



MYRICK HIXON ECOPARK

NEWSLETTER

Published quarterly by Myrick Hixon EcoPark

CALENDAR

Great Backyard Bird Count Program
Saturday, February 13, 9–11 a.m.

Natural History Book Club
Tuesday, February 16, 6–7 p.m.
Tuesday, March 16, 6–7 p.m.

Saturday at the Planetarium
Saturday, February 20, 1 p.m.

Aldo Leopold Day
Saturday, March 6, 10a.m.–3 p.m.

Raptor Day
Saturday, March 13

Prescribed Burn School
Saturday, March 20 & Sunday, March 21 or
Saturday, April 17 & Sunday, April 18

E-Waste Day
Saturday, March 27

Spring Volunteer Naturalist Training
3rd grade Tuesday, April 6
LifeCycles Thursday, April 8
Learning to See Friday, April 9

Wonderful Woodcocks!
Wednesday, April 7, 8 p.m.

Owl Prowl
Friday, April 9, 7–10 p.m.

Felted Soap Workshop
April 10, noon–3

Meet Cactus, MHEP's Porcupine
Sunday, April 11, 1 p.m.

Frog Frenzy Freakout
Thursday, April 21, 6:30–9:00 p.m.

Astronomy Day activities
Saturday, April 24

Marsh Clean-Up
Saturday, April 24, 8 a.m.

Marsh Walk
Saturday, April 24, 9 a.m.

Hans Mayer Earth Day Concerts
Friday, April 30, 6:30 p.m. &
Saturday, May 1, 3 p.m.

Meet Your Local Conservation Groups
Saturday, May 1

Spring Morning Bird Walks
Tuesdays: May 4, 11, and 18 (Marsh)
Thursdays: May 6, 13 and 20 (Forest)

Int'l Migratory Bird Day Activities
Saturday, May 8

Annual Banquet a Success

2009 was our first Annual Banquet at the new EcoCenter building. More than 112 people attended! The atmosphere and food were fantastic and could not have been pulled off without the expertise of **Nell** at **Nell's City Grill**. She created beautiful centerpieces and her staff was absolutely fabulous! Also, thank you to **Noelke Distributing** for providing the beverages.

Drake Hokanson and **Carol Kratz** gave a riveting presentation: "Beyond the Confines of This World, A Brief Journey to Antarctica." We also recognized all the time and good work that **Thompson Animal Medical Center** has provided to Myrick Hixon EcoPark over the years. **Carol Ramsey** was

Continued on page 9

The tables were decorated beautifully for the Annual Banquet.



Good food and good company.

EARTH MONTH ACTIVITIES

CONTENTS

From the Director	2	Ask the Naturalist	8–9
Volunteer News	2	Welcome New Board, Interns	10
Center News	3	Earth Month Activities	11
Thanks	4–5	Astronomy Day	11
Event Reports	6	Public Programs	12
Nature Notes	7		

A Quick Note from the Director

2009 was a very good year for the EcoPark, the details of which I am now putting together for our Annual Report. We moved into our fantastic new facility here in Myrick Park, increased our membership base, improved our operations budget with a very successful Annual Appeal, and made a lot of progress in our plans for the new zoo. A huge "Thank You" to all of our members and donors to the Annual Appeal!

2010 was off to a good start when we suffered a setback. One of the water pipes in the ceiling froze and burst on January 13. Fortunately we were having an evening board meeting at the time, and everyone sprang into action so that we were able to minimize the damage. It could have been a lot worse.

In spite of the poor condition of the national and regional economy, I

am optimistic about the future. The EcoPark and its plan to create a new zoo have widespread public support and interest. People want to be able to take their families to see animals at the zoo again. We are working as hard and fast as we can to make this happen! We hope to have a petting zoo and a few wild animal exhibits up this summer with a lot more to follow in the summer of 2011. Building a new zoo is a very expensive and complicated process and "slow" is just about the only speed to go.

On behalf of the EcoPark Board, staff, and volunteers, I wish you all a happy 2010 and thank you for all your encouragement and support for this wonderful project. Please come down to visit us and check out our progress!

Jim

Volunteer Appreciation Night a Great Success

The 2009 Volunteer Recognition Night was a fabulous success. We had over 60 volunteers attend and enjoy food made by EcoPark Staff along with festive drinks! **Pepsi-Cola of La Crosse** provided soda for refreshments.

Thank you to all who donated door prizes:

Rita Koch-Tometz	TGI Fridays
All Star Lanes	Traditions Restaurant
Coney Island	WKBT
Maggies Restaurant	Gallery La Crosse
Seven Bridges	John Zoerb
Restaurant	
Ship Shape Car Wash	
Sweet-Shop	

Chronicles of the Volunteer Queen

In case you volunteers don't feel thanked enough for all you do, here's another pat on the back. **You keep us afloat!**

Also, after the first of the year, look for the new blue three-ring binder at the front desk. It will contain background check forms that all of us in contact with children or money need to fill out and file alphabetically by last name. Not even 5 minutes of your time will be required. Next time you're in the building, look for it.

Thanks.

Clare Henneman
Volunteer Coordinator



Top: Two lucky door prize winners.

Bottom: Brenda Haug and Pat Wilson enjoy Volunteer Appreciation Night.

Myrick Hixon EcoPark was established as a collaboration between Hixon Forest Nature Center, the City of La Crosse, and area Rotary Clubs. Together our mission is to create a unique destination with dynamic educational programming, interactive displays, and live animal exhibits that will advance the appreciation and conservation of our natural resources.

STAFF

Jim Gallagher, Executive Director
Stephanie Hanna,
Conservation/Education Manager
Michelle Nelson, Business Manager

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Pat Caffrey, President
Kathie Tyser, Vice President
Sue Weidemann, Secretary
Sam Sauer, Treasurer

Gar Amunson	Catherine Kolkmeier
Nathan Barnhart	Dave Lange
Josh Blumenfeld	Jeff Odom
Paul Borsheim	Scott Reber
Kristine Cleary	John Satory
Rolan Covert	Milt Schmida
Jim Gallagher	Tom Thompson
Dan Graham	Ken Wing
Drake Hokanson	

OPEN HOURS

Monday–Friday 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

Phone: (608) 784-0303 **Fax:** 784-0322

E-mail: info@mhecopark.org

Web: www.mhecopark.org

NEWSLETTER PRODUCTION STAFF

Typesetting: Sue Knopf, Graffolio

Printing: John Maass, Sierra Printing

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The Friends newsletter is published seasonally.

