



Community Engagement & Environmental Education Memorandum

To: Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director
From: Laurie Metanchuk, Director of Community Engagement
Date: 10/8/2024
Re: September 2024 Report

Public Relations & Marketing

Kane Forest Preserve Foundation Golf Outing

Thanks to everyone who participated in the Kane Forest Preserve Foundation's Golf Outing on September 12th, 2024! We appreciate the support of our sponsors, who were the driving forces behind this event's success. Also, our amazing volunteers' dedication behind the scenes ensured everything went off without a hitch. Check out the photos from the event below and relive some of the fantastic moments we shared.



Press Releases

We published the following press releases in September:

- Join us for "It's Our Fox River Day" – A community Fox River Clean-Up Event, Sept. 3
- Discover the Unique Science Behind Seed Dispersal at EcoLab, Sept. 10
- Celebrate Autumn at Forest Preserve District's Harvest Festival, Sept. 16

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- Forest Preserve District places referendum on the Nov. 5 ballot, Sept. 19
- Explore Autumn's Beauty at Tekakwitha Woods Forest Preserve, Sept. 20

Media Coverage

Carpentersville Dam

- Carpentersville dam demolition work launched with a 'ribbon-tying' event, Courier News, Sept. 5
- Fox River to flow freely through Carpentersville with dam removal, Daily Herald, Sept. 4
- Work begins to remove the Fox River dam in Carpentersville, Kane County Connects, Sept. 11

Forest Preserve District of Kane County

- 'It's all chemistry': What dry spell means for fall colors, Daily Herald, Sept. 23
- Kane Forest Preserve seeks \$5.7 million levy increase on Nov. 5 ballot, Kane County Chronicle, Sept. 23

Nature Programs

- Discover the science behind seed dispersal at EcoLab, Daily Herald, Sept. 12
- Harvest of the Acorn Moon Fall Festival, Daily Herald, Sept. 26

TreeLine Newsletter

Our current print subscribers total 5,364 (+1). Current email subscribers total 13,379 (+13), for a combined total of 18,743 subscribers (+14). As always, free subscriptions to *The TreeLine* newsletter are available at: http://bit.ly/ForestPreserve_Email.

The Great Orb Hunt

Congratulations to all of our orb finders! If you haven't found an orb yet, don't fret. While we are no longer actively hiding orbs as of Sept. 30, there are still plenty to be found. Roughly 50 glass and ceramic orbs are unaccounted for – just out there waiting for their forever homes. For the most accurate counts, please remember to register your orb at <https://buff.ly/45GIxt2>. Thanks to Fine Line Creative Arts Center for their partnership!



Environmental Education

September Spotlight The newly rebranded *Harvest Fest* at Oakhurst Forest Preserve was a resounding success, with ~200 patrons turning out to enjoy fall-themed activities, learning stations, live music, mule-drawn wagon rides and refreshments. New this year was an Education Station, live raptor demonstrations and the Traveling Science Center. Smiles all around speak to the impact of this festival on the neighboring community.





"It's always so restorative to go hiking in our nature areas...I learned so much more from [Naturalist Amber Ross] Amber's insight and her enthusiasm is contagious.

Always enjoyable being with others that share my love of nature.

"Fall Wildflowers LFE" program participant

"The preserve is beautiful, [Environmental Education Manager Barb McKittrick] Barb was great and knowledgeable. The walk was invigorating!

"Trek with a Naturalist" program participant

In-Person Programs

- **Public Programs** – The 3rd Annual Women's Weekend: A Nurturing Nature Retreat was a sold-out restorative weekend in nature with a community of women naturalists and nature lovers. Attendees joined Naturalist Amber Ross to explore the benefits of nature walking, botanizing, yoga, artistic creation and cast iron cooking. Everyone who attended is lobbying for a 4th annual weekend in 2025!



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Forty patrons were eager to see the captive vulture featured at Naturalist Lisa O'Brien's *Vulture* program at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve. Naturalist O'Brien explained the essential role these birds play as nature's garbage collectors and the unique adaptations they use to find food and keep clean. Partners from Wings and Talons (a non-profit raptor education and conservation agency) brought a Turkey Vulture ambassador, which was a big hit.

Naturalist Josh Libman led 40 patrons on the September *Senior Stroll* at Fitchie Creek Forest Preserve, focusing on tallgrass prairie ecology. In another one of our recurring monthly programs, Naturalist Lisa O'Brien led a meditative, *Nurtured by Nature* hike at Campton Forest Preserve for 13 participants.

While getting in their 10,000 steps, a group of 20 hikers joined Environmental Education Manager Barb McKittrick for a *Trek with a Naturalist* at Camp Tomo Chi-Chi Knolls. During the 4.5-mile hike, trekkers learned a little about the geology responsible for the kames, moraines and kettle lakes at the preserve.

