



# Seedlings

Volume 8, Issue 1

## Park Updates

Hi Everyone!! It's been a while since our last newsletter! Inside find details on park updates and future happenings!

2023 has marked the 9th year of hosting Camp Hard Hat at the Genesee County Park & Forest! We are proud to be the first and original hosting site of this great youth building trades skills program. This summer also brought our third year of Music in the Park, the free concert presented by ACORNS. Batavia Swing Band set a beautiful evening to music at DeWitt Recreation Area.

We are looking forward to the new school year and offering our Meaningful Watershed Education Experience (MWEE), developed thanks to a generous grant through the NOAA B-WET program. Our MWEE provided a hands-on, locally based science unit that so far has reached students grades K–12 from 5 schools in the Genesee County area. We are excited to add it to our program catalog for 2023–2024!



Alexander Middle School Students Stream Sampling Black Creek at GCPF

One of the coolest of all astronomical phenomena will visit Genesee County on April 8th, 2024—the total solar eclipse. The Interpretive Nature Center at the Genesee County Park & Forest will host viewing and activities all about the partial solar eclipse on October 14th, 2023 and the total solar eclipse on April 8th, 2024.

Register for the Harvest Moon Hike, Owl Prowl and more by signing up online at our website or calling 585-344-1122! See inside for details on all this and more! Thank you for your support!

**Yes! WE'RE OPEN**

The Interpretive Nature Center is getting a new roof and new siding! We are excited for this update! The Center is open during construction.

Open Hours for May–Oct. 2nd:  
10 am to 4 pm Thursday–Saturday  
12 pm to 4 pm Sunday

Open Hours for October 2nd–May:  
10 am to 4 pm Thursday–Friday  
12 pm to 4 pm Saturday and Sunday



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### Interpretive Nature Center Hours October–May:

Thursday–Friday:  
10 am–4 pm

Saturday–Sunday:  
12–4 pm

### Fun Fact:

Opossum kits will carry leaves or other nesting material around with them using their prehensile tail.



# Kayak Rental at DeWitt Recreation Area!

Kayaks are available for rent at DeWitt Recreation Area! Life jackets are included!  
It's easy! Visit the kiosk at the boat launch and follow the steps on the outside.  
Visit <https://www.rent.fun/genesee-county-ny> for details and more information!

**RENT.FUN**  
KAYAK RENTAL  
DEWITT RECREATION AREA

**▶ HOW TO RENT**

- 1 DOWNLOAD**  
Download the Rent.Fun app and create an account.
- 2 UNLOCK**  
Scan the QR code on the locker.
- 3 REMOVE EQUIPMENT**  
Inspect kayak, paddle, and life jacket for any damage.
- 4 ENJOY YOUR PADDLE**  
You must wear a US Coast Guard approved life jacket at all times.
- 5 RETURN & LOCK**  
Return equipment to the same locker unit and select "End Rental" in app.

**▶ RULES**

- Do not leave valuables in lockers.
- You must be 18 years or older to use Rent.Fun equipment.
- Maximum of one person per boat and no pets allowed.
- Alcohol is strictly prohibited.
- You must wear a life jacket at all times.

**▶ SAFETY TIPS**

- Check the weather; do not rent if there is lightning, rain, or high winds.
- Stay out of the way of other boats.
- Bring a means of communication, such as a cell phone in a plastic bag.
- Dress appropriately, bring sunscreen and water.
- Wear a life jacket at all times.

Need Help?  
386-200-1385  
support@rent.fun

**\$25 for 2 hour rental**  
Download the app today!

Made possible by a generous donation from ACORNS!



# Students Improve Local Watershed

With the Meaningful Watershed Education Experience  
Through the NOAA B-Wet Grant



Students from Pavilion High School, St. Joseph's Regional School, Alexander Middle-High School and Notre Dame High School studied water quality and their local watershed through the NOAA Great Lakes Bay Watershed Education & Training Program (B-WET), administered by the Genesee County Soil and Water Conservation District in partnership with Genesee County Parks, Recreation & Forestry.

## What is a watershed?

A watershed is an area of land that drains or "sheds" water into a specific body of water, such as a creek, river, or lake. Watersheds are named for the waterbody that they drain into. For example, runoff from precipitation in the town of Alexander drains into the Tonawanda Creek, so we'd say that Alexander is "in the Tonawanda Creek Watershed".

