children's activities, and more. With birder Curtis Dykstra as your guide, you'll experience CraneFest in a truly special way. *Learn more on page 4.*



### ICEBOUND FOUND! The Ordeal of the S.S. Michigan

November 9, 6:30-8 pm | Hemlock Crossing  
Come listen to guest speaker Valerie van Heest share the multifaceted tale of the S.S. Michigan which became icebound off West Michigan during one of the worst winter storms in history. This presentation will discuss how the crew persevered and more!

### Tag us in your pictures of fall color!



@OttawaCountyParks

### REMINDER: Trail Closures

Trail construction has begun for the Bill Idema Moraine Nature Segment at Grand Ravines (North). The lower trails, covered bridge, and lower parking lot will be closed to the public until November 1, 2022. The main parking lot next to the Lodge will be an exclusive lot for reservation holders. If there is not a reservation, the lot will be open to the public.



Ottawa County Parks & Recreation Commission  
[miOttawa.org/parks](http://miOttawa.org/parks)

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### Hemlock Crossing Observatory Opening

October 8, 7-9 pm | Hemlock Crossing  
After a long summer of hard work, the observatory is finally complete! Please join us for an Astronomy Open House at Hemlock Crossing. For more information about the event, visit: [news.miottawa.org/observatoryopening](http://news.miottawa.org/observatoryopening)



### Meet the Artists & Sale

October 15, 2-4 pm | Hemlock Crossing  
You are invited to meet the artists of Ottawa County Outdoor Art whose work will be displayed at Hemlock Crossing October 11 through December 31, 2022. Artists will offer work depicting the beauty found in Ottawa County. Attendance is free.



### Holiday Luminary Event

December 9, 5-7 pm | Hemlock Crossing  
Join us for this year's annual Holiday Luminary Event as the Nature Center is transformed into a beautiful winter wonderland. There is no charge for attending, so bring your families and enjoy this magical evening! Hot cider, cookies, and candy canes will be waiting.



Friends of Ottawa County Parks

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

Roger Bergman, Chair  
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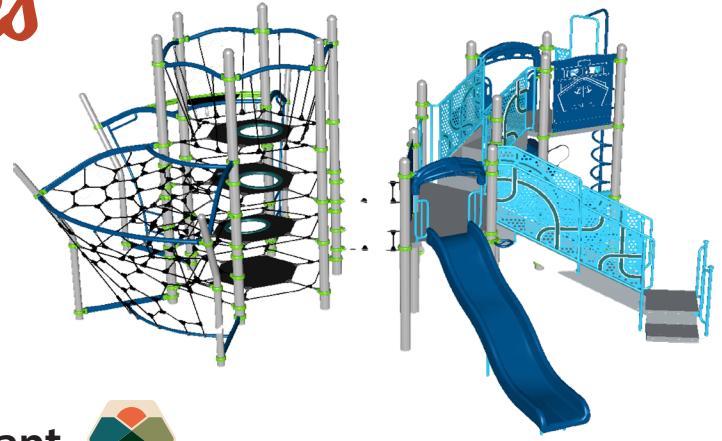


# Park News & Updates

## Kirk Park Renovation

### Lake Michigan Coastal Greenway

A Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant was approved to provide improvements at Kirk Park. This renovation project includes restroom updates, an addition of swim suit changing stalls, and a brand NEW playground! The playground will be similar to the structure at North Beach Park. This project also includes the development of trailhead amenities for regional bike and water trails.



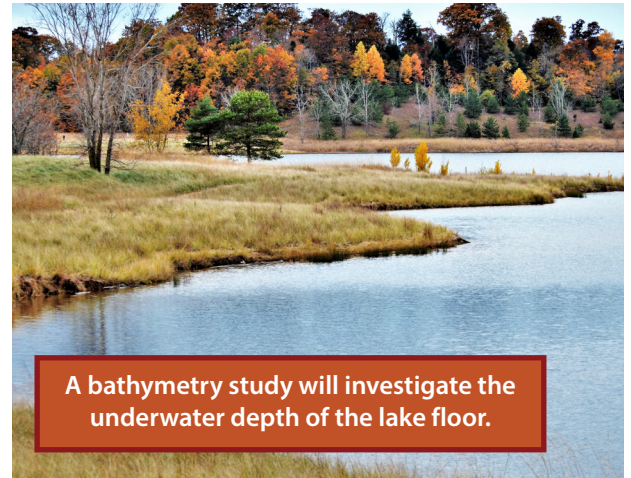
## Ottawa Sands Sustain Our Great Lakes Grant



