

MAR•APR '26 | Vol. 67 No. 2

GREEN ISLANDS

Summit Metro Parks Bimonthly Magazine



**Summit
Metro** 
Parks®

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Our parks are like green islands in an urban landscape.

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This magazine is mailed free of charge to Summit County residents. To join the mailing list, send your name and mailing address to contact@summitmetroparks.org or call 330-867-5511.

Green Islands can be downloaded online: summitmetroparks.org

Your Metro Parks are funded by a small Summit County real-estate tax. This magazine is an example of your public dollars at work.



Board of Park Commissioners



Jill M. Stritch Herb Newman S. Theresa Carter Rev. Dr. Curtis T. Walker Sr. Joel D. Bailey

The park district's governing body is appointed by the Summit County Probate Judge. Commissioners serve overlapping three-year terms and are assisted by the executive director, who oversees the work of full-time and part-time employees, seasonal workers and volunteers.



ON THE COVER

In October 2025, native lake sturgeon were released into the Cuyahoga River in a joint SMP conservation effort. Read more on page 4.

WILD & SCENIC[®] FILM FESTIVAL
MARCH 21, 2026
at The Nightlight

The Summit Metro Parks Foundation is excited to bring the world-class Wild & Scenic Film Festival back to The Nightlight theater in Akron to celebrate the beauty of nature and the importance of conservation. In-person and virtual tickets are available for \$25. All proceeds benefit the Summit Metro Parks Foundation and its work in supporting the park district.

Learn more at bit.ly/smp-wsff26

Summit Metro Parks **FOUNDATION**

Artwork by *Jeremy Collins*

Discover YOUR BACK YARD



TURN FOOD WASTE INTO SUPER SOIL

Why – and how – everyone should compost

Rachel Whinnery,
Marketing Specialist

Food makes up nearly 25 percent of solid waste sent from homes to landfills every year. By composting organic materials, you can help reduce the amount of methane landfills produce while improving soil quality.

To compost at home, you'll need a bin or tumbler with adequate airflow and access to water. Add a mix of green materials (vegetable scraps, coffee grounds) and brown materials (cardboard, wood chips) to create nutrient-dense compost.

But how do you compost meat, dairy or BPI-certified products that need composting bins to reach much higher temperatures? That's where commercial composting companies come in.

We partnered with Rubber City Reuse to offer community composting bins. So, whether you don't have space in your back yard or have items that can't be composted at home, you can still keep food scraps out of landfills.

To find community compost bin locations in your Metro Parks and a composting guide, visit bit.ly/SMPGreenerFuture. 🍃

[Other local organizations may offer composting services. Let's Grow AKRON offers community drop-off sites, plus pick-up services for local businesses. The compost is used in their gardens across the city or available for purchase.]

LAKE STURGEON



Reclaim the Cuyahoga as Home





Ramsey Langford, Park Biologist

The great river revival has a new chapter: The reintroduction of lake sturgeon in the Cuyahoga River is now underway, and it signals not only the return of a prehistoric species, but also the rebirth of a river once in flames.

Summit Metro Parks teamed up with Ohio Division of Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Cleveland Metroparks, Cuyahoga Valley National Park, U.S. Geological Survey and Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District to begin a Cuyahoga River Lake Sturgeon Reintroduction Plan.

Lake sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*) once roamed freely in the Cuyahoga River and other tributaries feeding Lake Erie. But, by the 1900s, a combination of over-fishing, pollution, damming of rivers and habitat loss caused lake sturgeon

continued on page 6



Ramsey Langford, park biologist, releases a fingerling lake sturgeon into the Cuyahoga River in Cascade Valley Metro Park.

to disappear from the system. Their numbers dwindled drastically across the Great Lakes region, making their comeback a conservation priority.

Several important habitat improvements have set the stage for this reintroduction. One of the biggest was the removal of the Brecksville Dam in 2020, which opened up roughly 45 miles of river from Lake Erie to the Gorge Dam within Gorge Metro Park. Biologists have also mapped the riverbed and found areas of suitable spawning habitat (gravel, cobble and flow rate) and nursery habitat

for younger fish. Additionally, water quality has improved significantly over the decades, allowing formerly absent species to return. The restoration of the river through the Valley View Area of Cascade Valley Metro Park was also designed with habitat for this species in mind.

The sturgeon restoration effort will take time. The goal is to establish a self-sustaining, spawning stock of about 1,500 mature adult lake sturgeon in the Cuyahoga River by approximately 2049. The plan calls for annual stocking of around 2,000 fingerling lake sturgeon in the

river over a 20-plus-year period. In 2024, a pilot release occurred with about 60 juveniles implanted with transmitters that were released to monitor movement, survival and habitat use. And last fall, over 2,000 fingerlings were released at three sites along the Cuyahoga River to inaugurate this broader rollout. Of those 2,000 fingerlings, more than 750 were released at the Valley View Area, the most upstream site.

Reintroducing lake sturgeon to the Cuyahoga River is significant for several reasons. Lake sturgeon are an ecological indicator because

they are long-lived, slow to mature and require high-quality habitat to reproduce. Their presence signals a river that has made real water quality progress. The reintroduction of this historically present species provides more biodiversity. This helps re-balance ecosystems, supporting an even more sustainable native river fishery, along with invertebrates and other river life.

The effort to reintroduce lake sturgeon is a marathon, not a sprint. Lake sturgeon mature slowly; it takes 10 to 15 years before they can spawn and return to the same river systems to reproduce, so results will not be visible overnight. The success of this reintroduction plan depends on not only stocking fish, but ensuring they survive, find suitable habitat, grow, display natural behavior and eventually reproduce. Monitoring the fish via tracking tags and transmitters is a key part of how local scientists will determine whether this has successfully occurred. Continued attention to water quality, sediment and habitat is a required component for the future generations to come. 🍃



Sharing the importance of conservation and community service, this father-daughter volunteer team worked alongside SMP staff to release lake sturgeon into the Cuyahoga River at *Cascade Valley Metro Park*.



Explore

PROGRAMS & EVENTS

MARCH

Beginning Sunday, March 1

SELF-GUIDED STORY TRAIL: NORTH COUNTRY SPRING

Enjoy hiking a portion of the 1.2-mile Downy Loop Trail as the season changes while reading a special spring story along the way. This experience is available through March 29. **WH/Downy Loop Trail: 2121 Barlow Rd., Hudson**

Sunday, March 1, 1 – 2:30 p.m.

