



# Outdoors

## Ottawa County Parks

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER | WINTER 2021-2022

Contact us: [ocparks@miOttawa.org](mailto:ocparks@miOttawa.org)  
Nature Center: 616-786-4847



### Ski ❄️ Snowshoe ❄️ Sled

**Pigeon Creek Park** offers a groomed, lit sledding hill and cross-country ski trails, ski and snowshoe rentals for adults and children, and both cross-country and skate ski lessons. Pigeon Creek Lodge will be open throughout the season during good ski conditions offering equipment rental, concessions, and a warm fire. Check hours and conditions before you make the drive: [miOttawa.org/trails](http://miOttawa.org/trails)

Reminder: Hiking, dogs, and horses are **not allowed** at Pigeon Creek Park once winter operations begin.

For more detailed information about winter operations, ski rental, a livestream of the sledding hill and main trail, and a video showcasing all the offerings at Pigeon Creek Park visit [miOttawa.org/winter-rec](http://miOttawa.org/winter-rec)



**Hemlock Crossing** offers snowshoe rentals for adults and children at the Nature Center during regular business hours. While skis are not available to rent, they are welcome on the trails. Dog walking is allowed on the trails on leash.

### Upcoming Events

#### Pigeon Creek Biathlon

January 22, 8 am | Pigeon Creek Park

Participants of all skill levels are welcome to this fun, low key snowshoe and cross-country ski biathlon. The distances are approximate, 1 mile snowshoe run/walk followed immediately by a 3-mile freestyle (skate or classical allowed) cross-country ski through the beautiful, groomed, rolling trails of the park. The entry fee is \$75/person. Two-person relay teams are welcome! Sign up online today: [miOttawa.org/OCPEvents](http://miOttawa.org/OCPEvents)



#### Coming soon...

Icebound: The Ordeal of SS Michigan | Nature Center at Hemlock Crossing  
In January 1885, the SS Michigan was called to rescue another Grand Haven steamer. Instead of rescuing that steamer, the Michigan also became trapped in the ice. Learn more about the exhibit on page 4.

### Summer-Ready

Park passes make great holiday gifts! Prepare for the summer season by purchasing your 2022 Motor Vehicle Permit today.

- 1) **Log in or sign up**
- 2) **Go to My Profile**
- 3) **Membership**

[countyofottawaparksandrec.perfectmind.com](http://countyofottawaparksandrec.perfectmind.com)



Did you know... Bridge Card holders in Michigan can receive a free annual motor vehicle permit?

[news.miottawa.org/beaches-are-for-everyone](http://news.miottawa.org/beaches-are-for-everyone)

Plan a hike at Eastmanville Farm or a fat tire bike ride at Riley Trails on trails that are groomed intermittently by volunteers! Updates will be on the trail conditions website.

Eastmanville Farm



Riley Trails



Check trail conditions & equipment rental hours: [miOttawa.org/trails](http://miOttawa.org/trails)

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



The Macatawa River Greenway connects parks along the Macatawa River



The Idema Explorers Trail connects parks along the Grand River Greenway



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

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

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# Thank you to the Bill & Bea Idema Foundation for a landmark gift of \$2.5 million for Ottawa Sands

## Ottawa Sands Master Plan

### Lake Michigan Greenway + Grand River Greenway

With the assistance of major philanthropic gifts through the Ottawa County Parks Foundation, a multi-million dollar effort to implement several components of the Ottawa Sands Master Plan has been initiated. The centerpiece being the Idema Explorers Camp that is certain to become a major attraction along the Grand River Greenway.

### Idema Explorers Camp

Due to its location, Ottawa Sands serves as a logical endpoint for anyone enjoying an extended adventure along the Idema Explorers Trail. As announced in our last newsletter, an outfitted campground that includes tent pads, a Tree House Village, and a Yurt Village will be fully funded by a gift from the Idema Family.