PUBLICATION DATE	SUBMISSION DEADLINE
Winter	November 15
Spring	February 15
Summer	May 15
Fall	August 15

MOVING?

Please give us your new address so we can be sure that you continue to receive your newsletter on time. (Also, returned newsletters cost us money.) Please contact the EcoCenter as soon as you know your new address and we'll make sure you continue to receive all of your MHEP mailings. Thanks!

*This newsletter is printed
on recycled paper.*

New Members

Justine Johnson Family	Karl & Marcia Friedline	Pat & Kathy Houlihan family	Linda Zimmerman	Mary Ellen Jafari	Lynn Biddick
Carl Miller	Carol Witt-Smith	Amy Hysel	Jim & Sheri Schneider	Maggie Kowalski	Marna Jenson
Linda & John Knight	Jack & Joyce Lockhart	Betty Thiele	Joan & Rick Waniger	Crystal Brunelle	Susan Giudice
Ruth Gallagher	Traci Segar	Steve & Cheryl Loehr	Richard Scott & Mary Bluske Scott	family	Betsy Stannard
Pete & Mary Kay Skemp	Richard Strauss	Robert & Maureen Freedland	Marlene Lake	Darryl & Margaret Wood	Patsy Hofer
Heather Young	Kathy Ivey	Sue Johnston	Lois Harvey	Lynne Valiquette	Daniel Nelson
Sue Laib	Catherine O'Steen	William & Jane Powell	Margaret Blanchard	Neva Glaunert	Janet Yearous
Karoline Auby	Susanne Hayes	Eric & Emily Dykman	Michelle Jerome	Gregory J. Mell	Jennifer Olson Family
Lou George	Jonathan & Ann Rigden	Dr A.C.V. & Mary Elston	Andy & Susan Chulyk	Stefanie VanZee	David Mowris
Ellyn Ash	Amy Marso	Gary & Mary Veldey	Susan Hengel	Chuck & Carmen Gustafson	Marie Metz
Elizabeth Ash	Marla French	Robert Ramlow	Gretchen Berns	Vendi Advertising LLC	Capt. Gerald Troyanek
Jay & Jan Ash	Jo Morstatter	Jeffrey Bluske	Ellen DeMers	Shauna Sallmen	Karolanne Hoffman
David Houlihan	Thomas Culp	James & Barbara Grayson	Wayne Feally	Kurt & Mary Mueller	Cathy Novy
Opal Tulpo	Kristen Andresen Skibo	Shahrom Kiani	Michael Slevin family	Chris Danou & Kate Meredith	Tina Hendricks
Diane & James Webster	John Powers	Jason Bishop	Lois Sprengelmeyer	Terry & Mary Dahlby	Gary Terbeest
Linda & Ed Sallander	Ellis Family	Asha Alsobrooks	Cheryl Robbins	John & Martha Meyer	Diane Stoffregen
Marla Natoli	Natalie Rose Kemp	Tom & Judy Sleik	Ken & Virginia Harth	Carole McNeilly	Khris & Paul Kruck
Tom, Eileen & Quinn Williams	Holly Hotchkiss	Eric Eggett	Gail Zuege	Erin & Colin Belby	Kathy Speiker
Elisabeth (Liz) Wing	Jane Johnson	Glena & Stephen Temple	Richard & Phyllis Ernst	Nancy Borgen	Heidi Worminghaus
Cory Gebel	Kurt & Linda Weaver		Mark & Deb Zellmer	Jan & Lincoln Gundersen	Thomas Vereront

Memorials Received

In Memory of Cecil Ackerson

Tom & Lyn Sheffer

In Memory of David Natanovich Bell

James & Peggy Baumgaertner

In Memory of John E. Turner (Jet), Who was a Volunteer Naturalist

Jane Turner

In Memory of Dick Dineen

John & Nancy Rieder

In Memory of David Simonson

Dianne Kurtz
Peg Zappen

In Memory of Alvera Meir

Jeneen Ablan Meir Family	The Swenson family	Jean & Burton Hammons
Tom & Vickie	Mary Gjermo	Dianne Kurtz
Mary Puza	Ahna & Tim	Pastor George & Norma
John & Brenda Hill	Clason	Thurman
Norman & Mary Greene	Dallas & Barbara Wall	Bill & Ann Van Atta
Joe & Sue Kuhn	Joseph & Marian	
Nancy Reithel & Tim Henke	Havlik Barbara Cowgill	

In Memory of Mark Deter

Mark Deter Memorial Fund within the Winona
Community Foundation

Start Preparing for Myrick Hixon EcoPark 2011 Calendar Photo Contest

Watch for more information on this brand new contest! The photo deadline will be sometime this summer. Photos need to be of things natural in our area. The categories have not been set yet, but may include Mammals, Birds, Other Wildlife, Dynamics of Nature, Landscape & Plant Life, Humans & Nature and a Youth Category (16 years and younger). If you are interested in finding out admission fees and other information, please email Michelle Nelson at mnelson@mhcopark.org.

Sign Up for E-Newsletters, Win Gift Shop Gift Certificate!

We are asking for your help to control our newsletter printing and mailing expenses. As an incentive to "go green," the EcoPark will be giving away some "green." A random drawing will be held for two \$15 EcoCenter gift certificates to those who choose to help the environment and MHEP by receiving their quarterly newsletter via a PDF through email.

To register for the drawing and begin receiving the newsletter online, please email Michelle Nelson at mnelson@mhcopark.org before March 30. Winners will be notified via email!

Wish List

- Pallet jack
- Post-it notes
- Fly swatter
- Plain large window envelopes—left side
- Pots and pans, toaster
- Utensil drawer organizer
- Storage bags, Saran Wrap
- Toolbox with basic tools
- Clocks (hanging)
- Shipping scale
- Mouse food
- Clean N Comfy small animal litter/bedding
- Orienteering compasses
- Umbrellas
- Color printer and/or scanner
- Pushpins

Thank You To...