VERY VALUABLE VULTURES

The wait is almost over! Join us in excited anticipation for the return of the migratory and magnificent turkey vulture. We'll take a deep dive into feathered forensics to discover the ecological importance of this misunderstood member of the scavenger squad. After a sit-down presentation indoors, we'll hit the trail and look for vultures and other birds, so please bring binoculars. **FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**

Beginning Monday, March 2

SELF GUIDED: A FROG IN A BOG

Who's in the bog? It's a frog! Follow a self-guided story trail based on the book "A Frog in the Bog" along the 1.6-mile Prairie Trail. This experience is available through March 28. **SFB/Prairie Trail: 1400 Portage Line Rd., Springfield Twp.**

Beginning Wednesday, March 4

EYE SPY: HARD MODE

Hike along the 0.6-mile Cherry Lane Trail for an amusing challenge in the woods. Remember, this is not your nana's eye spy! Available through March 16. **FASN/Nature Realm: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**



Wednesday, March 4, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

NATURE DRAWING FOR ADULTS

Join our interpretive artist for an entertaining lesson in nature drawing. Bring a sketchbook, pencil and a sense of humor. Beginners are welcome. *Registration required* (2/1). **FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**

Wednesday, March 4, 1 – 2 p.m.

VIRTUAL: NATURE DRAWING FOR ADULTS

Join our interpretive artist online for this entertaining virtual lesson in nature drawing. No experience is necessary; all you need are pencils, paper and a sense of humor. *Registration required* (2/1). **A Zoom invitation will be emailed to participants after registering.**

Thursday, March 5, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

NATURE DRAWING FOR ADULTS

Join our interpretive artist for an entertaining lesson in nature drawing. Bring a sketchbook, pencil and a sense of humor. Beginners are welcome. *Registration required* (2/1). **SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron**

Thursday, March 5, 6 – 7:30 p.m.

GOOD GARDEN TALKS: SEED STARTING

Join us in collaboration with Let's Grow Akron and OSU Extension to learn best practices for starting seeds for the vegetable garden. In the event of inclement weather, the program will be held indoors. **SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron**

Friday, March 6, 10:30 – 11 a.m.

WINTER NATURE TALES

Young children and their adult companions can enjoy an interactive, late-winter-themed story time. Make it a fun, family-friendly morning by exploring the park after the program. **LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg**

Saturday, March 7, 9 – 10:30 a.m.

BREAKFAST WITH WATERFOWL

Drop in at the campground boat launch to start your morning right with a campfire, pie iron pancakes and birdwatching. We'll have binoculars, a spotting scope and field guides set out to enjoy. *Registration required* (2/1). **NR/Lot C4: 5550 Christman Rd., Green**

Saturday, March 7, 12 – 1 p.m.

WOMEN OF ORNITHOLOGY

Join a naturalist for a presentation to celebrate and discuss the amazing history of women ornithologists. **FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**



Sunday, March 8, 12:30 – 2:30 p.m.

SALAMANDER SLIME OPEN HOUSE

Come have a good time making some salamander slime! We'll be talking about some of the slimiest creatures around the world. Afterward, we will make our very own slime to take home (while supplies last). **FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**

Key

WEB: bit.ly/SMPevents Register online beginning on the date in parentheses.

ZOOM: zoom.us/join Key in the Meeting ID number.

(date) Registration start date

\$ Fee

BHT Bike & Hike Trail

CV Cascade Valley

DLQ Deep Lock Quarry

FASN F.A. Seiberling Nature Realm

F Firestone

FR Furnace Run

FT Freedom Trail

GYH Goodyear Heights

G Gorge

HH Hampton Hills

LP Liberty Park

MF Munroe Falls

NR Nimisila Reservoir

ONW O'Neil Woods

SC Silver Creek

SFB Springfield Bog

SLNC Summit Lake Nature Center

SR Sand Run

TT Towpath Trail

WH Wood Hollow

Sunday, March 8, 8 – 10 p.m.



OWL PROWL

"Whooo" goes there? Hike the 2-mile Chippewa Trail at night to get a glimpse into the nocturnal world of owls. SC/Big Oak Area: 5199 Medina Line Rd., Norton

Tuesday, March 10, 1 – 3 p.m.

NATURE DRAWING FOR ADULTS

Join our interpretive artist for an entertaining lesson in nature drawing. Bring a sketchbook, pencil and a sense of humor. Beginners are welcome. Registration required (2/1). FR/Brushwood Area: 4955 Townsend Rd., Richfield

Thursday, March 12, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

NATURE COLLAGE

Let's make a beautiful nature-inspired collage using recycled paper! Join our interpretive artist for this easy, fun lesson. All materials will be provided. Registration required (2/1). FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron



**KINDEREALM:
TURKEY VULTURES**

Children ages 3 to 6 and their adult companions will learn about the extraordinary turkey vulture, their revolting habits and important roles as nature's clean-up crew. Program includes a hike and craft. Please make other arrangements for younger children unable to remain in infant seats or strollers. Registration required (2/1).

10:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Wednesday, March 11

FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Wednesday, March 18

LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg

Wednesday, March 25

SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron



Thursday, March 12, 1 – 2 p.m.

VIRTUAL: NATURE COLLAGE

Let's make a beautiful nature-inspired collage using recycled paper! Join our interpretive artist for this easy, fun lesson. Registration required (2/1). A list of materials and a Zoom invitation will be emailed to participants after registering.

Thursday, March 12, 6:30 – 8 p.m.

**HOMEGROWN HABITAT:
MOON GARDENS**

Calling all people with yards or green spaces big and small: Join us and learn how to rewrite your home landscape. This month, we'll dive into the moonlit world and discover what plants and practices attract wildlife active at night. FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Friday, March 13, 7:30 – 9 p.m.