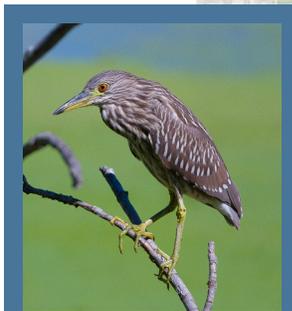
In order to ensure that work can begin on the campground, a significant additional donation of \$2.5 million from the Bill and Bea Idema Foundation was confirmed this fall! This generous gift provides funding needed for infrastructure and support facilities, including an entry drive, an extension of the Idema Explorers Trail, utilities, kayak launch, and a welcome/information station.

With work commencing on the campground and entry drive, potential state and federal funding options are being explored for completion of a day-use parking area near the current entrance as well as the 1.6-mile lake loop. More information will be available as this exciting project develops.

### Ottawa Sands Wetland Restoration

The Great Lakes Office of Audubon recently received a \$400,000 Sustain Our Great Lakes grant. This funding has spurred a significant project; planning for the creation and restoration of wetlands at Ottawa Sands.

Earlier this year, staff from Michigan DNR Fisheries Division and Michigan Sea Grant collected data that will inform the design and engineering of a naturalized shoreline along portions of the lake. Design work on the park's wetlands will continue through 2022, with the goal of improving the sustainability of the lake's fish population, while also creating habitat for other wetland wildlife.



The Black-crowned night heron is a marsh-dwelling species of special concern. We are looking forward to welcoming more of this species and others!

Photo by Beth Miller



3D models of the future Idema Explorers Camp Yurt Village (L) and Treehouse Village (R)



# Education & Stewardship

## Pollution Solution Outreach Program



### Macatawa River Greenway

Pollution Solutions is a program designed by the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council to inspire action through access to quality science. A virtual series focused on plastic pollution and the Great Lakes will be offered free to the public in 2022. Each session will include a guest speaker.

- Part 1 will discuss the history of plastic in our Great Lakes, ecological science, and Great Lakes activism in our region through the 1970's.
- Part 2 will discuss threats to Great Lakes ecosystems and how they impact specific groups dependent upon Lake Michigan.
- Part 3 will inspire a call to action by sharing what future projections look like for plastic pollution in the Great Lakes based on current human impacts, and offering solutions for a pollution solution.

The series will take place in February and March 2022. Specific dates will be announced online: [news.miottawa.org/pollution-solution-macc](https://news.miottawa.org/pollution-solution-macc)

*These programs are presented by the Lakeshore Cleanup Coalition with funding from an EPA Trash Free Waters grant. This grant was awarded to the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council to support beach and river cleanups in Ottawa and Allegan Counties.*

**"In the end, we conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught."**

**- Baba Dioum, Senegalese Poet**



**Become a Beach Buddy**

The Lakeshore Cleanup Coalition will offer more Beach Cleanup workdays this spring!



## Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Treatment

### Lake Michigan Coastal Greenway

Ottawa County Parks staff, volunteers, and interns started treatments for hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) in 2019. From the beginning of 2019 until the end of the 2021 season, 2,814 of the most imperiled hemlock trees in the Parks system have been treated.

Parks staff prioritized hemlock populations that were already infested—or in close proximity to known infestations—using a systemic insecticide that will protect each tree for 5-7 years. Parks that have been treated include Historic Ottawa Beach Parks, North Ottawa Dunes, Ottawa Sands, and Tunnel Park.



**Never heard of HWA?**

This sap-sucking forest pest is now widespread along the lakeshore. It threatens Eastern hemlocks, which are a critical species of Michigan. Learn more about this pest, how to identify it, and how you can help stop the spread: [saveMIhemlocks.org](https://saveMIhemlocks.org)