### Grand River Greenway / Lake Michigan Coastal Greenway

With funding from a Sustain our Great Lakes grant and in partnership with the National Audubon, an exciting project is underway at Ottawa Sands! This project aims to restore historic wetlands and create new wetlands for a total of 42 acres of high priority marsh. These areas represent some of the highest potential for Great Lakes marsh bird habitat creation and are in desperate need of restoration due to historic mining and more recent stressors from invasive species and climate change.

This summer, Great Lakes Audubon volunteers monitored marsh birds at Ottawa Sands and Stearns Creek Park. In the fall, engineering of shoreline creation and dunal wetland restoration at Ottawa Sands is set to begin. This includes: invasive plant removal, collection of native wetland seeds, shoreline bird monitoring, and volunteer work days. A bathymetry study is projected to be completed in October.



A bathymetry study will investigate the underwater depth of the lake floor.

## North Ottawa Dunes & Ottawa Sands will be closed to the public November 18-November 21, 2022

North Ottawa Dunes and Ottawa Sands will be CLOSED for an annual wildlife management hunt from Friday, November 18 to Monday, November 21. Access is by permission only; those in the parks without permission will be ticketed. Both parks will re-open Tuesday, November 22.

Hunting is an important part of managing natural lands and parks in Ottawa County. Learn more here: [news.miottawa.org/hunting-in-ottawa-county-parks](https://news.miottawa.org/hunting-in-ottawa-county-parks)

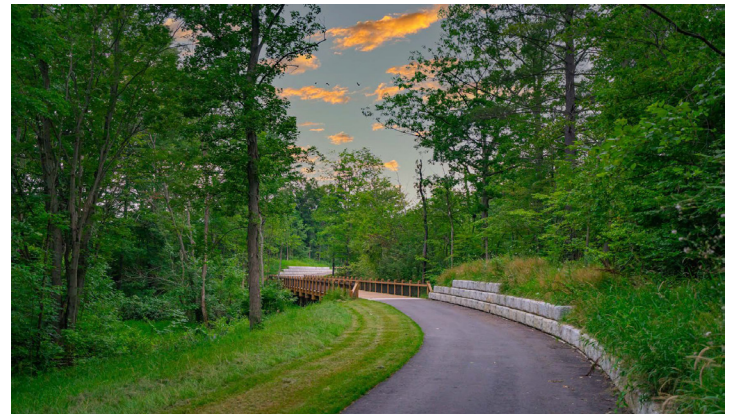


## Spoonville Trail Management



### Grand River Greenway

This fall, Ottawa County Parks & Recreation assumed ownership and maintenance of the Spoonville Trail. This award-winning 4.2-mile trail links the north and south sides of the river with a multipurpose path along the M-231 bridge. It also connects the Idema Explorers Trail and north side of the river to the North Bank Trail, closing the gap on the 24-mile Grand Crossings loop. The trail passes through a variety of unique landscapes and is the first to traverse a golf course in the state of Michigan. Come explore the new addition on a history bike tour (see page 6 for more information).





# Idema Explorers Trail Updates



## Grand River Greenway

### Jenison Mill Segment

Progress continues on this important connection to Kent County trails! The bridges and boardwalks in this section are completed and paving has begun. Stay tuned for a trail dedication event!



### Bill Idema Moraine Nature Segment

Trail construction on the western end of this segment is underway. Please note that during construction there will be limited parking available (see page 1 for more details).

*Excited about this project? You can support trail projects, additional park acquisitions, and expanded nature education for kids by donating to the Ottawa County Parks Foundation!*

Scan the QR code to support parks, trails, and nature programs!