- **Joan Berg** for the card and book-display rack
- **Nan Busse** for the nature books
- **Sue Knopf** for the tape dispenser
- **Nancy Kotnour** for the bulletin board and chair
- **Liz Nutter** for the electric pencil sharpener
- **Doreen Lucas** for the carpet
- **Nancy Goode** for the name badges
- **Diane Reinhart & the Olive Juice** for donating fabric for our gift shop
- **Joyce Abernathy** for her fantastic sewing skills
- **Carla Callies** for the gift shop fixtures and expertise
- **Pete Merfeld** for the beautiful birdhouse
- **WalMart** for the garden soil
- **WTC Landscape/Horticulture Club** for their monetary donation
- **Phyllis Schreiber** for her husband's beautiful wood carvings
- **Barb Loomis** for the meat
- **John Pederson** for the wood snowshoes
- **Ben Babbum** of West Salem for the donation
- **James P. Falvey** for helping to write the annual appeal letter
- **Workforce Connections** for their donation of turtle food, coffee, hot chocolate, fly swatter, baggies and their monetary donation
- **Stephanie Hanna & Greg Siemens** for donating the microwave for our kitchen
- **Gary Van Domelen** for all the time as an attorney he has donated to the EcoPark in 2009!
- **Logan High School Tech Ed & Special Ed Classes** for making birdhouses for us to sell in our gift shop!
- **John Dingley**, stone cutter, Irish pub owner, peregrine falcon expert, and wild and crazy guy, for building the cliff face for the peregrine falcon exhibit. John serves on the board of the Raptor Resource Project. He cut the stone and assembled the cliff face in a quarry near Minneapolis, then marked each

- stone, had it shipped to La Crosse, and re-assembled it inside the Eco-Center, all while telling crazy jokes, even though the pieces weighed several hundred pounds each. John and John Thiel, a biologist with Dairyland Power, another falcon guru who is helping design and build the exhibit, hauled a whole birch tree half way UP the bluff to the nearest road so they could haul it to the EcoCenter because it was "just right" for the exhibit.
- **Mary Thompson**, talented artist, for painting the sky and clouds for background for the peregrine falcon exhibit, bringing a greatly enhanced perception of depth to the exhibit.
 - **Dan Graham & Fowler & Hammer Construction** for use of a forklift for unloading bird seed
 - **Paul Borsheim & Borton Construction** for use of a pallet jack for moving birdseed
 - **Gundersen Lutheran Audiology Dept. & Milt Schmida, Jay Choutka & Paul Fisch** for their generosity, time and expertise in furnishing and installing a built-in sound system for our Multipurpose Room, including a loop system for the hearing impaired.
 - **Liz Nutter, Joan Berg, Wayne Feally, Martina Skobic, Val Burn, & Anita Froegel**, artists who have been donating their handmade art cards to sell in the gift shop. Please take a look at their creativity and support the EcoPark!!!
 - **Sam's Club Community Involvement Committee** for choosing Myrick Hixon EcoPark as the charity to receive a \$1,000 grant!
 - **Jim and Ken Wing, Justin Sanders (Big River Lumber Co), Scott Erman and the WTC Wood Tech Class**—a special thank you to you for creating our beautiful gift shop shelving
 - **The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of La Crosse members** for their wonderful monetary contribution
 - **All who donated to Erik Bahr's Eagle Scout Project**, which

- involved landscaping at the Eco-Center. Donors include **Jon & Jane Bahr, Paul & Lori Denny, Bill & Kathy Bahr, Joseph Bahr, Holly & Michael Bahr, Wesley Denny, Vincent Bahr, Donald Denny, Craig & Lisa Bartheld, Mark Denny, & Schumacher & Kish Funeral Homes**
- **Wettstein's** for their very generous donation of a refrigerator, oven and dishwasher for our kitchen
 - **All who participated in the Wine Guyz Guest Server Night Fund-raiser**
 - **Olivet Lutheran Church Congregation** for their monetary donation
 - **The Evelyn & Amil Bach Foundation** for their generous donation, and to **Janet Bahr** for her assistance with the donation.

Thanks to Retiring Board Members

Each of these retiring board members served the limit of two three-year terms on the board during a critical and demanding period when the EcoPark project was being developed, planned and implemented.

Marsha Kurth brought technology expertise and independent thinking to the board. She also played a big role in planning, coordinating and staffing the Enchanted Forest.

John Rieder brainstormed the idea, planned and carried out a special Earth Day fundraising event. He hosted our annual banquet at the Freight House every year prior to 2009 when we moved into the Eco-Center. He (and his wife Nancy) are also active volunteers for a variety of events and needs.

Clare Henneman is a past president of the board, helped draft vision and mission statements when HFNC became MHEP, has been a longtime volunteer naturalist, and more recently became our volunteer Volunteer Coordinator, which is a significant time commitment. Clare does a super job in getting volunteers for special events, work outings, assembling mailings, or whatever else needs to be done.