This science unit included 12 modules, field sampling of 2 waterbodies, and a community service project. Students created models of Lake Ontario food webs, studied the effects of excess nutrient loads on lake water quality, simulated macroinvertebrate population studies and mitigations of nonpoint source pollution in a model watershed, and performed chemical and biological water quality field samplings of Tonawanda Creek, Black Creek and various streams in Wyoming County. Nate Drag, Great Lakes Literacy Specialist of New York Sea Grant, visited classrooms and gave students practical working knowledge of the Great Lakes, watersheds, water pollution (specifically plastic pollution), native and invasive species, careers and the geography of the use of great lakes water resources.



Sixth Graders assist a Kindergartener as she plants a silky dogwood seedling on the hillside overlooking DeWitt Lake.

Students planted thirty wildlife shrubs to reduce shoreline erosion at DeWitt Recreation Area, removed a total of six fifty-gallon bags of trash from Kiwanis Park, planted trees to reduce runoff from impervious surfaces at Notre Dame High School,

created educational water conservation and invasive species posters displayed in their schools and at graduation events, and drew colorful water conservation messages on Tops shopping bags that were used by the general public over this two-year grant period.

NOAA B-WET grant activities have reached a total of 375 students since the fall of 2021. This Meaningful Watershed Education Experience science unit is designed for students sixth grade and up, and is available by contacting Shannon Lyaski of Genesee County Parks, Recreation & Forestry.



Students sample wildlife in the Tonawanda Creek tributary at Kiwanis Park.



# Camp Hard Hat 2023

Fleming Pavilion needed replacing, and luckily for us, Camp Hard Hat was up to the task! Karyn Winters of the Business Education Alliance (BEA) and Rich Monroe and Kelly Mileham of the GV BOCES Building Trades program assembled 20 campers ages 12 to 15 for the first day of Camp Hard Hat on Monday July 31st. Their task was to rebuild Fleming Pavilion, named for George Fleming, the first steward and forester of the Genesee County Forest. Campers assembled scaffolding, measured and cut lumber, put girders on to support the trusses, and began work with the goal of completing the entire project in 1 week.

Campers Alex Boldt, Cole Breton, Braden Clare, Teaghan Freeman, Olivia Gillard, Joshua Haurik, Jaxon Jones, Keller Kilby, Joal Lang, Ian McGary, John McJury, Harrison McPhee, Ayden Midkiff, Desean Mileham, Priscilla Reed, Aristina Riedel, Tucker Ripstein, Bryce Thompson, Brody Traxler and Ayden Waggoner worked tirelessly and with tremendous focus to kept the project moving with quick progress and no delays. Using math, process thinking skills, power tools, safety equipment, and the power of teamwork, campers worked hard and braved the heat each day.



Camp Hard Hat 2023 and the newly rebuilt Fleming Pavilion

In addition to learning the principles of design, construction, and safety, campers learned about careers from guest speakers and industry leaders, including Tim Hull of United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, Taylor McCabe of McCabe Electric, Bill Hayes, and Lindsie Cook of Livingston Associates.

By 1 pm on Friday August 4th, the new Fleming pavilion was completed, with the addition a new plaque to thank all of the camp sponsors. This was year 9 of Camp Hard Hat at the Genesee County Park & Forest and we never cease to be amazed. Of course this did not happen by magic but by the hard work of dedicated campers with the experienced and expert direction, guidance and encouragement of their instructors. Fernando Cacho and

Anna McLaughlin provided essential guidance as camp counselors, and ACORNS members and park volunteers Jim Schmitt and George Squires helped, along with Kylie Tatarka and Calista Light, both park interns.

We are proud to be the first hosting site of this program that transforms the park and everyone who participates. Congrats to all the originators, architects, instructors, sponsors, collaborators, and most of all the campers who have made the Camp Hard Hat such a huge success!!

For more about Camp Hard Hat 2023 see [The Daily News](#) and [Video News Service](#).



Campers measure and cut lumber

## Nature's Underappreciated Sanitation Workers - Opossums!

About the size of a house cat, with white faces, gray bodies and a long rat-like tail, opossums are one of New York State's most unique animals. So much of what they do directly benefits humans, but they are rarely appreciated. It's time to highlight these amazing creatures.