Paved trails along the new segments of the Idema Explorers Trail

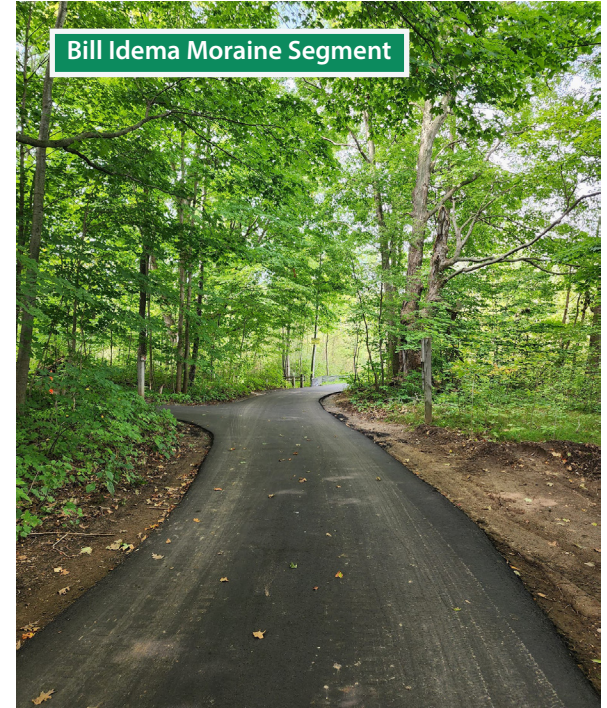


The Jenison Mill Segment's NEW boardwalk

Photos by: Bob Goddard



Jenison Mill Segment



Bill Idema Moraine Segment

# Mug Club Photo Contest



Have you taken a bird photo in Ottawa County in 2022 that would look great on our 2023 Mug Club limited edition mug? We want to see it! Submission deadline is October 31, 2022.

### How to enter:

Submit original image files (up to 3/person) online: [news.miottawa.org/mugclubcontest](https://news.miottawa.org/mugclubcontest)

The winning photo and 2023 mug will be revealed in December. *Please note: the winning photo may be edited for printing*

### Mug Club membership

2023 Mug Club Memberships will be available for sale for \$25. Members receive a limited edition mug and fun birding perks throughout the year. Funds raised through the mug club support birding programs. The mugs and membership make great gifts!



Sign up for birding updates for more information about mug club: [miottawa.org/birding](https://miottawa.org/birding)

# Freedom Trax Donation

Lori's Voice, a non-profit organization that was founded to help young people with disabilities, generously donated a Freedom Trax wheelchair to Ottawa County Parks. The special design allows individuals who are wheelchair-dependent to freely move regardless of the terrain!

The inspiration for the donation came from John Thompson who passed away in 2020. He loved Lake Michigan, its beauty, and adventures. His generous spirit had a huge impact on many children and in his memory an anonymous donor gave Lori's Voice the funds to purchase the Trax to pay forward his kindness and keep his spirit alive. The Freedom Trax will provide families the opportunity to go to the beach together and spend quality time outdoors exploring and making memories.

**"The only thing worth doing is what we do for others."**

**-Lewis Carroll**



[miottawa.org/Parks](https://miottawa.org/Parks)



# Stewardship & Education

## Protecting Pollinators - The Monarch

This summer, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) designated the monarch butterfly as endangered. Although this designation sounds the alarm, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has yet to change the status of the butterfly to endangered within the Endangered Species Act.

**Don't fret yet!** There are several things you can do in your own backyard to help monarchs and other pollinators.

For the full scoop, visit: [news.miottawa.org/protectingpollinators](https://news.miottawa.org/protectingpollinators)



### 1 Plant milkweed in your yard or community.

Milkweed is the ONLY plant monarch caterpillars can eat and it supports this species from larvae to egg-laying adult. There are 11 milkweed species native to Michigan.



### 2 Plant other native nectar plants.

This will help create additional pollinator habitat. Need help getting started? Watch this video on how to create a monarch habitat: [monarchdefenders.org/gardens](https://monarchdefenders.org/gardens)

### 3 Share information and get people talking!

You can create and register your pollinator habitat for the Monarch Watch Monarch Waystation Program.

