



Bois d’arc, wood of the bow

By Jeff Ormiston

On March 26, 1804, Merriwether Lewis, while preparing for the Corps of Discovery Expedition with William Clark, mailed a letter to President Thomas Jefferson. The letter sent from St. Louis said, “I send you herewith enclosed some slips of the Osage Plumbs and Apples. I fear the season is too far advanced for their success.” Lewis had collected these Osage tree cuttings from the gardens of Pierre Chouteau, who had collected Osage trees while staying with the Osage Nation about 300 miles west of the village of St. Louis.

At the time Lewis mailed his cuttings, the Osage trees were growing only in a very small area of Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas. Oddly, during the Pleistocene era the trees were native to a much larger portion of what is now the United States. This was made possible by the fact that the fruit of the trees were a food staple of the large mammals roaming North America, at that time, including the woolly mammoth and ground sloths. These large mammals ate the fruit and distributed the seeds through their digestive systems. The extinction of these large mammals, coupled with the glaciation during that time, forced the Osage orange (*Macula pomifera*) into the relatively small area, which later became the land occupied by the Osage Nation, who gave the trees their name. The early French traders called the Osage orange “bois d’arc” or “bow-wood.” “Bois d’arc” was corrupted



into “bodark” or “bodarc” and is still commonly referred to by that name in many locations. Another name given to the fruit is “horse-apple,” not to be confused with “road apple.”

The Osage used the wood from the trees to make superior bows for defense and hunting purposes and were able to use the wood to trade to other tribes wishing to do the same. The Osage orange is actually not related to oranges, apples or plums but are members of the mulberry family.

See **Bois d’arc**, Page 5

Upcoming programs at Fox Island

World Wetlands Day Bird Sit

Saturday, Feb. 2

Observe birds that inhabit wetland woods from the warmth of the Vera Dulin Wildlife Observatory. Join in this part of the day's WWD celebration with partners ACRES, Little River Wetlands Project, City of Fort Wayne and Purdue Fort Wayne's Environmental Resources Center.

3:30-5 p.m.

Cost: \$2 admission or free with annual pass

Preregister by: N/A

Vera Dulin Wildlife Observatory

To register or for more information:

Email: rzartman@allencountyparks.org

Call: (260) 449-3186

Ron Zartman

Preschool Discovery Hour – Touch a Turtle

Tuesday, Feb. 5

We love our exhibit turtles, and you will too! Get to know them better as we bring them out of their aquarium habitats. Here's a chance to touch, hold or just look at our turtles close up.

1-2 p.m.

Cost: \$3/child
\$2 adult

Preregister by: 1/31 Min:5

Max: 20

To register or for more information:

Email: rzartman@allencountyparks.org

Call: (260) 449-3186

Ron Zartman

Coyote Howl

Saturday, Feb. 9

Join us for a hike in the dark to listen for calls and search for signs of these wily canines. Dress for the weather and for trails.

6-7:30 p.m.

Cost: \$ 2

Preregister by: 2/4

Min: 5

Max: 15

To register or for more information:

Email: rzartman@allencountyparks.org

Call: (260) 449-3186

Ron Zartman

Frigid Fungi

Saturday, March 2

Fungi add interest to a woodland hike when plants are dead or dormant. Explore the important roles of mushrooms, their identification and lore.

9:30-11 p.m.

Cost: \$2

Preregister by: 2/25

Min:5 Max: 20

To register or for more information:

Email: rzartman@allencountyparks.org

Call: (260) 449-3186

Ron Zartman

Upcoming programs at Fox Island

Preschool Discovery Hour – Owls

Tuesday, March 5

We'll start with a story about Snowy Owls, and then learn about our local owls. We'll explore adaptations that make them great hunters and finish with a snack.

1-2 p.m.

Cost: \$3/child
\$2/adult

Preregister by: 2/28
Min: 5 Max: 20

To register or for more information:

Email: rzartman@allencountyparks.org

Call: (260) 449-3186

Ron Zartman

Woodcock Watch

We will walk to this whimsical bird's display grounds. As daylight fades, we'll settle in to observe the courtship flight of this close relative of the snipe.

Cost: \$2

Preregister by: 3/24
Min: 5 Max: 20

To register or for more information:

Email: rzartman@allencountyparks.org

Call: (260) 449-3186

Ron Zartman

Tai Chi

Wednesdays, April 10-May 29

Instructor Sandy Gebhard will teach the sun 24 movement form in this eight-week tai chi class. This gentle, non-strenuous form can be practiced by all. Be prepared to have fun as you join this light-hearted group.

6-7 p.m.

Cost: \$50 for eight weeks.