Thank You to Our Generous Annual Appeal Donors

Nancy Buldhaupt	Tom Pahs	Peter Levonian & Betsy Morgan	Margaret Webster & Mark Glendenning	Brigit Daley-Mosher & Michael Mosher
Irene Barmore	Vicki & Rich Miller	Peter Linnert	Colleen Shaw	Beth Kabat
Barbara & Robert Guertler	Robert Wish	Bob Carney & Kris Haskell	Rob & Kathie Tyser	Allan Beatty
David Blackey	Nancy Kotnour	Ingrid McCallson	Joe & Patricia Heim	Warren Loveland
Mary & Don Hanson	Frances I Young	Borton Construction	Tim & Sue Durtsche	Thomas Schini
Sigurd & Jean Ann Gundersen	Milt & Jackie Schmida	James & Sallie Munn	John Layton	Dave & Pat Fredrickson
Jim Fowler	George & Joyce Fulford	Michael & Joyce Davy	George & Nancy Schmidt	Jim March
Paul & Judy Ulland	Anthony Binsfeld	Pat Wuttke	Dave & Cherie Rohde	Robert Wingate
Al Gedicks	Don & Sue Zimmerman	Pamela Ball	Beverly Mach	David & Nancy Goode
Burt & Norma Altman	Randy Baier	Chris & Jane Kerbaugh	Sharon Sharp & Doug McVey	Victor & Cheryl Hancock
Ray Sundet	Ron & Roz Schnick	Karen Acker	Eddie Burgess	John Sherman
Brian & Joyce Abernathy	Joyce & Bob Arthur	Ann & Bill Barney	Stephen Shultz & Cynthia Hart	Ronald & Merle Gustafson
Kris Troyanek	Clare Henneman	Robert & Karen Cook	Jim & Jan Gallagher	Susan Kuhn
Pat Caffrey & Peg Zappen	Karen Markwardt	Jan & Mariellen Janiszewski	Jackson Mashak	Robertson Ryan & Associates
George Parke III	Minx & John Hanson	Hixon Properties Inc	Gundersen Lutheran Credit Union	Sue Dillenbeck
Jane Turner	Jan Ruesch	Kermit & Barbara Newcomer	Richard & Dorothy Lenard	Marlene Bannen
Dr. Ken & Linda Kempf	Liz Wing	Maureen & Robert Freedland	Jerry & Barbara Strohm	Kristin Swanson & Douglas Hecht
Don & Mary Marcou	Edna & Wenzel Smetana	Kim Fredricks	Andrea Mekkelson	Cheri Olson & Doug Nelson
George & Carmeen Johnston	Don & Susan Fritsch	Susan Swingen	Christopher & Krista Huiras	Don & Barb Frank
Ruth & Carl Rebhan	Judy & Chuck Shepard	Constance Arzigian	Jo Voight	Mary Linville
Jim & Sandra Noelke	Jim & Karen Ringstrom	John Zoerb	Martina Skobic	
Steve & Barbara Franke	Kathleen Saelens	Jaime Healy	Rebecca & James Naugler	
Chuck & Cheryl Hanson	Judy Brown	Michael Ablan Law Firm	Audrey Kader	
Craig & Mary Thompson	William & Cindy Berg			
Kelly Krieg Sigman	Gordon & Diane Stewart			
Jim Wiffler	Sue Knopf & Jim Rothwell			
	Mike & Sara Levenstein			

Thanks, Marti, for Sponsoring Our New EcoPark Animal

Our first new animal has just been added to the EcoPark!. It is a beautiful, tall, graceful, painted heron! It was part of the flock of herons produced by the Pump House and on display around the City for some time. This one is especially beautiful and was sponsored by the generosity of **Marti Schwem**. It is one of two herons painted by local artist Janet Mattison-Prise and is titled "Dockin' and Reelin'." It formerly stood on 2nd Street at the River Crossing Building, located at 2nd and King. The bird is covered with beautiful water scenes and images of wildlife and fishing and now stands looking out over the marsh at its (live) brothers and sisters as they fly by! Thank you, Marti, for the purchase of this gift for the EcoPark and to **Don Smith** for helping deliver and mount it on our front observation deck!



Thanks, Volunteer Naturalists

Thanks so much to the Volunteer Naturalists who helped with fall programs. We appreciate their enthusiasm and efforts a great deal! Just ask the following people how much fun they have with it:

Karen Cook	Dianna Brown
Ruth Habel	Gordon Stewart
Samantha Papenfuss	David Blackey
Sara Wooden	Mary Hanson
Clare Henneman	Linnea Mueller
Brian Blakeway	Casey Fischer
Sharon Hampson	Jamie Klonoski
Jon Cowan	Carol Ramsey
Judy Shepard	Kris Troyanek
Amy Kempen	

Thanks to Coulee Region Wildlife Rehabilitators

On a cold day in April 2009 a baby porcupine was born. MHEP's zookeepers noticed right away that there was something wrong because mom was not taking care of her baby. Sue and Merv Broten from Coulee Wildlife Rehab were called to the rescue! They took the baby home and took care of him just like they have taken care of so many baby mammals and other animals. It turns out that mom was unable to discharge the afterbirth and was very weak. Thanks to Thompson Animal Medical Center, the zookeepers and one amazing volunteer (who never thought he would be called upon to help a porcupine female discharge an afterbirth) mom survived. And the baby (who became known as Cactus) thrived under the care of Sue and Merv. Cactus came back to live at the zoo in November. He is adapting very well to his new home and his new zookeeper "friends." Cactus is being trained to become an "education animal" and will be able to help MHEP with its mission of education and conservation. Thanks so very much Sue and Merv!



Our Fall Events Were More Successful Than Ever!

The Great Pumpkin's Return—A Great Success!

Over 160 runners and walkers braved a chilly October morning to help make the return of the Great Pumpkin Chase 5K Run/Walk a great success! Proceeds from the event benefitted both the Myrick Hixon EcoPark and the Wisconsin Youth Conservation Corps, Inc. Thank you all of our volunteers, participants, sponsors, and contributors who made the return of this wonderful event possible!



Thank you to our generous sponsors:

Orange Computer Solutions
 Three Rivers Outdoors
 Magic 105 FM
 Great Lakes Trailbuilders LLC
 Robert Ryan and Associates
 Ranison Ice Cream and Candy
 Piggy's Restaurant and Blues Lounge
 The Root Note
 Honda Motorwërks
 Don's Towing and Repair
 Schmidt's
 Snap Fitness 24/7

Thank you also to our contributors:

Three Rivers Outdoors
 Simply Living
 153 Main
 Honda Motorwërks
 Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company
 Fred Skemp
 River City Running Club
 La Crosse Parks and Recreation

Save the Date!
River to Ridge Run/Walk
May 15, 2010

Male Champion: Dan Summerfield, 21-30, Time: 18:06
Female Champion: Emily Salberg, 21-30, Time: 24:08

