



Cross Country Skiing Fun at Fox Island

By Ron Zartman

Fox Island County Park has a long-standing history as a cross-country ski center. The Fox Island Alliance started a ski rental program in the 70's that got many of us started in the pursuit. Allen County Parks continues this effort today even as many parks in the region have given up ski rentals due to the fickle nature of our current climate. Some years ski inventories go unused; staffing is often unpredictable but when it is a happening, it's "A HAPPENING!"

The cross-country ski crowd is perhaps the most joyful gathering we see anywhere. The mix of physical exertion, bracing weather and good company is always exhilarating. Very few sports allow the mixing of the passive plotter with the graceful glider and the screaming demon. Grandma and grandchild, the svelte and the spherical, the energetic and the "just enjoying being out there" can all enjoy a common experience in the outdoors. When they return to the warming hut they are all smiley faced, pink cheeked skiers; sharing a common bond.



Cross-country skiing can be almost as easy as walking on skis, so it is easy to learn for most people. At its simplest it is just another way to engage with nature. It can be wonderful to just stand and experience a hush of falling snow. Long leafless views reveal the color of winter and the lay of the land. It is not unusual for a quiet skier to engage wildlife as they go about their daily activities. Even a noisy skier can read the behaviors of these animals, long since gone, recorded in their footprints.

Aspiring skiers can learn about how the equipment works, how to dress, purchasing and maintaining equipment and receive basic instruction at a cross-country ski clinic to be held at Fox Island on January 11th , 10AM-Noon. The \$8.00 fee will include an hour of on-the-snow instruction if weather permits. If there is no snow, participants will receive a voucher for an hour of rental on their own.

Beginners or experienced skiers can rent skis whenever there are four or more inches of snow on the ground. Rentals begin at 9 AM and wrap up at 4 PM. Skis must be returned by 5 PM. Rates are reasonable at \$5.00 per hour for children 12 and under and six dollars per hour for 13 and up. People with their own skis can use the trails, paying only \$2.00 for Park entry fee. Fox Island Alliance members receive free Park admission, so can ski for free with their own equipment. What a deal!

INDIANA MASTER NATURALIST 2014 CLASS

By Jeff Ormiston



Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, New Year, what a busy, crazy, wonderful time of the year! With the new year comes the next Allen County Indiana Master Naturalist class beginning February 18th, 2014. This year's course will be expanded to meet the needs of participants with a class on Native Americans added to the curriculum and a field guide to trees included in the price of the course. That will mean that participants in the course will receive four excellent field guides to aid with their classroom and field studies. Also added this year is a "day on the trail" with experienced trail guides, after the course is finished, in order to provide participants exposure to how to lead a group on a nature hike. The course is expected to fill quickly so interested individuals should sign up as soon as possible. A registration form and class schedule can be printed by going to the Allen County Parks website at <http://allencountyparks.org>. On the website Home Page, under the "Pages" menu click on "Indiana Master Naturalist 2014" for printable copies and information about the course. **Current IMN's wishing to help, contact Jeff Ormiston or Pam George.**

.Dedication: Jack Sunderman Memorial Geogarden and Sculpture

By Pam George

On a rainy October 4, 2013, the Geosciences Department at IPFW, along with the Chancellor and other IPFW dignitaries, officially dedicated the Jack Sunderman Geogarden along with a newly erected sculpture at IPFW. Dr. Sunderman co-founded IPFW's Department of Geosciences in 1965 and taught there for 30 years. The Geosciences Department had received over \$11,000.00 in grants and donations for this project.

Before passing on August 23, 2011, Jack had been a member of the Fox Island Alliance Board since 1975, serving as President of the organization during the development and construction of the new Fox Island Nature Center Building, and spearheading the construction of the geogarden near the Bird Observation Building. The Geogarden has since been renamed to honor his efforts.

Jack Sunderman's outstanding relationship with Fox Island Park and the Fox Island Alliance had earlier prompted the board to allocate \$500.00 to help with the installation of the sculpture designed by Cary Shafer, a local artist .

Again, a special "thanks" to all the Board Members and Fox Island Alliance Members who also made individual donations to the Jack Sunderman Fund.