Let's start with the basics. Is it possum or opossum? The animal I am referring to here, the Virginia Opossum, *Didelphis virginiana* is indeed, opossum. Possums are animals found in Australia and are named for their resemblance to opossums. It's super confusing, and most people say possum, but the correct word is Opossum. Opossums are nocturnal and live in the forests of the United States, Canada and Mexico. Their tails are prehensile - or able to grasp - but they do not hang from trees! Children's books may depict this, but it is untrue. As they grow larger they become too heavy for their tail to support them hanging. When not hunting for food, opossums are self-grooming - licking their paws and cleaning their fur just like a cat. The earliest known fossil of an opossum has been dated to 70 million years ago. That's before the dinosaurs went extinct!



Opossum mother with joeys.  
Image Credit: ARCO

Opossums may look like giant rats, but they are not related to them! Opossums are more closely related to kangaroos and koalas. Why? They're marsupials! In fact, they are North America's *only marsupial*. There's no animal in the USA quite like them! So what exactly is a marsupial? A marsupial is a mammal who is born premature and develops in a pouch, while drinking their mother's milk. When a baby opossum is born, it's about the size of a honeybee! They will then crawl into their mother's pouch, latch on, and nurse as they continue to develop. Once they're old enough, they will ride on their mother's back! Baby opossums are called joeys, just like kangaroos. Also like kangaroos, adult females are called jills, and adult males are called jacks!

Opossums are omnivorous. They eat everything and anything. They may eat rotten fruit, nuts or berries. They may also scavenge for carrion or even discarded human food in garbage cans. They are known to eat and reduce the populations of many kinds of pests! Cockroaches, mosquitos, ticks, mice and rats are all on the menu. Many of these pests carry diseases that humans can catch! Further south from upstate New York, opossums even eat rattlesnakes! They are immune to rattlesnake venom! No matter where opossums live, they are a benefit.

# Nature's Underappreciated Sanitation Workers - Opossums!

Interestingly enough, the body temperature of an opossum makes it very hard for them to carry rabies. An opossum's body temperature is a chilly 94 to 97 degrees Fahrenheit. The cold temperature makes it incredibly difficult for the rabies virus to survive in their body. It is not impossible for an opossum to get infected, but it is extremely rare. For all their work in pest and disease control, opossums have gained the nickname of Nature's Little Sanitation Workers!

Opossums are most known for "Playing possum". This is an involuntary defense mechanism where the animal 'plays dead'. They fall over limply and open their mouths to let their tongue fall out. Their heart and breathing rate slows, they become stiff and they release liquid that smells like rot. Most predatory animals that may be chasing an opossum, like a coyote, find this display distasteful and lose interest in eating the opossum. This tactic works! An opossum may remain in this 'dead' act for up to four hours.

Opossums unfortunately have short life spans. In the wild, they live only about two years. The biggest threats to them are dogs, cats, and motor vehicles. Dogs especially tend to chase and kill opossums. Dogs should always be kept on a leash when going outside at night, while these nocturnal animals are active, to minimize any harm to them.

These creatures are one of the most unique animals of the North American continent, and they do so much more for us than most people realize. They are not gross giant rats, they are diligent little friends who rid our backyards of dangerous pests and the diseases they may carry. Thank an opossum next time you see one! Mark your calendars for National Opossum Day on October 18th to celebrate these awesome animals!

An opossum on a tree  
Image Credit: Joe Tundra



Article By: Calista Light

Sources:

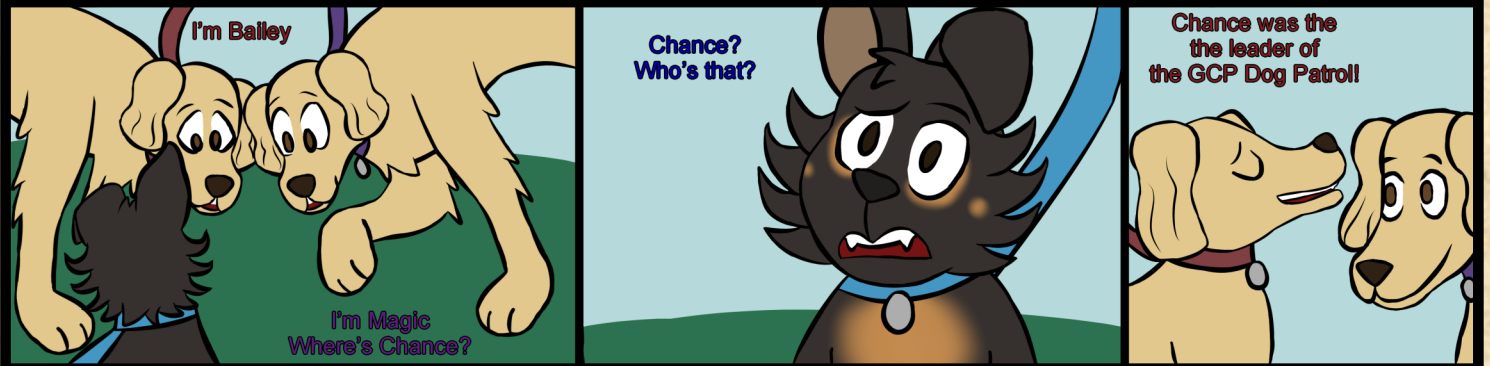
<https://www.britannica.com/animal/marsupial> , <https://opossumsocietyus.org/general-opossum-information/> ,  
<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/species/didelphis-virginianus>