FRIDAY NIGHT FROGS

Venture out on a night hike in search of frogs and discover the important roles amphibians play in our world. Please bring a headlamp or flashlight. SR/Old Portage Area: 1300 Sand Run Pkwy. Akron

Saturday, March 14, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

DROP-IN: ORIGAMI ANIMALS

Drop in to the nature center's Lakeview Room to learn about native wildlife and the basics of origami by folding an assortment of paper animals. Bring a mug; warm drinks will be available. SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

Saturday, March 14, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

LIVABLE, SUSTAINABLE AKRON

Explore ways to make your home more sustainable and see how local Akron organizations are helping lead the effort. FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Saturday, March 14, 12 – 1:30 p.m.

NATURE SAUNTER

Appreciate the outdoors at a leisurely pace with a refreshing stroll along the 1.3-mile Rock Creek Trail to look and listen for signs that winter is transitioning to spring! FR/Brushwood Area: 4955 Townsend Rd., Richfield

Saturday, March 14, 3 – 5 p.m.

**BEYOND THE SUMMIT:
THE FACTS OF FISHING**

Beyond the Summit is a speaker series featuring environmental professionals discussing topics related to water in Northeast Ohio. From watershed health to fishing best practices, each talk offers community members the chance to learn from experts shaping the future of our water resources. This month's guest joins us from Fisherman's Central to talk about some fishing facts and pro tips. SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

Sunday, March 15, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

**FLAPJACKS AND SAP FACTS:
A MAPLE SUGARING BREAKFAST**

Join us as we reap the fruits of our labor by enjoying a traditional pancake breakfast with our own Liberty Park maple syrup. As we wrap up breakfast, there will be a presentation and discussion of the notable history of maple syrup production in and around Summit County. Space is limited. Registration required (2/1). LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg



Sunday, March 15, 1 – 2:30 p.m.

DIVE INTO VERNAL POOLS

Come take a deep dive into vernal pool ecology as we explore what makes these temporary habitats perfect breeding grounds for amphibians, insects and more. We will also discuss the important role they play in forest ecosystems and how they may be facing an uncertain future. After the presentation, we will take a short walk to see them in action. FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron



Wednesday, March 18, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

THE CUYAHOGA: A DAM GOOD STORY

Join the Greater Akron Audubon Society to welcome Watershed Specialist Elaine Marsh, a lifelong lover of the Cuyahoga River and Lake Erie. From pristine to polluted and finally restored, we'll learn the roles science, public policy and funding play in this stunning account of man's checkered history with water quality. Meet in the East Room. GYH/Goodyear Heights Lodge: 2077 Newton St., Akron

Thursday, March 19, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

HOMESCHOOLERS: SPRING SINGS & OTHER THINGS

Homeschoolers ages 7 to 12: Join us to learn what's singing this spring and why there are so many things to see. We'll explore topics like bird migration, insect emergence, spring ephemerals and more through a presentation, activities and a short hike. Dress for the weather. Registration required (2/1). FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Thursday, March 19, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

GOOD GARDEN TALKS: BLUEBIRD BOXES

Join us in collaboration with Let's Grow Akron for this wild workshop! Learn about Ohio's eastern bluebird, then build your own bluebird box to take home. Materials will be provided on a first-come, first-serve basis. GYH/Goodyear Heights Lodge: 2077 Newton St., Akron

Friday, March 20, 7 – 8 p.m.

YOUNG BIRDERS: TIMBERDOODLES

Kids ages 8 and up are invited to learn about the elusive timberdoodle, better known as the American woodcock, through a short presentation and woodcock walk. An adult companion is required to remain for the entirety of the program. F/Tuscarawas Meadows Area: 2620 Harrington Rd., Akron

Saturday, March 21, 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

MIGRATION MADNESS FIELD TRIP

Join park naturalists on a bus trip to the wetlands of Killbuck Marsh and Funk Bottoms Wildlife Areas for a morning of migrating waterfowl, shorebirds and more. Pack binoculars, spotting scopes, snacks and a lunch. Dress for all-day comfort out in the elements. Cost: \$60/person. Registration required (2/1). FASN/Nature Realm: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Saturday, March 21 & Sunday, March 22, 12 – 4 p.m.

MAPLE MANIA

Everyone loves real maple syrup! Stop in to discover the ins and outs of maple sugaring. See how the trees are tapped, how sap is collected and how it's boiled down to that sweet amber syrup. Did you know Hudson, Ohio, was the birthplace of modern maple syrup production? Enjoy the festivities and — the best part — you can satisfy your sweet tooth by sampling our fresh, local Liberty Park syrup! LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg

Beginning Wednesday, March 25

SELF-GUIDED TRAIL: MIGRATORY BIRDS

Hit the 1.1-mile Redwing Trail to discover fun facts about bird migration and identification while experiencing the beauty of peak migration season through April 8. F/Tuscarawas Meadows Area: 2620 Harrington Rd., Akron

Wednesday, March 25, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

MEET ME IN THE GARDEN: SPRING INTO ROSES

Discover how to make your spring roses thrive with expert tips on care, pruning and feeding for gardeners of all levels. Summit County Master Gardener Rick Hoddinott will help you plan for spring! FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Thursday, March 26, 4:30 – 6 p.m. & 6:30 – 8 p.m.

ARCHERY GAMES

Practiced participants will review international-style target archery principles and test their marksmanship through a variety of fun and challenging shooting games. All equipment and hands-on instruction provided. Must be 9 years old and 50 inches or taller. Previous archery experience preferred. Cost: \$10/person. Registration required (2/1). F/Coventry Oaks Lodge: 40 Axline Ave., Akron

Friday, March 27, 10:30 – 11 a.m.

SPRING NATURE TALES

It's finally spring! Young children and their adult companions can celebrate during an interactive, spring-themed story time. Make it a fun, family-friendly morning by exploring the park or visiting the Nature Play area after the program. LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg

Friday, March 27, 6 – 8 p.m.

PRIDE IN THE PARKS: SIGNS OF SPRING

Join us for an evening hike full of inclusive fellowship with the queer community. But don't worry, allies are welcome too. Afterward, stick around for a fire, hot beverages and snacks at the Tuscarawas Shelter. F/Tuscarawas Meadows Area: 2620 Harrington Rd., Akron



Friday, March 27, 7:30 – 9 p.m.