Dr. Solomon Isiorho, a colleague of Dr. Sunderman, current Chair of the Geosciences Department, and a Fox Island Alliance Board Member, and Pam George, along with several other FIA Board Members, weathered torrential rains to attend the dedication of the Jack Sunderman Memorial Sculpture at IPFW.



Skiing

By Marchette Chute

I'm very good at skiing, And when I reach the bottom
I have a kind of knack I give a sudden flop
For I can do it frontways And dig myself in sideways
And also on my back. And that's the way I stop.

“I’m Freezing”

By Jeff Ormiston

When I was a youngster one of the first caterpillars I enjoyed finding and collecting was the rust and black caterpillar we came to know as a “Woolly Bear Caterpillar”. I remember that I was convinced that these caterpillars were what Monarch Butterflies were before they became real butterflies. This I deduced by noticing that the colors matched (kind of) so it must be so. I would spend hours building sand castles in my sand box and then stocking it with Woolly Bears as my “Knights of the Roundtable”.

With age comes knowledge, that these beautiful caterpillar-Tiger Moth. A native of our climates including the arctic. of the year and overwinters in them rushing across roadways frost. The Isabella caterpillar, buried under leaf litter and They can do this by produc-



forming in the caterpillar’s cells and rupturing the cell walls. After emerging as an adult the moth has a very short time to find a mate, lay eggs and produce the next generation of Woolly Bears. In the arctic where the period of growth for the caterpillar’s food supply is very short a caterpillar must weather several winters before it can feed enough to pupate. Some Woolly bears have been known to endure over 10 winters before reproducing!

if not always wisdom, and I can now appreciate larvae are the larval stage of the common Isabella area, these caterpillars can also be found in colder The Woolly Bear emerges from the egg in the fall the form of a caterpillar explaining why we see or parking lots on warm days preceding the first like the Wood Frog, has the ability to freeze solid thaw in the spring to spin a cocoon and pupate. ing a cryoprotectant that keeps ice crystals from

A common myth is that the severity of a winter is predicted by the length of the black segments on the Woolly bear. Actually the length of the black sections is an indicator of the maturity of the caterpillar and has nothing to do with the weather. The next time you see a Woolly Bear caterpillar please tread lightly as it is on its way to a heart-stopping sleep that will “chill it to the core”.

It’s a privilege to live in Indiana!



Kit Kapers: Fox Tale for Kids

By Pam George

Scat: Where They're At?

“It starts with an “s” and it ends with a “t”
It comes out of you and comes out of me
I know what you’re thinking, you can call it that
But let’s be scientific and call it **scat**.”

Scat Rap (1988, Andy Bennett, Mary Keebler, Rodd Pemble, Doug Elliott, Billy Jonas)

Why study scat? Scat, aka feces or poop, may seem like a disgusting thing to examine, but animal feces can be a useful identifier, giving us a wealth of information about the animals roaming around the woods and meadows in Fox Island Park.

Who’s been around? Scat is shaped like the intestines of an animal and the way it “poops”.

What the animal’s been eating? What’s in scat is different by what is eaten: meats = dark; bones, fur / vegetables = light browns, yellows and greens; seeds

How long ago was the critter there? Scat is 75% water, rapidly drying out as it ages.

Why study scat in winter? During warmer months, scat, usually a brownish color, blends in well with dirt and leaf litter. But scat is easier to spot on the bright, white snow of winter, even announcing the location of the entrance of an animal’s home. On top of that, because it is frozen, scat stays on the ground in its original shape for a longer time, giving you a better chance of spotting it.

Scat Facts:

The brownish color of scat is the result of iron left over when red blood cells are broken down by the bacteria in the critters’ intestines. Therefore, the darker the scat, the more blood the animal has eaten.

Scat stinks because helpful bacteria are eating (*digesting*) the broken down food in an animal’s intestines producing sulfur-smelling gases. Without these “good” bacteria, animals wouldn’t be able to get nutrients out of the food they eat. So the stinky smell just means everything is working well!



Field Mouse



Coyote

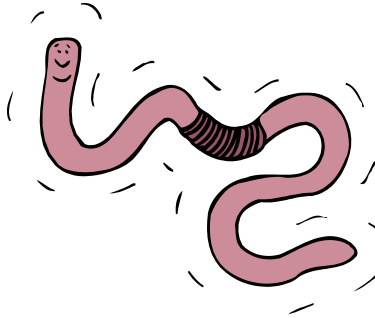


Be of good cheer; for the sun is returning!