		Male		Female	
20 & under	1st	Jacob Wittenberg	22:29	Rachel Smith	25:42
	2nd	Keith O'Flaherty	23:02	Ella Shively	37:05
	3rd	Peter Mueller	24:49	No Finisher	N/A
21 – 30	1st	Danny C	19:27	Brittany Ducharm	24:47
	2nd	Sven	20:10	Shannon Nelson	24:48
	3rd	Chris Erickson	20:43	Lisa Robbins	25:46
31 – 40	1st	Josh Shively	20:33	Dana Skemp	26:25
	2nd	Matt Schroeder	20:51	Jane Domrose	26:32
	3rd	Ben Olson	21:52	Rochelle Hagen	30:39
41 – 50	1st	Scott Tyink	21:47	Deb Markos	24:26
	2nd	Mark Conrad	22:56	Julie Zink	28:26
	3rd	Bill Chase	23:03	Tami Holislander	40:42
51 – 60	1st	Dave Korner	29:18	Cathy Ford	30:12
	2nd	John Powers	29:31	Carmen Rublicki	32:14
	3rd	Don Stoeckly	31:30	Becky Guinn	33:52
61 & over	1st	John Meyer	27:37	No finishers	
	2nd	John Styba	29:10		
	3rd	David Bange	31:17		

Second Annual Myrick Hixon EcoPark Art Show Benefit

The "Colors of Nature" Art Show Benefit at Gallery La Crosse ran from November 18 through December 5. It was a great success thanks to the following artists who participated:

Diane Andraska	Jamie Heiden
Edward Burgess	Gail Hemker
Lynne Burgess	Emily Jarrett
Jenn Bushman	Debbie Kemper
Ray DeBaun	Kevin Kohlman
Carol Frank	Kathie Koski
Ann Gronbeck-Peterson	Martina Skobic
Joan Gundersen	Linda Steine
Lee Harwell	Carol Witt-Smith

Also thank you to Festival Foods of Holmen for the donation of snack trays for the artists' reception! Thank you to all who attended and voted for People's Choice Award and Naturalist's Choice Award. Congratulations to **Lee Harwell**, who won both awards this year!!!

Enchanted Forest 2009

The Enchanted Forest proved to be an exciting new adventure given the use of our fantastic new EcoCenter and marsh trail! The EcoCenter classroom provided a great place for the performance of Hans Mayer, with treats galore from the new kitchen for families to enjoy! The trail this year was located in the marsh area loop. Families enjoyed the longer and more spacious walk, and many were able to take time to appreciate the animals and habitats of the area as well.

The children were very excited about having both the La Crosse Fire Department and Police Department present during the event days. Many families took pictures of their children enjoying both the staff and their impressive equipment! Thank you!

Of course a huge thank you to numerous UW-L students who volunteered alongside our veteran and community volunteers. We estimate that 200+ volunteers were involved in making this a great fund-raising event for the whole community. Thank you!

Thank you to all our sponsors:

Kwik Trip
 Badger Lawyer
 La Crosse Family Restaurant
 Woodman's Markets
 Schmidt's II Inc.
 Cary Heating & Air Conditioning
 Farm & Fleet
 Target

And thanks to our contributors:

Culver's
 Fayze's Restaurant & Bakery
 Feature's Sports Bar & Grill (Holmen)
 Festival Foods (Onalaska)
 Linda's Bakery
 Magic 105
 Old Country Buffet
 Pizza Doctors
 Taco John's

Save the Date!
The 2010 Enchanted Forest is October 23, 24, 30, & 31!
Hans Mayer will be back, and we welcome all hands to help with this fun-filled event!

How to Stay Warm and Safe—Whether You're an Animal or a Human

Subnivean Travel— the Way to Go in the Winter!

You might be wondering what that strange word at the top of this column means. Under... something? Just a warning, this type of travel is not for humans, at least not in this area! So what is this “nivean” part of the word, you ask? It's snow! In Latin, *niv* is snow (in Spanish it's *nieve*, and in French, *neige*... this might help you to remember if you know those languages).

Many small animals, such as mice, voles and shrews, travel under the snow in the winter. At the beginning of winter, they usually travel on top of the snow. Once the snow is 15 to 25 cm deep (6 to 9 inches)—or if we get lots of snow all at once, as we did this year—small mammals create a network of tunnels close to the ground underneath the snow.

The first thing you might worry about with animals living under the snow is if they can breathe. Snow actually has lots of air in it! As much as 97 percent of a fresh, dry snowfall can be air. The snow also falls on plants, leaving pockets of air near them and providing more ventilation. Air is a great insulator. The air temperature can be -40°C (also -40°F !) and the subnivean tunnels stay as warm as -4°C (39°F). Because the tunnels are closer to the “warmer” ground, they stay warmer than the fluctuating air temperature. They are also protected from bitter winds that come across the land in the winter months.

There are some problems with traveling under the snow—some roadblocks, you might say. When the snow is packed down by tires or feet, the tunnels underneath are crushed or cannot be made to begin with. When this happens, the small mammals need to come out of hiding and hurry to the other side, hopefully without being eaten by prey. Another twist in surviving winter is that the snowpack is always changing. In one day, the surface

may melt, recrystallize, and a new snowfall may come. This might challenge the integrity of the tunnels. A quick melt can leave animals unprepared and exposed to predators.

Speaking of predators, how do they survive the winter months if all of their prey is hiding underneath the snow? Different animals have different ways of getting their food in the winter. Weasels, being long and slender, were made for going through these underground tunnels. They are able to follow their prey and catch it...while staying warmer and safer themselves! Fox and other larger prey have acute senses of hearing and smell to determine where their prey is underneath the snow. When they hear or smell where the animal is, they pounce on that area, and if they're lucky, they will get more than a mouthful of snow!

Insulating Materials for Humans

We've learned that air is a great insulator. We can use that information to build shelters, or even more simply, to dress ourselves warmly for winter. Deer have hollow fur during the winter. Their body heat is trapped in the hollow fur, and they stay warmer than if they had their summer fur. Birds also keep their body heat close to them—they grow a lot of downy feathers in the winter.



People have noticed these natural ways of staying warm in the winter. We have down coats and sleeping bags. We've also come up with new materials that trap heat close to our bodies, like Polar Fleece.

Hopefully, if we're in a survival situation, we'll be wearing clothing made of some of these human-made insulators, but we need to be able to take advantage of a natural way to keep insulated—snow! No need to create a world of tunnels, but creating a cave or *quinzhee* would help someone survive a night in the woods this time of year!