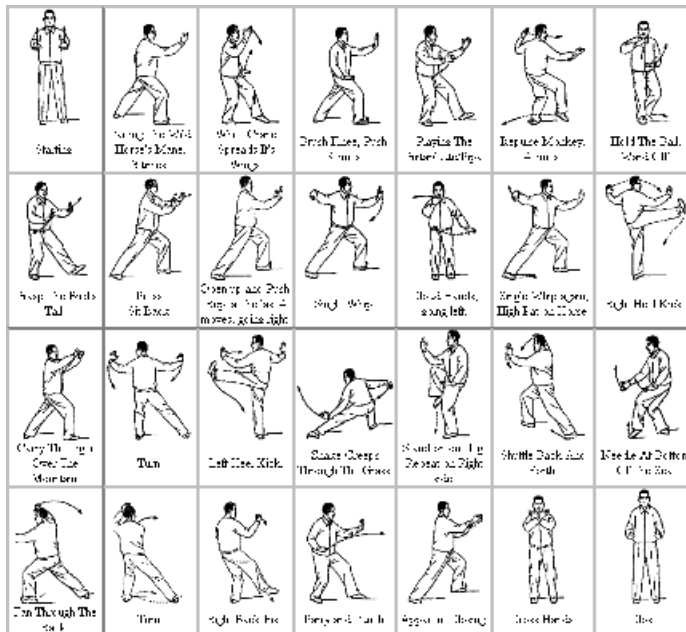
Preregister by: 4/5
Min: 10 Max: 25

To register or for more information:

Email: rzartman@allencountyparks.org

Call: (260) 449-3186

Ron Zartman





Kit Kapers: Fox Island Park for Kids

By Pam George

“Winter is the night of the year.
It is the coldest part.
It is the darkest part.
It is also the time for little
plants to go to rest.
They are like some children.
They do not wish to go to bed.
They stay awake as long as
they can.

But Jack Frost comes around
and sends them to bed – wheth-
er they will or not.

Then down comes a soft white
blanket.

Do you know what it is made of? Is it made of wool?

See how Nature takes care of everything.

She gives all her buds little white coats.

She wraps up little plants in seeds.

She puts something in the seeds for them to eat when they wake up.

She keeps the roots alive in the ground.

She does more yet: she sends down a cover of snow.

And then the plants stay safe and warm through the long Winter.”

by M. Florence Bass, 1896 – *Nature Stories for Young Readers – Plant Life*,

D.C. Heath & Co., Publishers. Boston



Bois d'arc: Continued from Page 1

Before the advent of barbed wire in 1868, Osage orange hedge rows were made by planting rows of Osage trees, then cropping them into dense, thorn-studded hedges impervious to livestock. The name "hedge apple" came from the time when these Osage hedge rows were in common use. When barbed wire finally came into common use, the Osage wood was used for fence posts due to its ability to ward off wood rot and gnawing insects. During World War I the wood of the Osage orange was used as a source of dye for the khaki uniforms of the United States Army. During the "Dust Bowl" the previously planted Osage trees stood against the strong winds that were eroding and removing the soil.

When burning Osage wood in a wood stove caution is always recommended because Osage burns nearly as hot as coal and can damage the stove if not mixed with cooler burning woods such as maple or ash. Random rows of Osage orange windbreaks were planted in the Midwest and still can be seen along the edges of some fields in Allen County and along the southern edge of Fox Island County Park bordering Yohne Road.

The largest Osage orange tree in the United States currently is growing at River Farm near Alexandria, Va. This Osage has a crown of nearly 65 feet across, and the property was once owned by George Washington. Another of the largest grows near New Harmony. Few trees have had such a long and distinguished service to the people of North America as Osage orange, though now *Macula pomifera* resides on the Indiana DNR list of "Invasive Exotic Plants" along with the likes of callery pear, tree of heaven and Japanese honeysuckle. The honeymoon is over!

Bird count results are in

By Cynthia Powers

The Stockbridge Audubon SW Allen Christmas Bird Count was held Dec. 29 at Fox Island and assigned areas. With all the reports in, we found a total of 49 species! The "birdiest" territory included the Arrowhead properties of Little River Wetlands Project, with 40 species.

Several species were found by only one team: mute swan, northern shoveler, sharp-shinned hawk, red-shouldered hawk, rough-legged hawk, great horned owl, peregrine falcon, horned lark, brown creeper, yellow-rumped warbler, white-crowned sparrow, and purple finch.

So you can see that each of you was important. At lunch — three kinds of chili prepared by Brett Fisher and Lori Healey — we were wondering "where are all the horned larks?" But finally, one group found some.

No snowy owls were seen this year. Red-breasted nuthatches, purple finches and pine siskins were the species expected to see an upsurge this winter.

If you're keeping track, the highest count was 52 species on 1-2-2017.



Dark-eyed junco photo by Jason Jablonski from <https://indianaudubon.org>.



Fox Island Alliance

Ed Powers
12206 W. Yoder Road
Roanoke, IN 46783

Officers:

Kate Sanders, President
 Brett Fisher, Vice President
 Carol Gaham, Vice President
 Raquel Walker, Secretary
 Nathan Arata, Treasurer

Board of Directors:

Nathan Arata, Barbara Bauer, Renee Bentz, Kevin Boner, Laura Colpitts, Grace Danel, Brett Fisher, Carol Gaham, Terri Habig, Liz Hincks, Lisa Esquivel Long, Jeff Ormiston, Ed Powers, Kate Sanders, Raquel Rodriguez and Darrell Will

Directors Emeritus:

Kate Ferguson, Pam George, Phil Herrick, Dr. Solomon Isiorho, John McCrory and Iona Mensch

Fox Tale Editor:

Lisa Esquivel Long

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 "Renewal"

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.

Make your check payable to FIA, Inc. and mail with this form to:

Ed Powers, Membership 12206 W. Yoder Rd., Roanoke, IN 46783

www.foxislandalliance.org