FRIDAY NIGHT FROGS

Venture out on a night hike in search of frogs and discover the important roles amphibians play in our world. Please bring a headlamp or flashlight. BHT/Young Road Lot: 5090 Young Rd., Stow

Saturday, March 28, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

BIRD NERDS: CANADA GOOSE

Bird enthusiasts of all kinds are welcome to join us for a deep dive into one of Ohio's most recognizable species each month. You see them. You love them. But how well do you really know them? After our indoor presentation, those interested can join for a guided birding walk. **FASN/Nature Realm: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**



Saturday, March 28, 1 – 2:30 p.m.

BEES & BLOOMS

Hike the 1.3-mile Rock Creek Trail with naturalists to look for queen bees working and early blooms flowering as we discuss the dynamic of spring and its effects on pollinators. **FR/Brushwood Area: 4955 Townsend Rd., Richfield**

Saturday, March 28, 7:30 – 9 p.m.

WOODCOCKS AND WOOD FROGS

Stay up late to discover some of spring's most legendary (and elusive) creatures! We will explore where wood frogs and woodcocks may be hiding and why this season is an important time for both. Please bring a headlamp or flashlight. **CV/Valley View Area: 1134 Cuyahoga St., Akron**

Sunday, March 29, 1 – 2 p.m. & 3 – 4 p.m.

BACK YARDS GONE WILD: DIY BLUEBIRD BOXES

Join a naturalist to learn about cavity-nesting birds such as chickadees, bluebirds and wrens. After a short presentation, participants can make a bluebird box to take home, free of charge, courtesy of Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Limit: one kit per household. Program will take place in the outdoor shelter, so dress for the weather! *Registration required* 🐦 (2/1). **LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg**

Sunday, March 29, 1 – 2:30 p.m.

SPRING SHIFT HIKE

Take a hike on the 2.2-mile Indian Spring Trail as winter comes to an end. We'll find out what's already beginning to appear and what else the season might have in store. **MF/Lake Area: 521 S. River Rd., Munroe Falls**

Sunday, March 29, 1 – 3 p.m.

HIKING SPREE SHIELD ASSISTANCE

Is attaching the hiking spree shield more challenging than actually hiking the eight trails? Summit Metro Parks volunteers will gladly attach it for you at no charge. *Please note: March 31 is the last day to collect 2025 Fall Hiking Spree rewards!* **FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**



Monday, March 30, 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. & 2 – 3:30 p.m.

LITTLE HIKERS: SPRING INTO STORYTIME

Storytime is better on the trail! Bring your little ones for a 1.1-mile hike on Redwing Trail with stops along the way for a story and games to celebrate the season. Consider a jogging stroller or carrier for younger children unable to hike. **F/Tuscarawas Meadows Area: 2620 Harrington Rd., Akron**

Tuesday, March 31, 10 – 11:30 a.m.

SPRING STINKS!

Come learn about all the smelly things that make spring stink! We'll take a 1.4-mile hike on Seneca Trail and use our sense of smell and other observation tools to learn about the funky, fetid plants and animals that call our parks home. **FASN/Nature Realm: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**



WILD & SCENIC[®] FILM FESTIVAL

WHERE ACTIVISM GETS INSPIRED





Learn more and purchase tickets:
bit.ly/smp-wsff26

THE NIGHTLIGHT:
30 N High St., Akron

Saturday, March 21

Showtimes:

- 2 p.m.
- 2:30 p.m.
- 6 p.m.
- 6:30 p.m.



Artwork by Jeremy Collins

APRIL

Wednesday, April 1, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

NATURE DRAWING FOR ADULTS

Join our interpretive artist for an entertaining lesson in nature drawing. Bring a sketchbook, pencil and a sense of humor. Beginners are welcome. *Registration required* 📍 (3/1). FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Wednesday, April 1, 1 – 2 p.m.

VIRTUAL: NATURE DRAWING FOR ADULTS

Join our interpretive artist online for this entertaining virtual lesson in nature drawing. No experience is necessary; all you need are pencils, paper and a sense of humor. *Registration required* 📍 (3/1). 📺 A Zoom invitation will be emailed to participants after registering.

Wednesday, April 1, 7:30 – 9 p.m.

“FOOL” MOON HIKE

Take an evening hike on the 2-mile Meadow Trail under the Pink Moon! We will celebrate April Fools' Day with some nature-inspired jokes and silly stories about early naturalists and some of their foolish exploits during the age of discovery. MF/Tallmadge Meadows Area: 1088 North Ave., Tallmadge

Thursday, April 2, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

NATURE DRAWING FOR ADULTS

Join our interpretive artist for an entertaining lesson in nature drawing. Bring a sketchbook, pencil and a sense of humor. Beginners are welcome. *Registration required* 📍 (3/1). SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

Thursday, April 2, 3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

KIDS IN THE GARDEN

Join us in collaboration with Let's Grow Akron for weekly hands-on gardening activities for children of all ages. Seed, sow, water, harvest . . . and enjoy! Each week we'll have a game or craft, garden activity and a snack themed around what is growing and ready to harvest in the garden. In the event of inclement weather, the program will be held indoors. SLNC:

411 Ira Ave., Akron



Thursday, April 2, 6 – 7:30 p.m.

GOOD GARDEN TALKS: SOIL HEALTH

Soil is the foundation of your garden and determines how well your plants will thrive. Join us in collaboration with Let's Grow Akron and OSU Extension to learn how to build and maintain healthy, living soil in your vegetable garden. In the event of inclement weather, the program will be held indoors. SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

Friday, April 3, 7:30 – 9 p.m.

WOODCOCK WALK

Join a naturalist as we partner with The University of Akron Field Station at Bath Nature Preserve for a chance to see the legendary timberdoodle! These birds put on a show you won't want to miss. *Please drive all the way down the driveway to the Field Station.* The University of Akron Field Station (Bath Nature Preserve): 4240 Ira Rd., Akron

Saturday, April 4, 10 – 11:30 a.m.

LIL' SPROUTS



This biweekly program is designed to engage young children and accompanying adults in the wonderful world of gardening and nature. Each class will be centered

on what's happening in nature and what's growing and ready to harvest! Adults are asked to actively participate with children during the program. *Registration required* 📍 (3/1). SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

Saturday, April 4, 1 – 2:30 p.m.