Monarch Waystation Program



Create, Conserve, & Protect Monarch Habitats  
monarchwatch.org

### 4 Donate.

Visit this link: [monarchjointventure.org/donate](https://monarchjointventure.org/donate)

## Volunteer Workdays

Do you want to get involved volunteering? Register online: [miOttawa.org/ocpevents](https://miOttawa.org/ocpevents)

Beach Clean Up	Oct 6	5:30-7 pm	Kirk Park
Invasive Species Removal	Oct 15	10 am-12 pm	Pigeon Creek Park
Invasive Species Removal	Oct 15	1-3 pm	Hiawatha Forest
Invasive Species Removal	Oct 20	5:30-7 pm	Eastmanville Bayou
Beach Clean Up	Oct 22	1:30-3:30 pm	Historica Ottawa Beach

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. Work days are cancelled if raining (or snowing).



## CraneFest Bus Trip

Experience something *new* this fall on a trip to view flocks of Sandhill Cranes gathering to feed before heading south for the winter. In November, they embark on their southward journey to Florida where they spend the colder months. As winter wanes, the echoing sounds of their bugling calls can be heard as flocks make their way north again to nest.



In the early 1800's Sandhill Cranes were widespread in Michigan, but by the turn of the century, it was feared they would disappear as only a few dozen pairs remained. Over-hunting and loss of wetland habitat was mostly to blame, but in 1918 the Migratory Bird Treaty Act stopped hunting and saved the crane's existence in Michigan.

Through decades of conservation efforts, their population has recovered and soared to nearly 19,000 birds. Sandhill Cranes have become increasingly common nesting birds in the wet meadows, pastures, and fields of Ottawa County.

Join us on October 9 to celebrate the spectacle! For more information and how to register, visit: [news.miottawa.org/cranefest-bus-trip](https://news.miottawa.org/cranefest-bus-trip)



## Volunteer Spotlight



### Step it Up Volunteers Step Up!

In 2022, there was a total of 18 volunteers who assisted with the Step it Up walking program. Snow, rain, or shine... people and volunteers showed up! Their dedication and enthusiasm, regardless of weather, was infectious and did not go unnoticed. In fact, over 70% of participants reported an improvement in their physical and mental health as a result of participating in the program. Thank you to all of the volunteers, great work!



# Dark Sky Initiative

An ongoing partnership between the Shoreline Amateur Astronomical Association (SAAA) and Ottawa County Parks is on the verge of providing the first public observatory in West Michigan. Both groups will join with the public to celebrate the observatory's Grand Opening on October 8. Once open, it will provide an opportunity for people to enjoy the night sky and have close-up views of planets, star clusters, galaxies, and more through its high-powered telescope. We invite you to come and enjoy the festivities. While you're there, stop by the information table to learn more about what you can do to help preserve (and improve) the night sky experience in Ottawa County.



(More info on pg 1)

A major threat to observatories around the world is light pollution. According to the 2016 "World Atlas of Artificial Night Sky Brightness," 80 percent of the world's population lives under skyglow. In the

United States and Europe, 99 percent of the public can no longer experience a natural night. Light pollution is harming our environment, wildlife habitats, and our quality of life. The good news is that there are things everyone can do to help erase light pollution in the backyards, parks, and communities we call home.



To ensure skies in West Michigan stay dark, we can all take steps to make a difference. The first is to recognize the power each of us has to collectively reduce light pollution in our communities. The second is to put that personal power into action. The International Dark Sky Association lists six actions to help Save the Night. Some of the solutions are as easy as screwing in warm-colored LED lightbulbs or installing motion sensors to reduce the average illumination levels. Visit this link to find more actions: [darksky.org/light-pollution/light-pollution-solutions](https://darksky.org/light-pollution/light-pollution-solutions)

Ottawa County Parks, too, recognizes the importance of dark skies and is taking steps to reduce excessive lighting. Although there are places such as parking lots that need to be lit, there are environmentally responsible lighting options. We are replacing the parking lot lights to soft white 'yellowish color' of 3000K or less, as well as lowering the height of the fixtures to ensure they only point down to a specific area and not up. To ensure optimal dark sky conditions at the observatory, Ottawa County Parks installed new light fixtures providing both red and white light options and the ability to turn off either or both light sources.

