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SPOOKY FINDINGS IN THE METRO PARKS

It's the time of year when spooky creatures and orange gourds take over the decorative landscape. Several traditional symbols of Halloween – like spiders, skeletons and bats – are year-round sights in the Metro Parks.

Creepy, crawly spiders are important to the ecosystem. In the state of Ohio, there are 624 recorded species of these bug eaters. Summit Metro Parks Naturalist Janean Kazimir said spiders feed by sucking on their prey, much like Dracula. They do not chew, but rather pierce prey with fangs and suck their “blood,” which in the case of insects is called *hemolymph*.

Another creature reminiscent of Dracula? Bats! Contrary to ghoulish tales, bats native to Ohio consume insects – sometimes thousands in one night! They can be found in the Metro Parks sleeping while hanging upside down. “Their feet are designed to allow them to hang for hours at a time without contracting a single muscle,” added Kazimir.

Kazimir suggested, for “bone-chilling fun,” looking to the ground during your next hike in the parks. Skeletal bones leave behind clues long after an animal is gone, and can be useful to other species. Rodents like mice, chipmunks and squirrels chew antlers and other bones as a source of calcium and minerals. Other creatures will eat bone marrow as they are consuming their prey.

“Nature leaves no waste!” she said.

For information about seasonal programs led by naturalists, visit summitmetroparks.org or call 330-865-8065.

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Summit Metro Parks manages 14,300 acres, including 16 parks, several conservation areas and more than 125 miles of trails, with 22.4 miles of the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail. Annual attendance averages 5 million visits.

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