DOWN TO EARTH WORM

By Jeff Ormiston

A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to spend a couple of hours helping Ron Zartman with a school group that wanted to learn more about earthworms and decomposition. While brushing up on my earthworm facts I ran into several articles that painted a not very complimentary picture of our fishing buddies as they relate to our eastern temperate hardwood forests. 10,000 years ago, during the last ice age, all native earthworms



were wiped out in areas of North America touched by glaciers. As the glaciers receded and the climate warmed, the hardwood forests of the Great Lakes Region evolved and established themselves in an environment free of earthworms, and the trees thrived in the process. But then earthworms were re-introduced to northern North America as Europeans brought them along in plant root balls. Over the decades the earthworm population increased as those imported earthworms were discarded by visitors to the backwoods. Today earthworms in a garden plot may be welcome guests as they loosen and aerate

the soil, but in a forest setting they become invasive as they consume the leaf litter base of the forest floor and de-stabilize the soil. By consuming the leaf covering of the forest floor the worms eliminate the rooting base for seedlings, resulting in a forest floor devoid of seedlings but thick with invasive plants such as garlic mustard and multiflora rose. As a gardener it's difficult for me to look unfavorably at my friend, the earthworm, but as a friend of the forest I remember the saying "All that glitters is not gold".

Poems written by Canterbury students in Anne Wallace's and Ben Ottenweller's classes, in October 2013 after a "Link Day" trip to Fox Island. Very impressive!

Nature

The chirp of the songbird
The wheeze of the wind
The twirling of leaves as they fall from high limbs.
The howl of coyote
The bite of the chill,
The slightly loose soil at the edge of the hill
Let it all stay the same,
Let it stay as it is.
For the beauty of nature is something of bliss.

~Alessia Devecchi, Grade 7

The Vine

The tree was huge and light
The crunch was down the side
Some thought healing
Some thought not
The lightning made its strike
The vine was dark brown
It twisted like a worm
The vine was long
Up to the ceiling and out
It grew to forty years old.

~ Trinity Beverly, grade 5

Leaves (a haiku)

Falling from the trees
Inevitably floating
Nature's dancing song

~Aubrey Aust, Grade 8

Dapple

The leaves dapple around,
Showing their color.
The birds sing,
Sharing their joy.
The wind is free
And so am I.

~Phoebe Toole, Grade 7

WINTER ACTIVITIES AT FOX ISLAND

To register for programs or for more information contact one of the following:

For Ron Zartman call 449-3186 or rzartman@allencountyparks.org

For Natalie Haley call 449-3246 or nhaley@allencountyparks.org

Most activities and programs have a \$2.00 charge and require pre-registration.

COMING UP VERY SOON, for preschoolers: \$3 per child, \$2 per adult.

Jan. 7, Tuesday, 10-11 a.m. TRACKS; Call Natalie to pre-register and get details.

Jan. 14, Tuesday 1-2 p.m. ANIMALS IN WINTER: Call Ron to pre-register and get details.

FOR ALL AGES: OWL PROWL , JANUARY 11, SATURDAY 5:30-7:30 P.M. Call Ron for details and to pre-register.



MORE FOX KIT CLUB ADVENTURES for pre-schoolers: \$3 per child, \$2 per adult.

February 11, Tuesday 10-11 a.m. “BIRDS OF PREY”

Call Natalie.

February 18, Tuesday, 1-2 p.m. “SQUIRRELS” Call Ron.

March 11, Tuesday, 10-11 a.m. “ANIMAL SKINS”

Call Natallie for details and to pre-register.

March 11 , Tuesday 1-2 p.m. “OWLS” Call Ron.



FOR ALL AGES:

WATERLESS WETLAND WALK Feb. 2, Sunday 1-2:30 p.m. Celebrate World Wetlands Day with an off-trail hike to explore Fox Island’s seasonally dry winter wetlands. Find signs of elusive animals, observe the less shy ones, and examine dormant plant life. Dress for the weather and off-trail exploration. Cost: free with paid admission or pass. Pre-register by 1/27. Min. 5, Max 15. Call Ron.