## Icebound: The Ordeal of the SS Michigan

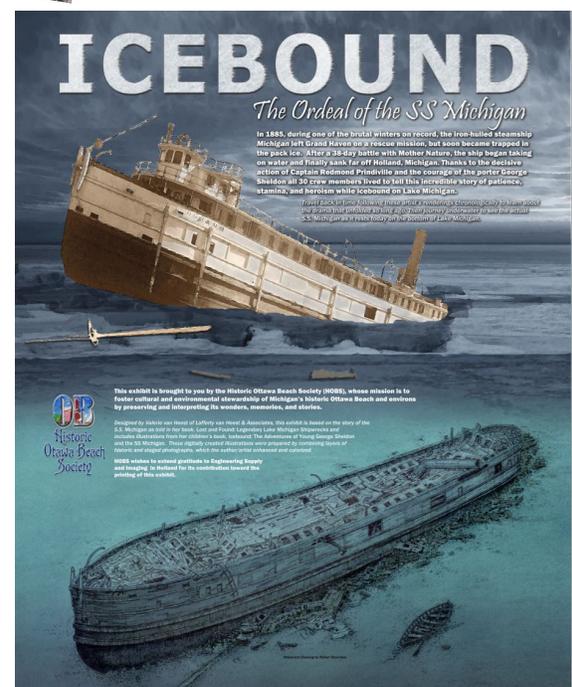
### Pigeon River Greenway | Nature Center at Hemlock Crossing

The SS Michigan, an iron-hulled steamship, was built in Detroit for the Goodrich Transportation Company in 1881. It sailed briefly for Goodrich before the Detroit, Grand Haven, and Milwaukee Transportation Company purchased the steamer and moved it to Grand Haven as its home port. It was called out of winter layup in January 1885 to rescue another Grand Haven steamer owned by the railroad, which became trapped in the ice during a brutal winter. Instead of rescuing that steamer, the Michigan also became trapped in the ice.

Visitors to the Nature Center at Hemlock Crossing County Park will soon learn of the ordeal that took place over the course of 43 days as the crew tried to save themselves and their ship. The courage and heroics of the youngest crew member, Grand Haven's George Sheldon, is woven through the exhibit.

The exhibit was designed by Valerie van Heest and is based on the story of the SS Michigan as told in her book, *Lost and Found Legendary Lake Michigan Shipwrecks*. Her book will be available for sale at the Nature Center, and Ms. van Heest will present a companion program based on the exhibit.

A special thanks to the Historic Ottawa Beach Society and the Pump House Museum and Learning Center for sharing this excellent exhibit with us! Exhibit and presentation dates will be announced online: [news.miottawa.org/icebound-2022](https://news.miottawa.org/icebound-2022)



# Volunteer Spotlight

Davin McMullin, an Environmental Studies student from Cornerstone University, interned this fall to help study and manage natural resources, focusing on North Ottawa Dunes and Ottawa Sands. Davin was invaluable in a time of staff shortages and high work volume. Because of Davin's strong work ethic and flexibility, we were able to finish treating the hemlock trees at Ottawa Sands this fall.

"When the internship with the OCPRC opened up, I jumped at the opportunity to take it. This internship has allowed me to put into practice what I have learned over the past four years of college and gain experience in the field that I will be working in," said Davin.

"What I have enjoyed most about this internship is being able to build relationships with other people in my field and learn from them. I have also really enjoyed trying new things and learning about how a Parks and Recreation Commission runs its parks.

One thing that I think is very important that I have learned over my time as an intern is to be willing to spend your time and put forth a full effort into the task you're given. Your hard work does not go unnoticed."



## Volunteer for Parks

Do you or a student you know have an internship project to complete? Are you looking to get outside more often and give back to your community? Ottawa County Parks has opportunities for all ages and abilities, apply online today: [miottawa.org/volunteer](http://miottawa.org/volunteer)



## Work for Parks

We are currently seeking candidates interested in working outdoors next spring and summer. These opportunities are perfect for students (18+) who are home on break, retirees who want to spend more time outside, or anyone interested in parks who would like to earn extra money during the summer months. Interested candidates can apply online: [governmentjobs.com/careers/miottawa](http://governmentjobs.com/careers/miottawa)



# Coffee with the Birds

Thanks to many spectacular submissions, our panel of judges had a difficult time deciding the winners for this year's photo contest. We had 71 entries representing a wide variety of bird species and Ottawa County locations, all taken in 2021. Thank you to everyone who entered!



Our winner this year is Doug Kuiper for his photo of a stunning Red-headed Woodpecker. His photo is featured on the limited-edition 2022 Mug Club member mug which can be purchased for \$25 online or in person at the Nature Center.

