

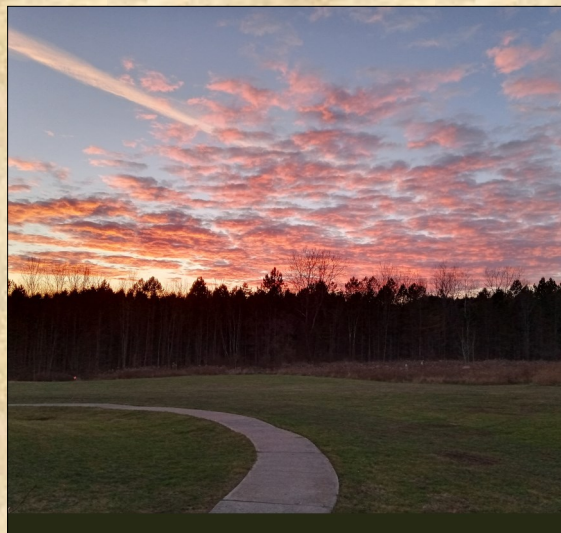


Seedlings

Volume 9, Issue 1

New Beginnings in 2024

The New Year is a time for new beginnings and we are no stranger to that here at the Genesee County Park and Forest! 2024 has kicked off with several exciting transitions, changes, and updates. After nearly a decade of service, Shannon Lyaski has left her position for new adventures closer to home at the Helmer Nature Center. Claudia Nusstein has stepped into the role of Conservation Education Program Coordinator.



Shannon and Claudia at the GCPF Interpretive Center (left) and a sunset at GCPF (right)



The Interpretive Center is getting a facelift in the new year! A new roof was installed in 2023. In 2024, the contractor team continues working hard to install brand new siding. The building is still open while work is on-going — stop by and say hi!



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Yes! WE'RE OPEN

Interpretive Nature Center Hours October–May:
Thursday–Friday: 10 am–4 pm
Saturday–Sunday: 12–4 pm



New Beginnings 2024 (continued)

Hi Everyone! There's no way to capture in words how wonderful my 9 years with the Genesee County Parks have been. I have taken a full-time Naturalist position with the West Irondequoit School District at Helmer Nature Center.

My new work hours are during the school day on days when school is in session, and with Daniel starting Kindergarten next year, it was not an easy decision but one that provides the best fit for my family. I miss the park and all of its people!!! However, I am enjoying my 7-minute commute and afternoons and weekends at home. I am proud to be a Lifetime ACORNS Member, a Leadership Genesee Alum Class of 2018, and a park volunteer with Claudia leading us! Thank you for your support and see you soon!!



Shannon and her Family

- Shannon Lyaski



Claudia with a Barred Owl

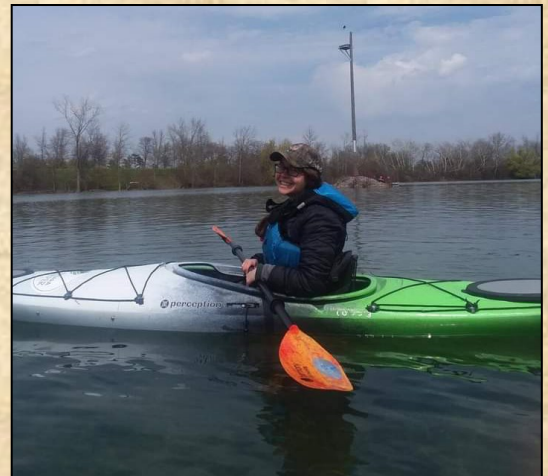
Hi Everyone— it's nice to meet you! I am excited to be here as the new Conservation Education Program Coordinator at the Genesee County Park and Forest. The park has been such a special place to me and I feel extremely lucky to be working among such dedicated staff and volunteers.

I've worked at several different nature centers throughout my career, including Evangola State Park in Irving N.Y, Shaver's Creek in Pennsylvania and Reinstein Woods in Cheektowaga, N.Y. After several years as a project manager with a non-profit organization in Buffalo called Waterkeeper, I am thrilled to start this new adventure at the Genesee County Park.

When I'm not at the park, you'll find me hiking along trails all across WNY, more often than not looking for birds to count!

Thank you to everyone who has made me feel so welcome! I'm looking forward to many more adventures at the park together!