# REX!

## & THE GCP DOG PATROL

Illustrated by Calista Light.  
Written by Pete Stanbridge.



# Meet the ACORNS

(Association for the Conservation Of Recreational and Natural Spaces)

The ACORNS is the volunteer group formed to support the Genesee County Parks by assisting with environmental programs and park maintenance, offering recreational opportunities and promoting the parks.



## ACORNS Board of Directors:

*Chris Caputi* President  
*Ashley Waite* Vice President  
*Julia Garver* Treasurer  
*Kathy Woika* Secretary  
*Ashley Waite* Membership Specialist  
Chris Nickerson  
Jerome Gentry  
Lewis Tandy  
George Squires  
Pete Stanbridge

## Members:

The Allen Family  
Norm Argulski  
Charlie Augrom  
Nancy Balbick  
Sarah Balduf  
Beth Berkemeier  
Elizabeth Bush  
Melissa & Christopher Caputi  
Carin Caruso  
Sonya & Carl Christensen  
Tom & Linda Clark  
Guy & Patricia Clark, Jr.  
The Crandall Family  
Bart & Sue Dambra  
Judy Day  
Dennis Dwyer  
Barb & Mike Easton  
Marjorie & Jim Fulmer  
Julia Garver & Joe Ruh  
Liz Genesky  
The Gentry Family  
Nancy Gerspacher  
Jefferey & Donna Gillard  
Karen Goodwin

Peggy Grayson  
Peter Guppenberger  
Janis & Stuart Hempel  
Bernard Hoerbel  
Doreen Johns  
The Kent Family  
Kelly & Lily Kiebala  
Daisy Klein  
Sarah Kohl  
Melanie Kujawski  
Jeff & Priscilla Langdon  
Esther Leadley  
Kathy Lee  
The Lewis Family  
The Lyaski Family  
Mac and Cheryl McCambell  
Glenn Merrill  
Mary Miller  
Bill & Connie Moon  
Thomas Moran  
Sharon Mosher  
Terri & Michael Muehlig  
Debbi Nanni

Christine & Brad Nickerson  
Paul & Emma Osborn  
Kathleen Purcel  
Jan & Gary Revier  
Josh Roman  
Matt & Karissa Santy  
Lucy Sargent  
Jim Schmitt  
George Squires  
Pete Stanbridge  
Dave & Sandy Steele  
Lewis & Bonnie Tandy  
Michele Terry  
Beth Trimble  
Tami Underhill  
Carol Vanderberg  
The Vandenbosch Family  
Evan Verbanic  
Ashley Waite  
Kathie Woika  
Pam Zola

ACORNS meetings are held every 4th Wednesday evening of the month. Check ACORNS website for location.

**Remember to renew your membership for 2024!** Send renewals to ACORNS at PO Box 787 Stafford, NY 14143.

To renew or become a member, please visit the ACORNS website or contact Ashley Waite, ACORNS Membership Specialist at [acornsoutreach@gmail.com](mailto:acornsoutreach@gmail.com)



# Internships and Volunteer Positions Available

**Meet New People, Help the Parks, Have FUN!!**

**Volunteers make park events and programs possible!!**

- **Maintain exhibits at Interpretive Nature Center**
- \* **Lead and assist recreation and outdoor education programs at the parks**
  - \* **Guide park visitors**
  - \* **Help with park improvement projects**
  - \* **Monitor park wildlife**
  - \* **Get experience**