POWERING TOMORROW SUSTAINABLY

Join a naturalist in this new monthly series to explore how emerging energy technologies and evolving policies are shaping our daily lives — and paving the way toward a sustainable future. We'll discover how communities, industries and individuals are coming together to cut carbon emissions, adopt renewable technologies and rethink the way we power our world. Each month focuses on a key theme. Look forward to future programs in this series that bring together science, innovation and community action to deepen your understanding of energy and inspire a more sustainable world for generations to come. LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg

Beginning Sunday, April 5

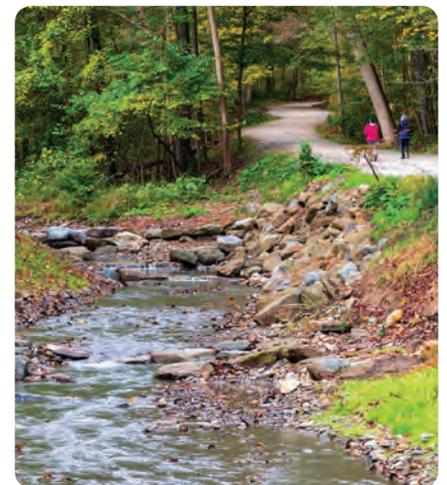
SELF-GUIDED STORY TRAIL: TOAD

Enjoy a hike and read an amusing story about a toad along the way. Available along the 1.3-mile Rock Creek Trail through April 26. FR/Brushwood Area: 4955 Townsend Rd., Richfield

Wednesday, April 8, 6 – 7:30 p.m.

BOOK CLUB: BICYCLING WITH BUTTERFLIES

Whether a first-time visitor or a longtime book club member, all adults are invited to share in a lively discussion about the inspiring book "Bicycling with Butterflies" by Sara Dykman. Don't forget to bring your mug — we'll supply the beverages. FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron



Wednesday, April 8, 6 – 8 p.m.

BEYOND THE SUMMIT: URBAN IMPACTS ON STREAMS

Beyond the Summit is a speaker series featuring environmental professionals discussing topics related to water in Northeast Ohio. From watershed health to fishing best practices, each talk offers community members the chance to learn from experts shaping the future of our water resources. This month's guest joins us from Summit Soil and Water Conservation District to talk about the urban impacts on local streams. SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

Beginning Thursday, April 9

SELF-GUIDED: AWAITING WARBLERS

Hike a portion of the 1.2-mile Downy Loop Trail to discover the world of warblers as we await these marvelous migrants. This experience is available through April 23. WH/Downy Loop Trail: 2121 Barlow Rd., Hudson



KINDEREALM: MARVELOUS MIGRATION

We invite children ages 3 to 6 and their adult companions to join us to learn about the marvels of bird migration. We'll embark on a journey of our own through activities, a story and a short hike. *Please make other arrangements for younger children unable to remain in infant seats or strollers. Registration required* 🏹 (3/1).

10:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Wednesday, April 8

FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Wednesday, April 15

9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg

Wednesday, April 22

SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

**Thursday, April 9,
4:30 – 6 p.m. & 6:30 – 8 p.m.**

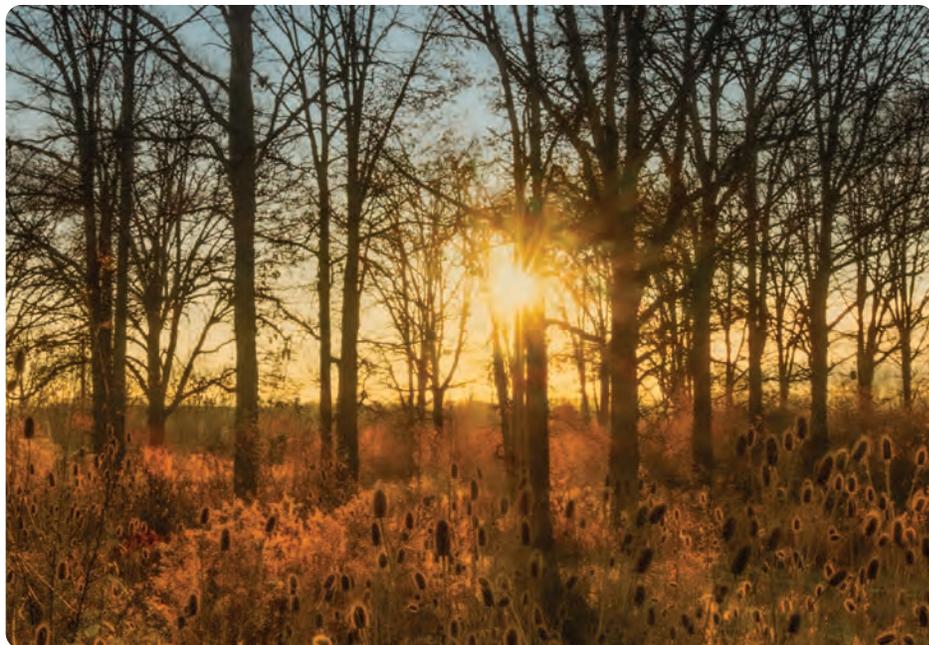
ARCHERY GAMES

Practiced participants will review international-style target archery principles and test their marksmanship through a variety of fun and challenging shooting games. All equipment and hands-on instruction provided. Must be 9 years old and 50 inches or taller. Previous archery experience preferred. Cost: \$10/person. *Registration required* 🏹 (3/1). F/Coventry Oaks Lodge: 40 Axline Ave., Akron

Friday, April 10, 8 – 9:30 p.m.

FRIDAY NIGHT FROGS

Venture out on a night hike in search of frogs and discover the important roles amphibians play in our world. Please bring a headlamp or flashlight. SR/Big Bend Area: 1337 Merriman Rd., Akron



Saturday, April 11, 9 – 11 a.m.

WATERFOWL WALK

Join a naturalist for a walk at Summit Lake to search for and learn about waterfowl and the other birds living nearby. Binoculars will be available to borrow on a first-come, first-served basis. SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

Saturday, April 11, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

BIRD NERDS: BALTIMORE ORIOLE

Bird enthusiasts of all kinds are welcome to join us for a deep dive into one of Ohio's most recognizable species each month. You see them. You love them. But how well do you really know them? After our indoor presentation, a guided bird walk will be held at the Valley View Area of Cascade Valley Metro Park. FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron



Saturday, April 11, 1 – 2:30 p.m.