Congratulations are also in order for our honorable mentions: Lynn Rutan for her fun photo of a Killdeer with young tucked beneath; June Kuiper for her striking photo of a showy Chestnut-sided warbler; Beth Miller for her sharp photo of the reclusive Black-crowned night heron (juvenile); and, Michael Bergeon for his excellent capture of a Yellow-rumped warbler singing

Be sure to join us for a Coffee with the Birds program this winter. More information on page 7. To join our Mug Club and see all of the submitted photos, visit: [news.miottawa.org/cwb](http://news.miottawa.org/cwb)

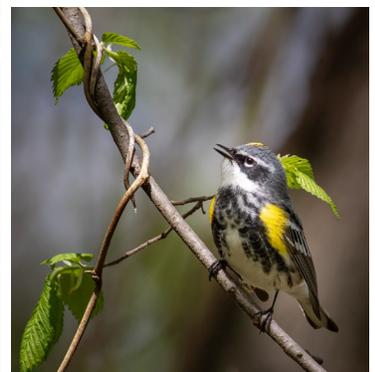
Killdeer



Chestnut-sided warbler



Black-crowned night heron



Yellow-rumped warbler



# Programs & Activities

Unless otherwise noted: Programs are recommended for ages 12+



Ottawa County Parks Foundation Community Engagement programs

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



## Stay active, get outside!

### THEMED WALKS

\* Walks for active adults ages 55+

Take a deeper dive into a topic that may focus on natural features of a park, tell the story of cultural connections to place, or weave both elements together.

Five-Needled & Fascinating	Dec 18	10-11 am	Hemlock Crossing
Five-Needled & Fascinating	Dec 21	9-10 am	Hemlock Crossing
Winter Silhouettes	Jan 8	10-11 am	Grand Ravines North
Bear Paws: About Snowshoes *	Jan 11	10-11 am	Hemlock Crossing
Seeing Like a Naturalist	Jan 22	10-11 am	Hemlock Crossing
Winter Silhouettes *	Jan 25	10-11 am	Grand Ravines North
Bear Paws: About Snowshoes	Feb 5	10-11 am	Hemlock Crossing
Seeing Like a Naturalist *	Feb 8	10-11 am	Hemlock Crossing
Cache-ing In	Feb 19	10-11 am	North Ottawa Dunes
Fire!*	Feb 22	10-11 am	Pigeon Creek Park
Redefining Red Pines	Mar 5	10-11 am	Rosy Mound
Cache-ing In *	Mar 8	10-11 am	North Ottawa Dunes
Fire!	Mar 19	10-11 am	Pigeon Creek Park
Redefining Red Pines *	Mar 22	10-11 am	Rosy Mound

### GET TO KNOW YOUR COUNTY PARKS

There is so much to discover in Ottawa County Parks! These programs will help "park newbies" become familiar with what Ottawa County Parks has to offer as well as tips on ways to enjoy these natural areas all year round.

Welcome!	Jan 5	10:30-11:30 am	Hemlock Crossing
Welcome!	Jan 8	1-2 pm	Hemlock Crossing
Branching Out	Jan 12	10:30-11:30 am	Pine Bend Park
Branching Out	Jan 15	1-2 pm	Pine Bend Park
Animals in Parks?	Jan 19	10:30-11:30 am	Hemlock Crossing
Animals in Parks?	Jan 22	1-2 pm	Hemlock Crossing
Pinecone Producers	Jan 26	10:30-11:30 am	Hemlock Crossing
Pinecone Producers	Jan 29	1-2 pm	Hemlock Crossing
Winter Activity-Snowshoeing	Feb 2	10:30-11:30 am	Hemlock Crossing
Winter Activity-Snowshoeing	Feb 5	1-2 pm	Hemlock Crossing
Owls and night-time wonders	Feb 9	10:30-11:30 am	Hemlock Crossing
Owls and night-time wonders	Feb 12	1-2 pm	Hemlock Crossing
Pigeon Creek Park	Feb 16	10:30-11:30 am	Pigeon Creek Park
Pigeon Creek Park	Feb 19	1-2 pm	Pigeon Creek Park
Binoculars and more	Feb 23	10:30-11:30 am	Hemlock Crossing
Binoculars and more	Feb 26	1-2 pm	Hemlock Crossing
Preparing for Spring	Mar 2	10:30-11:30 am	Hemlock Crossing
Preparing for Spring	Mar 5	1-2 pm	Hemlock Crossing