**"These changes in lighting will certainly help when trying to observe and photograph faint galaxies, star clusters and nebulae," says SAAA's President Frank Roldon.**

Ottawa County Parks and SAAA look forward to offering more programming and opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy the beauty of the night sky. Check out [holland-saaa.org](https://holland-saaa.org) to view the SAAA's full schedule of events for 2022.

For the full article, visit: [news.miottawa.org/dark-sky-initiative](https://news.miottawa.org/dark-sky-initiative)

## Programs & Activities

Contact the Nature Center:

[naturecenter@miottawa.org](mailto:naturecenter@miottawa.org)

(616) 786-4847

### Art & Writing

#### NATURE JOURNAL CLUB THEMED WALKS

Registration required, \$5/person; ages 18+

Experience the autumn season in a new way through nature journaling! Learn new drawing and writing techniques specific to the walk theme while building community and connection.

Oct 1	10-11:30 am	Hemlock Crossing
Nov 6	10-11:30 am	Hemlock Crossing
Dec 3	10-11:30 am	Hemlock Crossing

#### WONDER WALK

Practice your nature journaling skills as we slowly meander the trails and follow what catches our eyes. \*Journals are not provided.

Oct 13	9:30-11 am	Rosy Mound NA
Nov 3	9:30-11 am	Riley Trails
Dec 1	9:30-11 am	Hemlock Crossing

#### INTRODUCTION TO NATURE JOURNALING

Registration required, \$5/person; ages 8+

Learn how to begin a nature journal, drawing basics, and some simple tricks. Then, join us on Wonder Walks to practice!

Oct 15	10-11:30 am	Hemlock Crossing
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#### MARVELOUS MUSHROOM ABSTRACT ART

Registration required, \$5/person; ages 8+

Create your own piece of abstract art based on fascinating fungi.

Oct 22	1-3:30 pm	Hemlock Crossing
Nov 13	1-3:30 pm	Grand Ravines North 

#### FANTASTIC FLOWERS AND SKULLS

Registration required, \$15/person; ages 8+

Practice painting and composition techniques based on the art style of Georgia O'Keeffe while learning about the native plants and animals of Ottawa County. No previous experience required.

Oct 30	1-4 pm	Hemlock Crossing
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#### DRAWING FROM NATURE

Registration required, \$25/person; ages 18+

Learn technical drawing skills with colored pencil while using native plants and animals as examples. No experience required.

Nov 6	1-4 pm	Connor Bayou 
Nov 27	1-4 pm	Hemlock Crossing

Visit our online learning page for videos, programs, & more: [miOttawa.org/naturetoyou](https://miOttawa.org/naturetoyou)





# Programs & Activities

Look for these symbols for ways to *Get to know your Greenways!*



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



The Macatawa River Greenway connects parks along the Macatawa River.

## 3 ways to experience your parks

### THEMED WALKS

History Walk at Pine Bend

Oct 16 1:30-2:30 pm Pine Bend Park

Fall Color Walk at Grand Ravines

Oct 16 1:30-2:30 pm Grand Ravines-North 

Big Teeth, Quakers, and Cottony Seeds

Oct 1 1-2 pm Hemlock Crossing

Oct 12 6-7 pm Grand River Park 

Nov 3 6-7 pm Crockery Creek Natural Area 

Discover the Dunes

Oct 6 10-11 am Olive Shores

The Farm in Fall-time

Oct 20 6-7 pm Eastmanville Farm 

Ravens & Ravenswood

Oct 29 6-7 pm Hiawatha Forest

Five-needled & Fascinating!

Nov 13 2-3 pm Grose Park

A Palette of Fall Color

Nov 19 10-11 am Hemlock Crossing

Seeing the Parks Through New Eyes

Nov 19 10-11 am Stearns Creek 

### THRU HIKES

Registration required, \$5/half day or \$10/full day

Enjoy the changing seasons as you venture ALL THE WAY THRU these amazing parks with a naturalist guide.