TURKEY VULTURES: NATURE'S CLEAN-UP CREW

Following a presentation on turkey vultures' unusual habits, extraordinary adaptations and important role in our ecosystem, we'll hit the trail in hopes of watching them in action as they rock and glide on thermals overhead. LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg

Beginning Sunday, April 12

SELF-GUIDED: AMPHIBIAN LIFE

Enjoy a hike on the 1.1-mile Redwing Trail while learning all about our local amphibians. Discover facts about their life cycle, seasonal happenings and different species. This experience is available through April 19. F/Tuscarawas Meadows Area: 2620 Harrington Rd., Akron

Sunday, April 12, 6 – 8 p.m.

TWICE AS NICE: FITNESS HIKE

There's more than one way to experience the same trail. Join a naturalist for a brisk, health-focused first lap followed by a slower exploration of Parcours Trail. Total distance is 3.4 miles. GYH/Main Entrance: 2077 Newton St., Akron



Sunday, April 12, 7:30 – 8:30 p.m.

ANIMAL TALES CAMPFIRE

Why do bears sleep all winter and how did the opossum get his bare tail? Gather around a fire at sunset to hear tales and learn some facts while enjoying s'mores! Meet at the campfire area and bring a camp chair if you'd like. LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg

Tuesday, April 14, 1 – 3 p.m.

NATURE DRAWING FOR ADULTS

Join our interpretive artist for an entertaining lesson in nature drawing. Bring a sketchbook, pencil and a sense of humor. Beginners are welcome. *Registration required* 📍 (3/1). LP/ Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg

Wednesday, April 15, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

BUILD YOUR BIRD-FRIENDLY YARD

Join the Greater Akron Audubon Society and Becca Zak, environmental educator and native plant enthusiast, to learn how to build a bird-friendly space, right in your own yard. We'll highlight simple, accessible and effective ways to transform your passion for birds into conservation action that best supports backyard bird species and other wildlife neighbors. Meet in the East Room. *GYH/Goodyear Heights Lodge: 2077 Newton St., Akron*



Thursday, April 16, 10 – 11:30 a.m.

LIL' SPROUTS

This biweekly program is designed to engage young children and accompanying adults in the wonderful world of gardening and nature. Each class will be centered on what's happening in nature and what's growing and ready to harvest! Adults are asked to actively participate with children during the program. *Registration required* 📍 (3/1). SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

Thursday, April 16, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

NATURE COLLAGE

Let's make a beautiful nature-inspired collage using recycled paper! Join our interpretive artist for this easy, fun lesson. All materials will be provided. *Registration required* 📍 (3/1). FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Thursday, April 16, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

HOMESCHOOLERS: STREAMS

Homeschoolers ages 7 to 12: Join a naturalist to learn about the importance of freshwater habitats and the life within them. Participants must wear closed-toe shoes that can get wet. *Registration required* 📍 (3/1). F/Coventry Oaks Lodge: 40 Axline Ave., Akron

Thursday, April 16, 1 – 2 p.m.

VIRTUAL: NATURE COLLAGE

Let's make a beautiful nature-inspired collage using recycled paper! Join our interpretive artist for this easy, fun lesson. *Registration required* 📍 (3/1). 📺 A list of materials and a Zoom invite will be emailed after registering.

Thursday, April 16, 6 – 7:30 p.m.

GOOD GARDEN TALKS: CREATING SOFT LANDINGS

Discover how native plantings under native trees provide critical shelter and habitat for one or more life cycle stages of moths, butterflies and beneficial insects whose numbers are in decline. *GYH/West Room: 2077 Newton St., Akron*



Thursday, April 16, 6:30 – 8 p.m.

CONSERVATION IN ACTION: BATS OF OHIO

Join us for the first Conservation in Action Series presentation. Park Biologist Marlo Perdicás will summarize two decades of bat research and discuss the future of these unique and imperiled species. *FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron*

Beginning Friday, April 17

SELF-GUIDED: SPRING WILDFLOWER WALK

Welcome, spring! Hike the 1.1-mile Ledges Trail through May 3 to discover delicate spring blooms of all shapes, sizes and colors. Interpretive signs will be posted along the way to point out these beauties and guide your learning experience. *LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg*

Friday, April 17, 10:30 – 11 a.m.

SPRING NATURE TALES

Young children and their adult companions can celebrate spring during an interactive, spring-themed story time. Make it a fun, family-friendly morning by exploring the park or visiting the Nature Play area after the program. *LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg*

Friday, April 17, 3:30 – 5 p.m.

DANCING CONVERSATION: CREATIVE PROCESS IN NATURE

NCCAkron Executive/Artistic Director Christy Bolingbroke will facilitate a discussion with four artists around incorporating nature as a part of their creative process. Akron-based artists will include Choreographer Dominic Moore-Dunson and his work *Black by Nature*, Saxophonist Chris Coles and Wildlife Specialist Monika 'Bell' Bowman and their project *AVIMANCY*. Dancing Conversations highlight how dance and the arts touch everyday life. *FASN/Nature Realm: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron*

Saturday, April 18, 10:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.

EARTH FEST OPEN HOUSE

Get an early start on celebrating Earth Day 2026 and enjoy games, a craft and music. You'll learn the history of Earth Day, plus easy ways you can live greener and adopt sustainable practices. *FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron*

Saturday, April 18, 12 – 2 p.m.

NATURE SAUNTER

Appreciate the outdoors at a leisurely pace with a naturalist-led stroll along the 2.1-mile Black Bear Trail to observe and enjoy spring wildflowers and wildlife. *LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg*

Sunday, April 19, 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.



SPRING WILDFLOWER WALK

Search for early spring wildflowers alongside a naturalist during a 1.9-mile stroll

on Spring Hollow Trail. We will learn how these eager bloomers have specially adapted to take advantage of a sleeping forest floor. Be prepared for steep, uneven terrain. *HH/ Main Entrance: 2925 Akron Peninsula Rd., Akron*

Sunday, April 19, 2 – 3:30 p.m.

TAKE HOME TERRARIUMS

Learn how to make a simple terrarium to house roly pollies! Participants will go home with a large glass jar fully furnished for their backyard friends. Afterward, take a short stroll along part of the paved Maple Loop Trail in search of life under logs — it's bound to be a flippin' good time! *Registration required* 📍 (3/1). *LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg*

Sunday, April 19, 6:30 – 8 p.m.