**Every volunteer makes a BIG difference!!**

**Contact: Shannon Lyaski, Conservation Education Program Coordinator at (585) 344-1122**

## RSVP – Volunteering for 55 and Older

The Genesee County Park has been partnering with the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) since 2002, where interested volunteers 55 and older have found meaningful volunteer activities close to nature and to their hearts. In Genesee County, over 325 adults serve our community as RSVP members. Their volunteer experiences range from one-time events to weekly placements in one or more of our 20+ partner agencies. You can volunteer as little or as much as you desire at the Genesee County Park and with other agencies in our community who rely on volunteers to achieve their mission and goals. RSVP strives to connect volunteers with fruitful experiences based on individual interests and abilities, so that together we can improve the quality of life in our community. For more information call the RSVP Volunteer Placement Program at 585-343-1611 or visit the RSVP of Genesee County website

[https://www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/office\\_for\\_the\\_aging/volunteer\\_opportunities.php](https://www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/office_for_the_aging/volunteer_opportunities.php)

## Scout Opportunities

**Genesee County Park & Forest and DeWitt Recreation Area provide volunteer opportunities for Scouts of all ages. Scouts earn service hours by:**

- 🌐 **Assisting with programs**
- 🌐 **Creating trail signs**
- 🌐 **Monitoring nest boxes**
- 🌐 **Maintaining and working in the ACORNS Outdoor Learning Center**
- 🌐 **Hosting duties and cleaning the Interpretive Nature Center**
- 🌐 **Providing turtle care**
- 🌐 **Participating in a number of other volunteer activities and events.**

**Bronze, Silver, Gold Award projects and Eagle Scout projects also available.  
Please contact Shannon Lyaski at (585) 344-1122.**

# GeneSEetheEclipse 2024!!



## Phenomena to look for during the Total Solar Eclipse on Monday, April 8th 2024:

- Images of the crescent partially-covered sun are created by any object with small holes in it, such as a colander, hole punched paper, or even your interlaced fingers.
- 10 to 15 min before totality, the air temperature will drop and shadows will become sharper as daylight diminishes.
  - Frogs may start to sing and birds may become quiet as they respond to the visual cues of twilight
- Shadow bands may appear on the ground or other surfaces 1 to 2 minutes before totality. They are most visible on light-colored surfaces. They appear to be caused by the refraction of the sun's fading light as it passes through turbulent cells of air in the earth's upper atmosphere. They look similar to ripples of sunlight on the bottom of a pool.
  - The total solar eclipse is the only time that the sun's corona is observable in nature!
  - Planets and bright stars will be visible during totality
  - Look at each horizon during totality and you'll see what looks like a 360-degree sunset.
- Baily's beads, the diamond ring, and shadow bands will be visible in reverse order at the end of totality

Stay tuned for details on seeing the total solar eclipse at the Genesee County Park & Forest  
April 8th, 2024!

## #GeneSEetheEclipse

<https://visitgeneseeny.com/2024-eclipse>

# Annular Partial Solar Eclipse—October 14, 2023

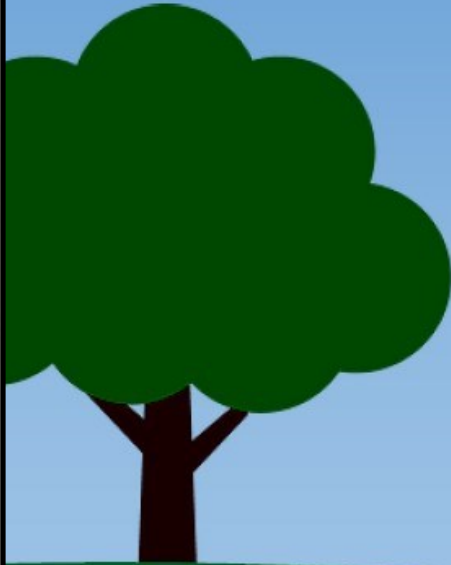
## Partial Solar Eclipse

at the Genesee County Park & Forest



Saturday October 14th 2023 10:00 AM to 2:30 PM

Eclipse begins at 11:58 AM, ends at 2:27 PM



Come see the partial annular eclipse at New York State's First County Forest! Meet at the Interpretive Nature Center to discover the science of solar eclipses, make a pinhole viewer and other crafts, and learn about the 2024 total solar eclipse!

1 pair of eclipse glasses will be given to each participant and must be worn for the entire duration of the eclipse.