Oct 2 3-4:30 pm Paw Paw East 

Oct 22 9:30 am-3:30 pm North Ottawa Dunes

Oct 30 3-4:30 pm Grand River Park 

Nov 6 3-4:30 pm Pigeon Creek Park

Dec 4 3-4:30 pm Crockery Creek Natural Area 

### GET TO KNOW YOUR PARKS

Get to know the natural & cultural history of each park. For more info: [news.miottawa.org/get2knowyourparks](https://news.miottawa.org/get2knowyourparks)

Oct 15 10 am-12 pm Jenison Mill Trail 

Oct 15 2-4 pm Grand River Park 

## Open House Tours

On Oct 16, the Friends of Ottawa County Parks will be hosting open house tours at the Weaver House from 1-4 pm and at the Grand Ravines Lodge from 1-3 pm.



## Land, water, & sky

### COLORS BY KAYAK

Registration required, \$10/person (+\$20 for rental)

Bask in the glorious fall colors along the Pigeon River by kayak.

Oct 8 1-4 pm Hemlock Crossing

Oct 29 10 am -1 pm Hemlock Crossing

### HISTORY BIKE TOUR

Registration required, ages 18+

Pedal through time with us on the Idema Explorers and Spoonville trails. Participants will need to bring their own bikes for this program.

Oct 23 1-4 pm Riverside Park 

### EARTH ENCOUNTERS: GEOLOGY - GLACIERS

We will look at how geologists read the landscape for clues to the processes that created this land we call Michigan.

Nov 5 3-4:30 pm Hemlock Crossing

### WILDLIFE ENCOUNTERS: THE WHITE-TAILED DEER

Deepen your knowledge of the natural history of this common Michigan mammal of which many are only merely acquainted.

Dec 3 3-4:30 pm Hemlock Crossing

## In the parks...after dark

### ASTRONOMY PROGRAMS

Programs hosted by the Shoreline Amateur Astronomical Association.

Fall Sky & Public Sky Viewing

Oct 1 8-9 pm Hemlock Crossing

From a Dream to A Reality

Nov 12 7-8 pm Hemlock Crossing

### MOONLIGHT NIGHT HIKE

Registration required, \$5/person; ages 10+

See which nocturnal creatures lurk as you explore by moonlight!

Oct 7 7-8:30 pm Grand Ravines North 

Nov 4 7-8:30 pm Upper Macatawa NA (84th) 

Dec 2 7-8:30 pm Stearns Creek 

### FULL MOON KAYAK TRIP

Registration required, \$10/person (+\$20 for rental); ages 18+

Experience the Pigeon River on a crisp autumn night under the light of the Hunter's Moon. Kayak experience on the Pigeon River is required.

Oct 9 7:30-9:30 pm Hemlock Crossing

### SEEING THE PARKS THROUGH NEW EYES: AT NIGHT!

Registration required, \$5/person ages 8+

Join a guide for a 90 minute walk to delve into our senses at night.

Nov 19 7-8:30 pm Stearns Creek 



# Program calendar & registration: miOttawa.org/OCPEvents

Unless otherwise noted:

Programs are free to attend and recommended for ages 12+  
Registration is encouraged



Ottawa County Parks  
Foundation Community  
Engagement programs

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



## Kids & family

### TUNED INTO NATURE

Registration required, \$5/child; ages 2-4, with a caregiver  
Sing songs, dance, and learn about nature together. We'll make and  
move to music and go for a walk to explore it outdoors.

Oct 5 9:30-10:30 am Hemlock Crossing

### THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SPIDERS!

Registration required, \$5/person; age 8+

Georgia has recently been invaded by giant Joro Spiders as big as  
your hand! Is this really true, and how much of it is news-hype?  
Join YouTube personality Bob The Spider Hunter, as he helps sort  
out the truth from the hype on this Joro Spider Invasion!

Oct 1 2-4 pm Hemlock Crossing

### NATURE'S SONGS: WALK & ROLL EDITION

Registration required, \$5/person; ages 15-30

Join an Outdoor Educator and resident Music Therapist to explore  
nature through music and the outdoors! This session is designed  
for those with cognitive and mobility impairments, so bring your  
caregiver, wheel chair, walker, and any alternative system you use.