### CROSS-COUNTRY SKI CLASSES

\$8/person; all lessons offered at Pigeon Creek Park. *Ski rentals are available, rental fee is not included.*

**Beginner:** Learn about equipment and basic techniques. Ages 10+; one adult must accompany every two children.

**Intermediate:** For experienced adult skiers wishing to refine their technique and ski more efficiently.

**Skate Ski:** For experienced adult skiers who want to learn the basics of several techniques. Skate skis required; limited rental available.

Beginner	Jan 1	10-11:30 am
Skate	Jan 4	6-7:30 pm
Beginner	Jan 8	10-11:30 am
Skate Ski	Jan 13	6-7:30 pm
Beginner	Jan 15	10-11:30 am
Skate Ski	Jan 18	6-7:30 pm
Intermediate	Jan 27	6-7:30 pm
Skate Ski	Jan 29	10-11:30 am
Beginner	Feb 1	6-7:30 pm
Intermediate	Feb 5	10-11:30 am
Beginner	Feb 10	6-7:30 pm
Skate Ski Class	Feb 12	10-11:30 am
Intermediate	Feb 15	6-7:30 pm
Beginner	Feb 19	10-11:30 am
Intermediate	Feb 24	6-7:30 pm
Skate Ski	Feb 26	10-11:30 am

### WILDLIFE ENCOUNTER: BACKYARD HABITATS TO ATTRACT BIRDS

Maximize your yard's potential as bird habitat by going beyond just bird feeders! Learn how to use food, water, and shelter to attract birds for your own viewing, while also abundantly benefiting the birds that visit.

Jan 29 3-4:30 pm Hemlock Crossing

### EARTH ENCOUNTERS: FOSSILS OF THE DEVONIAN SEA

Large coral reefs once covered a large part of the northern lower peninsula of Michigan. Explore the formations that contain these fossils and discover how they formed.

Feb 5 3-4:30 pm Hemlock Crossing

### EQUINOX EXPEDITION

Help celebrate the Vernal Equinox by joining this expedition to find signs of spring.

Mar 20 3-4 pm Hemlock Crossing

### GET TO KNOW HISTORIC OTTAWA BEACH

Get to know the natural & cultural history of a newer park facility.

Mar 26 10-11:30 am Ottawa Beach Marina

Register online:

[miOttawa.org/ocpevents](http://miOttawa.org/ocpevents)

Questions? Contact the Nature Center:

[naturecenter@miottawa.org](mailto:naturecenter@miottawa.org) | (616) 786-4847

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.

## In the parks, after dark

### ASTRONOMY PROGRAMS AT HEMLOCK CROSSING

Programs and stargazing are hosted by the Shoreline Amateur Astronomical Association at Hemlock Crossing.

Jan 8 7-8 pm James Webb Space Telescope

Feb 12 7-8 pm Meteors, Meteoroids, & Meteorites

Mar 12 7-8 pm The Spring Sky



### MOONLIGHT NIGHT HIKE

\$5/person; registration required - best for ages 10+

Experience the nip of cold on your nose, the hoot of owls in your ears, and the crunch of snow under your feet as you explore the park by the light of the moon! If snow conditions allow, we will snowshoe. Bring your own or reserve a pair when you register.

Jan 14 7-8:30 pm

Riley Trails

Feb 11 7-8:30 pm

Connor Bayou

Mar 17 7-8:30 pm



Grand Ravines North

### WOODCOCK WALK

\$5/person; registration required - best for ages 10+

Introduce yourselves to Woodcocks with a short presentation, then enjoy watching the sun set to the twitter of displaying Woodcocks!