COYOTE HOWL: Feb. 2 Sunday 5:30-7 p.m. Call Ron to pre-register.

SPOTTING OWLS: March 2, Sunday. Join us for a walk through Great Horned and Barred Owl habitats. We will attempt to view Great Horned Owls on the nest through a spotting scope, and will scan for owls en route. Bring or borrow optics.

TIMBERDOODLE ‘SKY DANCE’ March 15, Saturday 7:30-9 p.m. Attend the courtship “sky dance “ of the American Woodcock as he shows off for the ladies. Dress warm for the weather! Bring a sit-upon if you like.

Call Ron to pre-register by 3/10.

SCRAPBOOKING “Crop Till You Drop” 6 P.M. TO MIDNIGHT!

THIS POPULAR ACTIVITY CONTINUES:

January 17, Friday; February 21, Friday, March 21, Friday

CONTACT NATALIE FOR DETAILS and to pre-register,

TAI CHI with Sandy Gebhard continues on Wednesdays, 6 p.m to 7 p.m.

Feb. 19 to April 9, cost \$50 for 8 weeks or \$8 drop-in fee. Gentle, non-strenuous Sun form that can be practiced by all. Be prepared to have fun as you join this light-hearted group. Call Ron to pre-register by Feb. 16. Minimum 10, max. 25.



GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT: Monday, Feb. 17 1-3 p.m.

Join birders across the country as we observe the variety of birds found here and across the U. S. Scientists use our data to compare bird survival rates from one year to the next. This is an easy activity for your family to do all through Presidents’ Day Weekend, Feb. 14-17. if you have as little as 15 minutes to spare! Check out their website at www.birdsource.org/gbbc. Cost: \$2 park entry fee and a birdseed or suet donation. Call Natalie to pre-register by 2/12. Min. 5, Max 30.

BUZZARD DAY MINI BIRD FEST: March 15, Saturday. Noon to close. Will turkey vultures return here today, as they do in Hinkley Ohio? Take a two mile bird walk noon to 1:30 to see what’s here. Then at 2 p.m. see a group of short films about the “Ordinary Extraordinary Junco” (2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.) Then we’ll take another short hike to watch Juncos (“snowbirds”) before they take off to the north for the summer. Bring binoculars or borrow one of ours. Then stay late to watch the “Timberdoodle Sky Dance” (see above.) Cost \$2



Indiana Master Naturalist Continuing Education Series:

January 26, Sunday 1-3 p.m. “January Thaw” AT METEA PARK

Feb. 23, Sunday 1-3 p.m. “A Good Oak” AT FOX ISLAND

March 23, Sunday 1-3 p.m. “The Geese Return” AT METEA PARK

These programs are for Allen County Park trail guides and Indiana Master Naturalist Alumni. Preregister to make sure we have enough materials; no fee.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS: April 1, Tuesday, 6 p.m. “Central Park Effect” movie night at Fox Island with Stockbridge Audubon Society. Free but pre-register by 3/27: Call Natalie.



Fox Island Alliance
Ed Powers
12206 W. Yoder Road
Roanoke, IN 46783

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Jeff Ormiston, President
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Fox Tale Editor:

Cynthia Powers

The **Fox Island Alliance** is a volunteer not-for-profit organization. Its purposes are to help preserve the natural features of Fox Island County Park, to assist its orderly development as a nature preserve, to raise funds to facilitate its development, to promote Fox Island's use as an educational center, and to coordinate volunteer efforts.

MEMBERSHIPS EXPIRE ON MARCH 31. CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL TO BE SURE.

Use the application to the right and check the "Renewal" area!!

Fox Island Alliance Membership Application __New __Renewal

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

__ Check if you would like to receive your Fox Tale by email

— Check if you do not want your name published

Please Circle One:

Students \$5 - Senior \$5 - 2 Seniors \$10 - Indiv. \$15 - Family \$20

Sustaining \$30 - Patron \$50

Additional gift \$__ Education \$__ Exhibits \$__ Scholarship

\$__ Preservation

Total Dues and Gifts \$__

If this membership is a gift, enter donor's name:

Check if you are interested in volunteering. You will be contacted.

Will your employer match your gift to FIA?

Check with your Human Resources/Personnel Department.

FIA is a 501 (c) (3) organization; extra gifts are tax deductible.

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