Oct 2 2-3:30 pm Hemlock Crossing

### WILDLIFE ENCOUNTER - FOR KIDS!

Registration required, ages 5-12, with a caregiver

Learn about wildlife found in your backyard and parks.

Michigan's Marsupial: The Virginia Opossum

Oct 9 3-4:30 pm Grand River Park 

Oct 23 3-4:30 pm Hemlock Crossing

The Winsome White-tailed Deer

Nov 13 3-4:30 pm Hager Park

Nov 20 3-4:30 pm Hemlock Crossing

### STORYWALKS

StoryWalks are now available around  
the county! View the schedule here:  
[news.miottawa.org/storywalks](https://news.miottawa.org/storywalks)

Thank you to our local libraries for  
making StoryWalks possible!



### CELEBRATING FALL CHANGES THROUGH ART

Invite your inner child and bring your family along to explore the  
colors, shapes and textures of trees through various art media.  
Materials and instruction provided. Ages 5+.

Oct 15 1-3 pm Spring Grove Park

Nov 12 1-3 pm Spring Grove Park

### SEEING THE PARKS THROUGH NEW EYES: FAMILIES!

Join an outdoor educator for an hour walk to dig deeper into a  
county park and hone your observation skills. Ages 5+.

Nov 19 1-2 pm Stearns Creek 


## Birding

### BIRDING OUTINGS

Whether you are an avid birder or desire to experience birds  
beyond your backyard, join us for a birding program! Trail  
conditions vary depending on the park.

Oct 1 9am-12 pm Lake Watch Historic Ottawa Beach

Oct 5 9-11 am Birding Walk Stearns Creek 

Oct 19 9-11 am Birding Walk Grand River Park 

Nov 2 10am-12pm Birding Walk Riley Trails

Nov 16 10am-12pm Birding Walk Crockery Creek NA 

### WATERFOWL BIRDING TRIP

Registration required, \$10/session

Witness the spectacle of waterfowl migration! Part 1 will start  
at North Beach Park. Part 2 will visit one of Michigan's premier  
waterfowl birding locations at the Muskegon Wastewater facility.

Oct 29 Part 1 8-11 am North Beach Park

Oct 29 Part 2 1-4 pm Muskegon Wastewater

### COFFEE WITH THE BIRDS

Enjoy coffee and baked goodies as you watch the birds at the  
feeders. Bring your bird questions, curiosities, and stories, and  
don't forget your favorite mug! In-person & live-stream options.

Dec 10 Part 1 9:30-10:20 am Hemlock Crossing

Tidbit 10:30-11 am Hemlock Crossing

Part 2 11:10 am-12 pm Hemlock Crossing

## Fitness & Well-being

### EAT GREEN. STAY ACTIVE. LIVE WELL.

Registration required, \$35 class fee; ages 18+

Rediscover healthy eating and the outdoors at its best. Get expert  
tips, recipes, latest nutrition news, and natural foodie finds!

Oct 1 12-1:30 pm Hemlock Crossing

Oct 9 3-4:30 pm North Beach Park

Oct 23 3-4:30 pm Rosy Mound Natural Area

Nov 5 11 am-12:30 pm Upper Macatawa (84th Ave) 

Nov 12 1:30-3 pm Connor Bayou 

Dec 4 3-4:30 pm Hemlock Crossing

### EMPOWER WALK

Registration appreciated, ages 18+

Have you ever wanted to hike in a county park but don't feel  
comfortable enough to go on your own? Come enjoy a brisk hike,  
meet new people, and build familiarity with our county parks!

Oct 7 10-11 am Upper Macatawa (84th Ave) 

Oct 21 10-11 am Paw Paw East 

Nov 4 10-11 am Riley Trails



miOttawa.org/Parks





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Ottawa County Parks & Recreation Commission  
12220 Fillmore Street  
West Olive, Michigan 49460

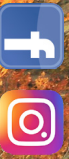


# Outdoors

OTTAWA COUNTY PARKS



*explore your*  
Ottawa County Parks



[www.Ottawa.org/Parks](http://www.Ottawa.org/Parks)