KIDS CAMPFIRE STORIES & S'MORES

Share stories as the light gets low. Join a naturalist for a classic campfire story and a sweet treat followed by shadow puppets, campfire songs and s'more camp classics. *Meet on the beach at the Lake House Area.* **SC/ Lake House Area: 5000 Hametown Rd., Norton**

Wednesday, April 22, 4:30 – 6 p.m.

EARTH DAY HIKE

Celebrate Earth Day by hiking the 2-mile Meadow Trail with a naturalist. Along the way, we will explore all there is to appreciate about nature including blooms, birds and more. We will also discuss how you can do your part to protect our beautiful world. **MF/ Tallmadge Meadows Area: 1088 North Ave., Tallmadge**

Wednesday, April 22, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

SPRING WILDFLOWERS AT SUNSET

Join a naturalist along the challenging 2-mile Deer Run Trail as we explore the forest in search of spring ephemerals at sunset. We'll learn some identification tips and the cultural history of these small but mighty plants. **ONW/Deer Run Trail: 2550 Martin Rd., Bath**

Thursday, April 23, 6:30 – 8 p.m.

WILDLIFE HISTORY HIKE

Celebrate Earth Day on a 1-mile hike through Cascade Valley Metro Park. We will take a look at the rich past, present state and optimistic future of wildlife in our area, thanks to the conservation efforts right here in our parks. **CV/Valley View Area: 1134 Cuyahoga St., Akron**

Friday, April 24, 8 – 9:30 p.m.

FRIDAY NIGHT FROGS

Venture out on a night hike in search of frogs and discover the important roles amphibians play in our world. Please bring a headlamp or flashlight. **SFB/Prairie Trail: 1400 Portage Line Rd., Springfield Twp.**

Saturday, April 25, 10 – 11 a.m.

YOUNG BIRDERS: WARBLIN' WARBLERS

Kids ages 8 and up are invited to join us and learn about the commotion in the tree canopy through a short presentation and warbler walk. An adult companion is required to remain for the entirety of the program. **FASN/Seneca Deck: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**

Saturday, April 25, 1 – 3 p.m.

SPRING WILDFLOWERS AND THEIR BEES

Join a naturalist as we walk the ledges in search of spring wildflowers and their friends, the specialist bees. Learn about the interdependence between wildflowers and bees and why you only see "queen" bumblebees this time of the year. **LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg**

Saturday, April 25, 8 – 9 p.m.

VITAL VERNAL POOLS

Meet in Pheasant Run Shelter to learn about the formation and richness of an essential and ephemeral spring habitat: the vernal pool. Afterward, join a short hike to listen to the frogs that flock to these pools. **SC/Pheasant Run Area: 5000 Hametown Rd., Norton**

Sunday, April 26, 9:30 – 11 a.m.

BIRDS AND BLOOMS



New and experienced birdwatchers are invited to stroll the 1.4-mile Quarry Trail in search of songbirds and wildflowers painting the forest with a long-awaited splash of color.

Binoculars are recommended; some will be available to borrow. **DLQ/Quarry Trail: 5779 Riverview Rd., Peninsula**

Sunday, April 26, 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.

ANIMAL AMBASSADOR MEET N' GREET

Get up-close with the animal ambassadors that call the visitors center home! We'll learn about each critter, enjoy tabletop activities and learn about how you can be a local wildlife hero right in your own back yard! *Meet in the auditorium.* **FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**

Sunday, April 26, 1 – 2:30 p.m.

MIGRATION MADNESS

Join a naturalist as we get ready for spring migration, warbler season and the Biggest Week in American Birding! We will review the basics of warbler identification, along with other spring migrants. There will be several specimens preserved by taxidermy to provide a bird's eye view of the many species that will be migrating through in the coming weeks. This program is designed for all levels of birding experience. **LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg**

Thursday, April 30, 4:30 – 6 p.m. & 6:30 – 8 p.m.

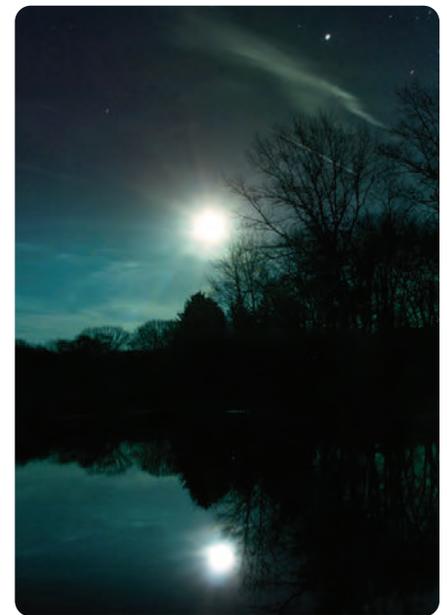
INTRO TO ARCHERY

Participants will learn international-style target archery and test their marksmanship at our temporary indoor range. All equipment and hands-on instruction provided. Must be 9 years old and 50 inches or taller. Cost: **\$10/person. Registration required** 🏹 (3/1). **F/ Coventry Oaks Lodge: 40 Axline Ave., Akron**

Thursday, April 30, 6:30 – 8 p.m.

HOMEGROWN HABITAT: FROGS & SNAKES

Calling all people with yards or green spaces big and small! Join us and learn how to rewind your home landscape. This month, discover ways to garden alongside amphibians and reptiles. From toad abodes to rock gardens, there are lots of ways to embrace our scaly and slimy friends at home! **FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**



Thursday, April 30, 8:30 – 10 p.m.

DRIVE-IN ASTRONOMY NIGHT

Join a naturalist for a drive-in style program on the science and history of our night sky. Learn what a lightyear is, why stars twinkle and how to navigate the night sky by looking for planets, constellations and other objects. You will be in your car just like the old drive-in movies, enjoying popcorn while listening through your car radio. Arrive early to get a good parking spot! Weather permitting, we will scan the sky to see what might be visible after the presentation. **LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg**



Enjoy

SUMMIT METRO PARKS

Dive Deep INTO VERNAL POOLS

Kasey Krok, Interpretive Naturalist

*These small,
yet vital
habitats hide
an underwater
wonderland*

Under the cover of warm rain on early spring nights, dozens of small and slimy creatures begin to crawl across the forest floor. Who are they and where are they headed? They're amphibians and they're making their annual "migrations" to vernal pools. Vernal — meaning spring — pools are small, shallow pockets of water that form on the forest floor each year as winter thaws into spring. Although they may resemble a puddle, these habitats are crucial to the health of woodland ecosystems and the wildlife relying on them.