To build a quinzhee, first stomp on the snow in order to break up the different levels of “setness” (since the snowpack is different at different depths). Then pile the snow up to the height you want it, patting it down as you go. (You might think you want a huge, epic shelter, but a big shelter is a lot more work to make, and your body heat will spread out more in a big one than in a small one.) Once the pile is complete, find a dozen or so branches about a foot long and poke them into the snow pile so that only 2 inches are sticking out. When you start hollowing out the pile, the inner ends of these sticks will let you know that you've dug far enough.

Now relax for a while—let the pile set for 3 to 4 hours or longer so the snow can recrystallize. Then start hollowing out the shelter, making sure to stop when you hit the branches—otherwise, the walls may get too thin! The thicker the walls are, the more insulation you'll have, and the smaller the shelter is, the more your body heat will warm up the small space!

I hope you get to have some fun being a subnivean animal before the winter is over!

Here's a helpful video about making a quinzhee:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MniKeLZGsCY&feature=related>

Anna Demers

.....

If you want to check out a cool video of a lynx chasing a snowshoe hare, this is a great one!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9liMQsk4eCg>

All About the Birds and the... 'Rats

Dear Naturalist,

I would really like an activity that is easy to do that my wife, children and I could do to help nature somehow. Would you have any suggestions?

Budding Naturalist in Bruce

Dear Budding,

I have just the thing for your family! And you can do it right in your backyard! It's called the Great Backyard Bird Count. Check out what their website has to say about this fun way to get into birding and why your help matters:

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird-watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent and in Hawaii. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird-watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds.

Participants count birds anywhere for as little or as long as they wish during the four-day period. They tally the highest number of birds of each species seen together at any one time. To report their counts, they fill out an online checklist at the Great Backyard Bird



Count web site.

As the count progresses, anyone with Internet access can explore what is being reported from their own towns or anywhere in the United States and Canada. They can also see how this year's numbers compare with those from previous years. Participants may also send in photographs of the birds they see. A selection of images is posted in the online photo gallery.

Your counts can help us answer many questions:

- How will this winter's snow and cold temperatures influence bird populations?
- Why do winter finches and other "irruptive" species appear in large numbers during some years but not others?
- How will the timing of birds' migrations compare with past years?
- How are bird diseases, such as West Nile virus, affecting birds in different regions?
- What kinds of differences in bird diversity are apparent in cities versus suburban, rural, and natural areas?
- Are any birds undergoing worrisome declines that point to the need for conservation attention?

Scientists use the counts, along with observations from other citizen-science projects, such as the Christmas Bird Count, Project FeederWatch, and eBird, to give us an immense picture of our winter birds. Each year that these data are collected makes them more meaningful and allows scientists to investigate far-reaching questions.

For highlights of past results, visit the Science Stories section of the GBBC web site, www.audubon.org/gbbc/.

Also see page 12—we're having a program on participating in the GBBC!

Dear Naturalist,

Now that the La Crosse River Marsh is frozen I have really noticed many small piles of plants sticking out all over the marsh. I know there has been a lot of beaver activity at the marsh but I thought that beaver lodges were larger.

Learner in La Crosse

Hi Learner,

Perhaps this information from Missouri Conservationist for Kids website will help:

A small lodge in the middle of a pond looks a lot like a pile of weeds, but is actually a home shared by up to 12 family members. The entrance to the home is underwater. A tunnel leads from there to the main room.

"Who lives here?" you ask. Let's take a closer look.

From the home's description, you might think it belongs to a beaver. Although beavers build homes in lakes and ponds, they use tree branches and tree trunks for their lodges. And, their lodges are much bigger, sometimes towering 7 feet high and spreading out over 40 feet.

This lodge is much smaller and is made from grasses, roots and other plant materials, carefully piled together with mud. A medium-sized rodent known as the muskrat built the house. Muskrats grow to be around 1.5 feet in length. This length includes a long, hairless, flat tail.

Muskrats live throughout the United States and Canada (except for the Arctic tundra). They are also found in parts of Europe and Asia. They are fond of water and are usually found near or in it. Although many live in ponds, they also live in rivers and streams.

When living in deeper water, muskrats sometimes dig into a bank instead of building a lodge. These bank dens have a long tunnel connecting them to the outside world. Usually, the tunnels open underwater.

Muskrats need a lot of space to

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

raise their young. They usually have as many as seven babies in one litter, and they may have three litters in one year. Their first litter may be ready to have babies of their own by the end of summer.

Most muskrats are born in the spring. Hairless and weighing less than an ounce at birth, baby muskrats depend on their mothers for food and for warmth. Although helpless at first, muskrats grow quickly and can take care of themselves in no time. A 2-week-old muskrat can swim, and by four or five weeks of age, it is ready to leave home. But its adventure is just beginning.

Muskrats of all ages must keep an eye out for predators. Minks, coyotes and large birds such as hawks and owls will take a muskrat for a meal. You can count people among their predators as well. We use their durable fur for clothes, their musk for perfumes and their meat for food.

The muskrat's dark brown fur is wonderfully waterproof for its aquatic habitat. Muskrats have small front feet for grasping, as well as



A muskrat lodge is much smaller than a beaver lodge and is made from grasses, roots and other plant materials, carefully piled together with mud.

large back feet that are partially webbed to help them swim.

Although muskrats move slowly on land, they swim gracefully in the water. Using their hind feet to paddle, they hold their front feet under

their chin and keep their eyes above the water to watch where they are going. They can paddle forward or backward and swim underwater for long periods of time. Muskrats have been known to stay underwater for 15 minutes or more.

Muskrats often search for food under the water. They like to eat the stems and roots of aquatic plants. They're not strict vegetarians, though. They also eat clams, snails, crayfish and fish.

Muskrats are interesting and useful creatures. They play an important role in our ecosystem by clearing vegetation from wetlands to create areas with more open water. They provide food for larger carnivores, and people trap them for their beautiful fur. So next time you see what looks like a pile of sticks in a pond, look a little closer and investigate a little further. You may have found a muskrat lodge.

Continued from page 1

the recipient of the Pat Caffrey Award for exceptional volunteer service. Carol coordinates and does much of the training for all the volunteers who staff the front desk.