As our kayaking season draws to a close, Environmental Education Manager McKittrick joined partners from Rocktown Adventures for a naturalist-led exploration of the Fox River. Putting in at Fox River Shores Forest Preserve, the group paddled upriver to Buffalo Park Forest Preserve, where they disembarked to enjoy a picnic lunch and camaraderie before boating back to the origin. Sightings of Painted Turtles, an Osprey and many shore birds helped to make this a magical late summer trip.



The Moon shines over kayaks ready to launch at Fox River Shores Forest Preserve.

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Naturalist Libman led a seasonal *Bird Watching* walk for 18 birders at Bowes Creek Woods Forest Preserve, observing seasonal birds and sharing some birding stories along the way.

During the preschool *Chippy Chipmunks - Little Saplings* program at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve, Naturalist Lisa O'Brien talked about chipmunks and other regional ground squirrels and their adaptations, then helped attendees make chipmunk-themed bookmarks before heading out for a nature hike. Also, for the pre-school crowd, *Storytimes at Creek Bend Nature Center* was led by staff from St. Charles Public Library.

Naturalist Lemon partnered with Volunteer Coordinator Robb Cleave to host the Glenwood Park Forest Preserve location of the *It's Our Fox River Days* watershed-wide clean-up event. She taught the 77 participants about river ecology, sharing pelts and skulls of regional wildlife that calls the river their home.



Kids take a break from cleaning the watershed to learn about the animals that depend on clean waterways.

- **Community & Outreach Programs** – Our Naturalist team was busy with community outreach programs this month, traveling to seven locations to engage with patrons. Naturalists Libman, Ross and Lemon brought the *Nature Detectives Traveling Naturalist* program to 125 students at Country Trails Elementary School (CUSD 301.) Naturalist Ross taught a *Trees and Their Leaves* program to 20 Clapham Elementary School (Wheaton-private) students. She also welcomed 12 adults with disabilities from NISRA Carpentersville to the Brunner Family Forest Preserve for an educational program on *Regenerative Farming* practices. Thirty members of the Senior Learning Club at Edgewater Del Webb, Elgin enjoyed learning about the science of *Phenology* from Naturalist Ross.

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Naturalist Libman taught University of Illinois Extension's Master Naturalist Class of 2024 *Tallgrass Prairie Field Day* at Dick Young Forest Preserve and he also welcomed 26 members of the Sun City Birding Club to Burnidge Forest Preserve for a *Bird Watching* program.

- **School Programs** – With public school students back in class, we conducted our first school field trip of the season, for 80 John Stewart Elementary (Kaneland D302) students. The kids enjoyed learning about *Trees and Their Leaves* at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve. Naturalist Libman welcomed 83 homeschooling members to six *Homeschool Hike* programs at LeRoy Oakes, Glenwood, Jon J. Duerr and Fox River Bluffs Forest Preserves. Program themes included *Discovery Hikes*, *Creek Walks* and *Trees and Their Leaves*.
- **Learn from the Experts (LFE)/KCCN Programs** – We conducted three high-level adult education LFE programs this month. Naturalist Ross led a *Fall Wildflowers LFE* class at Dick Young Forest Preserve, teaching 22 patrons to identify prairie flowers and sharing interesting lore and cultural history about the different plant species found in the autumn tallgrass prairie.

Environmental Education Manager McKittrick hosted members of the Fox Valley Astronomical Society for a program on *Astronomical Curiosities: Eclipses, Auroras & Meteor Showers*. Presenters shared the science behind the more fleeting curiosities of eclipses, auroras and meteor showers and attendees were then able to explore members' different types of telescopes.



FVAS member Al Spagnola did a great job of explaining complex astronomical science in layman's terms.

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Seventeen patrons attended a 2-session program about a *Sense of Place at Bliss Woods Forest Preserve*. Volunteer Steward and retired naturalist Mary Ochsenschlager told the fascinating story of one of our first forest preserves, explaining the geological and cultural history of Bliss Woods Forest Preserve.

In-House Collaborations

Environmental Education Manager McKittrick attended the District's Volunteer Appreciation Dinner at The Wilds in North Aurora and presented two volunteer awards: Nature Center Host Volunteer of the Year to Pat Del Giudice and Nature Program Volunteer of the Year to Carrie Needham.

The entire naturalist team helped our Community Engagement colleagues host the *Great Orb Hunt*, each taking turns hiding orbs at LeRoy Oakes and Burnidge Forest Preserve throughout the month.

Nature, Virtually Everywhere/Online Programs

The Science of Fall Color

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbltBWHv9jg>



Rental Facilities

Barbara Belding Lodge at Brewster Creek Forest Preserve

In September, the lodge hosted four meetings, one wedding, one birthday party and one special event, totaling \$2,397.50.

Creek Bend Nature Center at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve

In September, Creek Bend hosted two meetings and two weddings, totaling \$7,400.