- Claudia Nusstein



Claudia kayaking at Beaver Island State Park

First Day Hike with the ACORNS

On January 1st 2024, a group of over 80 people started their year on the right foot by joining the ACORNS First Day Hike at Genesee County Park & Forest.

The First Day Hike is an annual tradition that began in the early 1990s where people are encouraged to start their year with a hike. This tradition has grown over the years—today hikers across the country join First Day Hikes at National, State, and local parks.

At Genesee County Park, as hikers arrived, we met by a warm fire at Pavilion B with plenty of hot cocoa and snacks. After, we set out along the trails!



Pete Standbridge leading the First Day Hike near the wetland

Julia Garver, ACORN Treasurer, led a shorter hike while Pete Stanbridge, ACORN Board Member and Trail Monitor, led a longer hike. Those that joined Julia got to enjoy a fun nature scavenger hunt and her endless nature knowledge. Those that joined Pete completed over 3 miles of walking and were treated to stories and anecdotes from Pete's years of nearly daily walks at the Park!

Thank you to all who joined the First Day Hike, and to the ACORNS who organized a wonderful event. The ACORNS dedicate so much of their time to making the Genesee County Park & Forest a special place to be, not just on the first day, but every day!



First Day Hikers gather near Pavilion B

***First Day Hikes
are a tradition that
encourages starting
the year with a hike
among friends in a
local park!***

Firsts of the Year

We humans love keeping track of things. Our brains are hardwired to notice the world around us and relate what we are seeing to things that we understand. Often, we'll find ourselves organizing our busy days and lives into lists and categories, schedules and calendars. A fun way to cater to this side of ourselves, while building a stronger connection with the natural world, is the concept of "Firsts of the Year".

At the First Day Hike, led by the ACORNS on New Years morning, a question I heard many asking their friends and fellow hikers was—what was your first bird of the year? And so we ask you, what was the very first bird that you saw in 2024? As with many traditions among birders, the first bird of the year can become a competition. Some have been known to close their eyes tight on the morning of January 1st, avoiding European starlings and House sparrows in the hopes of seeing a unique first of the year bird!

My first bird of 2024 was a Black-capped chickadee. When I woke up in the morning, I noticed several of them visiting my backyard bird feeders. January 1st was a snowy day, and after a very warm December, our bird feeders had many more visitors than usual!

Noticing firsts of the year doesn't have to be restricted to just birds on January 1st. We can pay attention to just about anything in the natural world— all year round! When will you hear your first Spring Peeper of 2024? When will you see the Maple trees begin to produce buds or the dragonflies start to emerge?

You can also notice "lasts". When will be the last time you see a Palm Warbler? Or the last time you find a flowering Trout Lily on the forest floor?



Spring Peeper calling



First Bird of 2024— a Black-capped Chickadee



One of the first plants to produce a flower in Western New York is Skunk Cabbage! It emerges so early in the spring, it has evolved to have thermogenic properties that allow it to melt it's way through frozen ground.

Firsts of the Year

We can tap into nature's cycles and deepen our own understanding of the complex and exciting natural world simply by taking the time to notice and observe.

When you start observing "firsts of the year" you're learning about phenology, nature's calendar! Phenologists study the timing of natural events, cycles, and phenomena. Events like the budding of leaves in the spring, the arrival of migratory birds, and when plants first produce a flower happen on a schedule. That schedule is deeply connected to the seasons, the climate, and local weather patterns.

If you monitor firsts and lasts of the year you may notice the timing of certain events can change from one year to the next. Or, they may remain consistent, happening on the same day every year. Scientists monitor shifts in this schedule. Any big changes can give us clues as to how climate change and other human impacts are altering the natural world.



Trout Lily flower



Palm Warbler in a Maple tree

Phenology is "nature's calendar." It is the study of the timing and cyclical patterns in the natural world.

This year, make a New Years resolution to notice as many "firsts" as possible. You can keep track in a nature journal, notebook, or on an online app like iNaturalist or eBird. By the end of 2024, you'll be surprised how much more attuned you are to the natural world around you!

For more information about phenology, check out the USA National Phenology Network:
<https://www.usanpn.org>

iNaturalist is an online community of naturalists that allows you to record your observations and share them! Learn more here: <https://www.inaturalist.org>

eBird is a community science app that allows birders around the world to share their birding lists and contribute to science! Learn more here: <https://ebird.org>

As always, if you observe something interesting at the park—stop by the Interpretive Center and let us know!