2009 was also the first year we held a "green" silent auction, which was the biggest auction yet, bringing in over \$2,400. A special thank you to **Jennifer Odom** for all her hard work

in procuring so many wonderful auction items. Thanks to these generous auction item donors:

Drake Hokanson & Carol Kratz
Ruth Ann Knapp
Scott Reber
3 Rivers Outdoors
Applebee's
Aramark
Beautanica
Bentz Chiropractic
Best Buy
Birnbaum, Seymour, Kirchner & Birnbaum
Bittersweet Flowers
Blue Moon
Caribou Coffee
Children's Museum
Creative Solutions Hair Studio
Culligan
Domino's Pizza

Doyle Law Office
Dreamin' & Believin' Therapeutic Massage
Engelhart Printing & Digital Services
Extremely Clean
Famous Dave's
Fayze's
Freight House Restaurant
Gallery La Crosse
Grizzly's Grill 'N Saloon
Howes Diamond Jewelers
Kate's on State
Kwik Trip
La Crosse Archery
La Crosse Community Theatre
La Crosse Loggers
La Crosse Speedway

La Crosse Symphony Orchestra
La Crosse Veterinary Clinic
La Crosse YMCA
Life Shots Photography
Maplewood Dental
Mari's Therapeutic Massage
Marks Home Services
Michael Ablan Law Firm S.C.
Midas Auto Service
Bion's Mobil Service Center
Morrells Spa & Salon
Nell's City Grill
Northland Golf & Ski
Pleasuring Gourmet Seasoning

Quillin's
River City Image Works
River Valley Chiropractic
Satori Arts
Skipperliner Marine Group
Steve Low's Midwest Toyota Scion
Sue Kolve's Salon & Day Spa
The Commodore Supper Club
The Photographer
The Relaxation Center
Three Rivers Lodge
Three Rivers Martial Arts
Tidy House
Trempealeau Hotel
Wine Guyz

Thanks also to our volunteers who helped bartend and keep Michelle on track:
Brook Riley
Matt Brantner
Dave Ronsman
Mike Scheiber.

Welcome, New Board Members

Paul Borsheim is the president and co-owner of Borton Construction and has been an important supporter, helping to plan the EcoPark long before his firm was the low bidder for construction of the EcoCenter. His extra efforts in identifying ways to save costs after Borton Construction won the bid made it possible for us to proceed with our beautiful new building. Paul is also president of North La Crosse Rotary.

Kristine Cleary is an attorney who splits her time between a law prac-

tice in Milwaukee and serving as vice president of Cleary Management in La Crosse. A summer spent working on the river with the Fish and Wildlife Service cemented her love of the outdoors and natural areas.

Drake Hokanson is a professional photographer and author who lives in La Crosse. He teaches journalism and photography and has been a major force in the development of the River Studies program at Winona State University. He has been active with both the EcoPark (most recently

with his wife Carol Kratz as our last Annual Banquet speaker) and the Mississippi Valley Conservancy, where he has led work crews in the Winona area. His photographic work focuses on Midwestern and Western American landscapes, people and towns. He and Carol have written and published several books, most recently (2008), *Purebred and Home-grown: America's County Fairs*, published by the University of Wisconsin Press.

Meet Our Interns

Anna DeMers

I am the AmeriCorps Service Member. YES AmeriCorps looks to “strengthen our communities by helping youth experience success, assisting in public safety, reducing hunger, promoting literacy, expanding volunteer services and getting things done.” La Crosse members work as tutors in many schools and work with many organizations that help people in La Crosse and the surrounding area.

I am in graduate school at UW-L in recreation management. My undergrad degree is from UW-Stevens Point in environmental education and interpretation with minors in adventure education and resource management. I have worked at many camps over the past few years including Central Wisconsin Environmental Station, Camp Lakotah, Camp Juniper Knoll, Camp Webb and Ed Bryant Scout Reservation. I love to do anything outside, especially sharing my love for the outdoors with others. Working here is right up my alley!

I am originally from Waukesha, Wisconsin. I love to travel. I've been to Peru and Costa Rica on mission trips, as well as many countries in Europe. When I was a kid, my family would take trips to visit national parks around the country. Next summer, I would like to finish hiking the Superior Hiking Trail north of Duluth!



Janie Johnson

I am a full-time graduate student and mother of two young and energetic boys. I enjoy “The Three W’s”: wood-working, wine, and warm weather! I was born and raised in Little Rock, Arkansas. While I have lived in numerous states since then, I have come to love living in the La Crosse area more than any other place. I have lived here for almost four years now.

I started work with the Myrick Hixon EcoPark in the fall of 2009 in a Voluntary MBA Internship. The Enchanted Forest was my first big project, and I am now moving my energies towards organizing the 2010 River to Ridge event.

I really appreciate having the opportunity to learn how to apply my MBA toward a developing environmental, educational and nonprofit organization. The knowledge I gain by working side by side with experienced staff and volunteers is providing an education that you cannot buy with money or learn from textbooks alone.

It has been so exciting to be part of this developing organization, and I look forward to its future!



What's New at the Gift Shop

If you didn't make it to our gift shop during the holiday sale, you don't know what you're missing! Thank you to all who helped make the holiday sale a success! We have a good supply of bird seed and feeders left, so remember us when you need to restock.

1st Edition 2010 EcoCenter calendars are now half price (\$4.50). The photos were donated by Tom Rhorer, local photographer.

March will bring the unveiling of our first Artist of the Month, featuring the artwork of Lee Harwell. Stop in and see his great work. If you're interested in becoming an Artist of the Month, email mnelson@mhecopark.org for more information.

Spring will bring many new additions to the gift shop, so make sure to stop during Earth Month!

Earth Month Activities Hosted through the EcoCenter

Wonderful Woodcocks!

Wednesday, April 7, 8 p.m.

Have you ever seen a sky dance? Do you know what bird does that? Come discover the woodcock, its sky dance and many other adaptations! Join Naturalist Anna Demers as she explains all about these great birds. After a short presentation we will hike outside looking for woodcocks and other wonders of nature. FREE!

Owl Prowl

Friday, April 9, 7–10 p.m.

Learn about and search the forest for owls as well as other natural wonders of spring evenings. FREE!