Amphibians such as spotted salamanders, wood frogs and spring peepers are just some of the species that utilize these pools as breeding grounds, often returning

to the very pool they were born in. Unlike other wetland habitats, vernal pools are free from strong currents and hungry fish, making them the perfect safe haven for soft, fragile amphibian eggs.

Once they hatch, a high diversity of insect larvae serve as an abundant food source as these amphibians grow, metamorphosize and prepare for life on land. Their transformation is often a race against time as these pools fade away into the leafy landscape of the forest floor by midsummer. Why? They're shallow enough to fully dry out as sunlight and temperatures increase throughout the season. This is why you may hear vernal pools referred to as "ephemeral," meaning temporary.



⤴ *Spotted salamanders*



⤴ *Spring peeper*



⤴ *Fairy shrimp*



⤴ *Wood frog egg mass*

Living among these amphibians and insects are other specialized species found only in vernal pool ecosystems. One is the fairy shrimp — a tiny, often-overlooked crustacean that can be found swimming on its back using 11 pairs of fluttering legs. If that doesn't sound enticing to you, it certainly would to a hungry salamander nymph, showcasing how vernal pools help form the basis of a forest's food chain.

But that isn't the only important role of vernal pools. To scientists, they serve as bioindicators or living representations of the health of an ecosystem. The presence or absence of any particular species in vernal pools (even ones as miniscule as bacteria or fungi) can clue us in to the health of a forest, as many of the species reliant on vernal pools are highly sensitive to disturbance and pollutants. Our continued monitoring, understanding and

appreciation of these habitats can help ensure their longevity. Vernal pools are mysterious, underwater wonderlands that, as long as we take the time to look, remind us how fascinating the natural world can be. 🌿

[Want to see more? Join us for upcoming amphibian programs to participate safely during this sensitive season.]

SMP CREATURE FEATURE



Wood FROG

Lithobates sylvaticus

Wood frogs live on Ohio's forest floors, blending in with striped legs and a brown mask. In the springtime, they gather in large, temporary ponds called vernal pools to lay eggs. During this time, you can hear their raspy croaks calling "quack, quack, quack!"

DIET:

- > Insects
- > Spiders
- > Worms



SIZE:

1.5 to 3 INCHES
long

MALE WOOD FROGS have two inflatable pockets in their throat, allowing them to call loudly from the water's surface.



LIFESPAN:

3 to 5
years

SCAN HERE:

to hear them
in action!



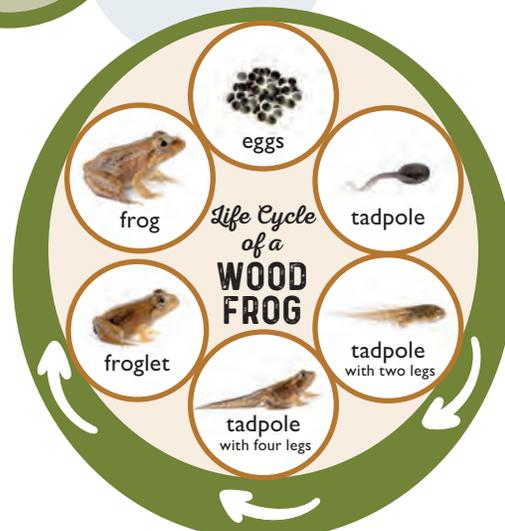
BEHAVIOR:

Nocturnal

(They are active
at night.)

Did you know?

Wood frogs are world-famous for their **HIBERNATION SKILLS**. They can survive freezing almost entirely solid in cold winter temperatures! This allows them to live as far north as the arctic circle.



KID'S CORNER



WORD SEARCH **VERNAL POOLS**

Kasey Krok, Interpretive Naturalist

What Lives in a Vernal Pool?

DID YOU KNOW? The word “vernal” comes from another word for springtime, clueing us in to when these temporary habitats can be found on the forest floor.

Learn by finding all the words listed below.

DIRECTIONS: Words can go in any direction (*forward, backward, up, down and diagonal*) and can share letters as they cross over each other.

G	M	G	I	S	D	T	C	G	E	P	S
A	O	Y	M	G	B	C	O	N	M	O	I
Q	T	L	M	G	C	I	T	I	L	T	N
S	E	V	A	E	L	W	R	R	A	I	S
P	T	P	W	A	E	H	J	P	N	U	E
O	B	P	R	N	S	L	R	S	R	Q	C
O	U	V	E	Y	H	F	O	R	E	S	T
L	A	L	R	E	Z	C	R	P	V	O	K
O	X	I	I	L	P	A	N	O	D	M	Z
Y	A	E	L	T	E	E	B	A	G	A	W
F	N	Y	M	P	H	K	R	J	R	Q	T
R	E	D	N	A	M	A	L	A	S	B	D

- Beetle
- Branch
- Eggs
- Fairy Shrimp
- Forest
- Frog
- Insect
- Larva
- Leaves
- Log
- Mosquito
- Newt
- Nymph
- Peeper
- Pool
- Salamander
- Spring
- Tadpole
- Vernal

For the solution to this word search puzzle and other fun at-home activities, visit bit.ly/SMPAtHome or scan the QR code.



MAR-APR '26 | Vol. 67 No. 2

GREEN ISLANDS

Summit Metro Parks Bimonthly Magazine

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15TH ANNUAL

Mother's Day 5k

MAY 10, 2026



RUN, JOG OR WALK IN CELEBRATION OF MOM!

MUNROE FALLS METRO PARK > LAKE AREA: 521 S. RIVER RD., MUNROE FALLS

Jogging strollers are welcome on this family-friendly course.

Register early for the best price!

REGISTER ONLINE > [SUMMITMETROPARKS.ORG](https://summitmetroparks.org)

Proceeds benefit the Summit Metro Parks Foundation