Winter Programs at the Genesee County Park



GENESEE COUNTY PARK & FOREST WINTER WALKS

Saturday, 1/20 | 8:30 - 10am - Morning Bird Walk

Whether you are new to birding or a seasoned pro, winter is an excellent time to enjoy birdwatching! Join us for a slow paced, easy walk along the trails. We will learn tips for bird identification and keep a list of the birds that we see along the way. Field guides and binoculars will be available to borrow.

Wednesday, 1/24 | 10 - 12 pm - Winter Woods Walk

Explore the Winter Woods at Genesee County Park and discover something new! We'll trek through the frozen forest, uncovering tracks in the snow and winter wildlife.

Pre-Registration Required

<https://bit.ly/GenCoParkRegistration>

Meet at the Interpretive Center Parking Lot
Program Fees help support the park!
Cost for attendance is \$5 per person or \$10 per family.

Questions?
Call the Interpretive Center at
(585) 344-1122

GENESEE COUNTY PARK & FOREST GROUNDHOG DAY WALK



**Saturday, February 3rd
10 - 11:30 am**

It's Groundhog Day – again! Legend has it that if a woodchuck sees his shadow on Groundhog Day, we'll have six more weeks of winter. Join Genesee County Parks for a short walk through field and forest, we'll learn about Groundhog Day and other ways to predict the weather. This walk will begin with a story time inside at the Interpretive Center. All are welcome, children must be accompanied by an adult.

Meet at the Interpretive Center. Program Fees help support the park!
Cost for attendance is \$5 per person or \$10 per family.

Pre-Registration Required

<https://bit.ly/GenCoParkRegistration>



Questions? Call the Interpretive Center at (585) 344-1122

Winter Programs at the Genesee County Park

GENESEE COUNTY PARK & FOREST

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT



Saturday, February 17th | 10 – 12 pm

Join the Genesee County Parks for the Great Backyard Bird Count! The GBBC is an annual community science event sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Birders around the world will be counting birds throughout the weekend. Our observations will help scientists understand bird populations in the wintertime. Join us for an easy-paced walk, we'll spend time watching birds visiting feeders so dress warm! Beginners are welcome. Field guides and binoculars will be available to borrow.

Meet at Pavilion B parking lot near the Veterans Memorial.

Pre-Registration Required

<https://bit.ly/GenCoParkRegistration>



Program Fees help support the park!
Cost for attendance is \$5 per person or \$10 per family.

Questions? Call the Interpretive Center at (585) 344-1122

GENESEE COUNTY PARK & FOREST

MOONLIGHT SNOWSHOE HIKE

Saturday, January 27th
4:30 - 6 pm

AND

Saturday, February 24th
5:30 - 7 pm

Join Genesee County Parks for a winter walk underneath the (almost) full moon! Enjoy the tranquil beauty of the forest by moonlight on a journey through meadows, along creeks, and into woodlands. Snowshoes may be used, weather permitting, and are provided or you may bring your own. No previous experience needed, snowshoeing lesson included! Hike concludes with refreshments by a warm fire in Pavilion B.

Pre-Registration Required

<https://bit.ly/GenCoParkRegistration>



Questions? Call the Interpretive Center at (585) 344-1122

Program Fees help support the park!
Cost for attendance is \$5 per person or \$15 per family.



Rex Introduces the GCP Dog Patrol

Hi!

I'm Rex—the Genesee County Park and Forest Mascot. I'm a two year old, 95lb. German Shepard. I

I've been coming to the GCP almost every day since I was 5 weeks old. In fact, I came to the park before I even went to my new home! I guess you could say that I have two homes. I am a very lucky dog.

I am proud to be the GCP mascot and the leader of the GCP Dog Patrol. The Dog Patrol watches over the park. We keep our eyes on the trails, investigate any new smells, and make sure that all park visitors, human or furry friends, feel welcome. In future Seedlings newsletter issues I will be introducing you to my park friends and members of the GCP Dog Patrol.



Our first GCP Dog Patrol member is Copper! Copper is a 10 year old, 135 lb. Malamute / Rottweiler mix.

I first met Copper when I was 7 weeks old. I jumped out of the car and ran to see him. When I got close, I realized that Copper is a BIG dog! After I realized that he wasn't going to eat me, I paid my respects by licking him under his big jaw. I still do that every time I see my friend, the gentle giant.