Meet Cactus, MHEP's Porcupine

Sunday, April 11, 1 p.m.

Find out all about how porcupine use their adaptations to survive in the wilds of nature. FREE. (See a picture of Cactus on page 5.)



Frog Frenzy Freakout

Thursday, April 21, 6:30–9:00 p.m.

Find out why frogs are frenzied and call as we walk along the trails by the La Crosse River Marsh on a spring evening during Earth Week. We may even spot and hear other interesting marsh critters. And if you like what you hear, why not help with an evening frog call survey. Volunteer with a friend or family member to help one evening a week or one evening every 2 weeks, whatever works for you. It's a great way to enjoy the wonders of nature as dusk turns to evening from April until August. Call Stephanie at 784-0303 Ext 223 to sign up and/or for more information.

Felted Soap Workshop

Saturday, April 10, noon–3 p.m.

This olive oil soap is gentle and smells delicious. Great for gardeners, campers—anyone who gets grubby. Kids love it! It adds a bit of creativity to your bathroom, is long-lasting, and making it is just plain fun!

Astronomy Day activities

Saturday, April 24

See info on this page.

Marsh Clean-Up

Saturday, April 24, 8 a.m.

Marsh Walk

Saturday, April 24, 9 a.m.

Hans Mayer Earth Day Concert

Friday, April 30, 6:30 p.m.

FREE, space is limited!

Hans Mayer Earth Day Concert

Saturday, May 1, 3 p.m.

FREE, space is limited!



Annual Astronomy Day Is Saturday, April 24

The La Crosse Area Astronomical Society will host the annual Astronomy Day at the Myrick Hixon EcoPark Saturday, April 24, 2010.

Through special telescopes, view solar sunspots larger than earth and enormous jets of gas thousands of miles high erupting off the surface of the sun.

Then come back at sunset to view the craters on the moon, double stars, the planets Mars and Saturn, galaxies and star clusters as Galileo could only have dreamed of seeing.

Inside the EcoCenter, from 1:00 until 2:30 p.m., experience the night sky during the day inside a Starlab portable planetarium. Up to 35 people at a time will be able to view the changing night sky, constellations, and an astronomy slide show under the simulated nighttime skies inside the dome.

Displays, videos, telescopes and demonstrations will be set up in the EcoCenter for your entertainment and education.

Astronomy Day runs from 10:00 till 3:00 and will then reconvene at dusk for night time viewing.

Outside observing events are weather dependent. However, events scheduled in the EcoCenter and Starlab planetarium will run rain or shine.

Adult Program Ideas, Please

You may have noticed that since MHEP has moved to the EcoCenter, more adults-only programming/workshops/classes are being offered. A much improved space provides many more opportunities!

If you have any ideas for programs and/or names of folks who you think would offer interesting classes etc., please contact Stephanie at shanna@mhecopark.org or 784-0303 Ext 223. Thanks!

Public Programs

Natural History Book Club—FREE, for adults only

Tuesday, February 16, 6–7 p.m.

The Land Remembers by Ben Logan

Tuesday, March 16, 6–7 p.m.

Hope, Human and Wild by Bill McKibben

Meet at the EcoCenter. Register by calling 784-0303.

Saturday at the Planetarium

Saturday, February 20, 1 p.m.

The La Crosse Area Astronomical Society (LCAAS) and Myrick Hixon EcoPark invite you to UW-L for “Saturday at the Planetarium.” Come join us for the show “Starship Earth” followed by a dusk-till-dawn tour of the nighttime stars, planets and constellations—all in the comfort of the warm planetarium. This program is appropriate for children 6 years and up. Attendance is limited to 60 children and adults. Cost is \$3 for adults and \$2 for children.

Come join us for an out of this world experience. Please call the EcoPark at 784-0303 to preregister or email us at info@mhecopark.org

Great Backyard Bird Count Program

Saturday, February 13, 9–11 a.m.

Bring yourself and/or your family to the EcoPark to join Dan Jackson from Coulee Region Audubon Society to find out more about how to participate in this wonderful backyard activity for the whole family. (For more information, see Dear Naturalist, page 8.)

Raptor Day

Saturday, March 13, time TBA

Join MHEP in celebrating the opening of the peregrine falcon exhibit sponsored by Dairyland Power. Meet a live peregrine falcon and other raptors!



Prescribed Burn School—Two 2-Day Sessions

Saturday, March 20 and Sunday, March 21

OR Saturday, April 17 and Sunday, April 18

This two-day course will cover the ecology of fire, fire behavior principles, and the elements of fire management planning, all particularly focused on prairie and savanna ecosystems. Participants will operate basic fire management tools, view the layout and preparation of a fire unit, and, weather permitting, conduct several real burns. This course will not prepare students to serve as burn bosses or conduct burns on their own. It will allow graduates to participate as volunteers in prescribed burns in the La Crosse area. Space is limited to 25 participants per session. Please call 784-0303 by March 5 to preregister for the March session and by April 2 for the April session.

Fee: \$30 for MHEP members, \$35 for nonmembers, \$20 for students

E-Waste Day

Saturday, March 27

Bring your e-waste to the EcoCenter. It will be picked up by the La Crosse County Hazardous Waste Center and disposed of appropriately for 10¢ per pound.

Printers	Circuit boards	Stereos
Fax machines	Computer accessories	Microwaves
Copiers	Telephones	CB and ham radios
Computer monitors	Cameras	Computer gaming items
CPUs	VCRs/DVD players	Walkmans, iPods, MP3 players
Laptops	Cable/satellite TV equipment	Television sets
Keyboards/Mice		
Disk drives		

Spring Morning Bird Walks

Tuesdays: May 4, 11, and 18 (La Crosse River Marsh, meet at the R.A.B.B.I.T. trail, near new EcoCenter parking lot)

Thursdays: May 6, 13 and 20 (Hixon Forest, meet at the Hixon Forest trail parking lot, off Milson Court)

Join Pat and Bobbie Wilson as well as Dan Jackson for morning bird walks from 6:30 to 8:00 a.m. to enjoy spring migration and to see our regular residents return. Feel free to leave early or stay later. Attendance is FREE. Bring binoculars if you have them. No preregistration necessary.