**This program is FREE!**

#GeneSEetheclipse  
#RocEclipse2024  
[visitgeneseeny.com/2024-eclipse](http://visitgeneseeny.com/2024-eclipse)  
[rochestereclipse2024.org](http://rochestereclipse2024.org)



Genesee County Park & Forest Interpretive Nature Center  
11095 Bethany Center Road East Bethany, NY 14054  
(585) 344-1122 • [www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/parks/](http://www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/parks/)  
Like us on Facebook at: [Genesee County Parks, Recreation & Forestry](#)

## #GeneSEetheEclipse

<https://visitgeneseeny.com/2024-eclipse>

Programs take place at the Genesee County Park & Forest Interpretive Nature Center, 11095 Bethany Center Rd, East Bethany, NY 14054 unless otherwise noted. Pre-registration is required for all programs. To register call (585) 344-8508. For more information visit our website at <http://www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/parks/>, or contact the Conservation Education Program Coordinator at [Shannon.Lyaski@co.genesee.ny.us](mailto:Shannon.Lyaski@co.genesee.ny.us) or (585) 344-1122.

# Upcoming Events



**Full Harvest Moon Hike**

Friday September 29th, 2023

7:30 pm - 9:00 pm

At Genesee County Park & Forest

Join us for a forest hike on a full moon night!

Listen for nocturnal animals and hear tales of full moon folklore!

Hear tales of the full moon that comes at the beginning of fall, and learn where it got its name from!

\$5/person or \$10/family. Pre-registration is required; call 585-344-1122!

Like us on Facebook at: [Genesee County Parks, Recreation & Forestry](#)  
Genesee County Park & Forest Interpretive Nature Center · 11095 Bethany Center Road  
East Bethany, NY 14054 (585) 344-1122 · [www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/parks/](http://www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/parks/)



Saturday, October 21st, 2023 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm

**Owl Prowl**

at Genesee County Park & Forest

Explore the secret world of owls in the forest. Learn about their fascinating abilities, listen for the sounds of nocturnal wildlife, and visit owl habitats. Anything can happen on an Owl Prowl!

Recommended for ages 4 and up!

Please bring a headlamp or a flashlight with a red filter!

**\$5/person**  
**\$10/family**

Pre-registration is required  
Call 585-344-1122  
or visit us online

Dress for the weather!

Like us on Facebook at: [Genesee County Parks, Recreation & Forestry](#)  
Genesee County Park & Forest Interpretive Nature Center · 11095 Bethany Center Road  
East Bethany, NY 14054 (585) 344-1122 · [www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/parks/](http://www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/parks/)



**Create-a-Critter & Treats for Wildlife**

at the Genesee County Park & Forest Interpretive Nature Center

Saturday, December 2nd 2023

Let your imagination run WILD!  
Meet in the activity room of the Interpretive Nature Center for an eclectic spread of natural craft materials.  
Hot glue together a perfect gift for your loved ones!  
Make edible garlands and ornaments for wildlife and trim the trees in the ACORNS Outdoor Learning Center!

Session 1: 10:00 am — 12:00 pm  
Session 2: 1:00 pm — 3:00 pm

**\$5/person or \$10/family**

Pre-registration is required!  
Call 585-344-1122

Like us on Facebook at: [Genesee County Parks, Recreation & Forestry](#)  
Genesee County Park & Forest Interpretive Nature Center  
11095 Bethany Center Road · East Bethany, NY 14054 · (585) 344-1122  
[www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/parks/](http://www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/parks/)

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WE PROUDLY PRESENT THE 11TH ANNUAL

# 2023 RUN FOR THE ACORNS

SUNDAY OCTOBER 1, 2023

## 5K/10K TRAIL RUN/WALK

WITH VIRTUAL OPTION

GENESEE COUNTY PARK & FOREST - AREA B, EAST BETHANY, NY 14054  
CHECK-IN STARTS AT 8:00 A.M.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION OPTIONS:

[HTTPS://WWW.GENESEEACORNS.ORG/RUN.HTML](https://www.geneseeacorns.org/run.html)

[HTTPS://RUNSIGNUP.COM/RACE/?RACEID=35565](https://runsignup.com/race/?raceid=35565)

GENESEEACORNS@GMAIL.COM



ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE GENESEE COUNTY PARKS!

**Genesee County Park & Forest  
Interpretive Nature Center**

11095 Bethany Center RdPrimary  
Business Address

Phone: 585-344-1122

**Visit**

[www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/parks/](http://www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/parks/)



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Recreation & Forestry

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**facebook**®