Mar 25 7:30-9 pm

Hemlock Crossing

Apr 1 7:30-9 pm



Grand River Park

## Kids & families



A very special thank you to Friends of Ottawa County Parks for providing the hot chocolate for our winter programs! Become a member: [friendsofocp.org](http://friendsofocp.org)

### FIRESIDE STORYTIME

Snuggle up by the fire with for nature stories and hot chocolate. Don't forget a comfy pillow and blanket. An optional walk will be offered afterward. All ages welcome, stories chosen for ages 4-8.

Jan 2 3-4 pm Hemlock Crossing

Feb 13 3-4 pm Connor Bayou

Jan 9 3-4 pm Hemlock Crossing

Feb 27 3-4 pm Hemlock Crossing

Jan 16 3-4 pm Hemlock Crossing

Mar 5 3-4 pm Hemlock Crossing

Jan 16 3-4 pm Connor Bayou

Mar 6 3-4 pm Hemlock Crossing

Jan 29 3-4 pm Pine Bend

Mar 6 3-4 pm Connor Bayou

Jan 30 3-4 pm Hemlock Crossing

Mar 6 3-4 pm Grand Ravines

Feb 6 3-4 pm Hemlock Crossing

Mar 13 3-4 pm Hemlock Crossing

Feb 12 3-4 pm Hemlock Crossing

Mar 19 3-4 pm Hemlock Crossing

Feb 13 3-4 pm Hemlock Crossing

### STORYWALKS

StoryWalks are now available throughout the county! Pages from a featured book will be posted along a path for your family to read together. Stories are available during park hours. Registration not required; for more information: [miOttawa.org/ocpevents](http://miOttawa.org/ocpevents)

Please be sure to complete the survey at the end of your StoryWalk!

Thank you to our local libraries for making StoryWalk possible! Loutit District Library, Herrick District Library, Georgetown Township Library, Gary Byker Memorial Library of Hudsonville, Patmos Library

## Birding

### COFFEE WITH THE BIRDS

Enjoy coffee and baked goodies as you watch the birds at the feeders. Bring your bird questions, curiosities, and stories. At this time this program will be in-person. Livestream dates/times may be announced online.

Session 1: 9:30-10:20 am / Session 2: 11:10 am-12:00 pm  
Birding Tidbits (bite-sized bird presentations): 10:30-11:00 am

Jan 15 9:30 am-12 pm

Hemlock Crossing

Feb 12 9:30 am-12 pm

Hemlock Crossing

Mar 12 9:30 am-12 pm

Hemlock Crossing

Don't forget your favorite mug. Or, support birding programs by joining the Coffee with the Birds Mug Club! Join the club and the e-mail list by visiting: [miOttawa.org/birding](http://miOttawa.org/birding)



### WATERFOWL BIRDING TRIP

\$10/session; ages 12+  
Registration required

Wintertime birding can be an adventure worth the effort! Come along as we venture to local birding hotspots of winter. Both sessions will meet at the Nature Center.

Feb 26 Part 1 10 am-1 pm

Hemlock Crossing

Feb 26 Part 2 2-5 pm

Hemlock Crossing

### WILDLIFE ENCOUNTER - FOR KIDS!

Ages 5-12, with a caregiver; registration required

Learn about wildlife found in your backyard and parks!

Jan 23 3-4:30 pm Hemlock Crossing

Owls: Hunters of the Night

Feb 20 3-4:30 pm Hemlock Crossing

Birds at My Feeder

Mar 20 3-4:30 pm Hemlock Crossing

Frogcicles: Wood Frogs

Pre-covid photo; masks are currently recommended inside county buildings



Jan 10-16

When Winter Comes

Connor Bayou

Jan 17-30

Winter Dance

Hager Park

Jan 24-Feb 6

Once Upon a Winter Day

Hemlock Crossing

Feb 7-20

Ten Ways to Hear Snow

Hawthorn Pond

Feb 14-27

Over and Under the Snow

Riley Trails

Feb 28-Mar 6

Almost Time

Hemlock Crossing



[miOttawa.org/Parks](http://miOttawa.org/Parks)



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# Outdoors

OTTAWA COUNTY PARKS



*explore your*  
Ottawa County Parks

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