Copper is getting a little older and doesn't come to the park as often as he used to. Sometimes I stop at his house on my way home from the park to say hi!

Thank you Copper for your many years of service on the GCP Dog Patrol!

Would your dog like to join Rex and the GCP Dog Patrol? Join Rex's monthly dog walks on the first Saturday of the month. Save the date for:

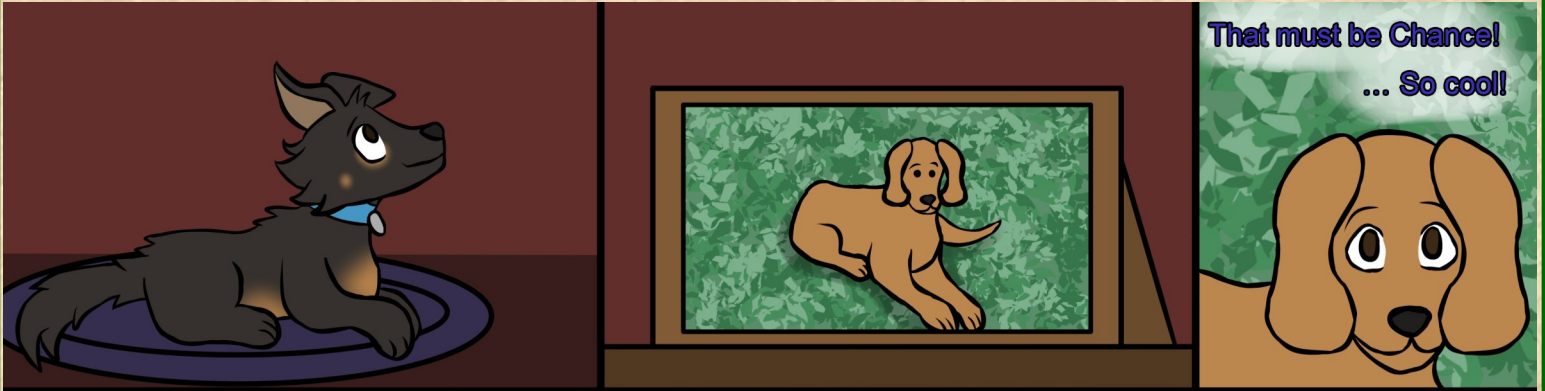
April 6th, May 4th, June 1st, July 6th, August 3rd, and September 7th

Registration for Dog Walks will be available in the Spring.

REX!

& THE GCP
DOG
PATROL

Illustrated by Calista Light.
Written by Pete Stanbridge.



That must be Chance!
... So cool!



Later...

Oh!! Look at these two!
I just want to say hi!!

Wait!



What would
Chance do?

I think... he'd let them pet him
... and wouldn't jump!

Just like this!

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>

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 McKeown Membership Specialist
Chris Nickerson
Jerome Gentry
Lewis Tandy
George Squires
Pete Stanbridge

Members:

Gabe & Michelle Abdella
The Allen Family
Norm Argulski
Charlie Augrom
Nancy Balbick
Sam & Ann Barone
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 Hoerbelt
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

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 McKeown, ACORNS Membership Specialist at acornsoutreach@gmail.com

ACORNS meetings are held every 4th Wednesday evening of the month.

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: Claudia Nusstein, 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

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 Claudia Nusstein at (585) 344-1122.

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

11095 Bethany Center Rd
Primary Business Address

Phone: 585-344-1122

www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/parks

SNOWSHOE RENTALS

Snowshoes are available to rent at **Genesee County Park & Forest Interpretive Nature Center** through the months of December, January, February and March, weather permitting. Rentals are available on a first come first serve basis and must be used in the Park.

Hours:

10 am — 3 pm Thursdays and Fridays

12 pm — 3 pm Saturdays and Sundays

(Snowshoes must be returned to building by 3pm)

Interpretive Nature Center will be closed December 25th
and January 1st.

Rental: \$5/pair, driver's license must be left at Nature Center while snowshoes are in use.

Snowshoes provided by ACORNS, the Association for the Conservation of Recreational and Natural Spaces

**For more information call 585-344-1122
or check out our facebook page!**



like us on
facebook



Genesee County Park & Forest Interpretive Nature Center
11095 Bethany Center Rd.
E. Bethany, NY 14054

<http://www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/parks/eventsprograms.html>



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Recreation & Forestry

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