

NOV•DEC '25 | Vol. 66 No. 6

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.

MAPLE LEAF
Gifts



A Gift for Everyone on Your List

‘Tis the season to shop **MAPLE LEAF GIFTS!**

With Summit Metro Parks branded apparel and gear, along with nature-themed items for all ages, you can find something for everyone on your list. Shop local and enjoy a unique gift from Maple Leaf Gifts — conveniently located inside the **F.A. SEIBERLING NATURE REALM VISITORS CENTER** in Akron — or shop online and ship to anywhere in the US!

Visit bit.ly/MapleLeafGifts to learn more.





Discover

YOUR BACK YARD



TINY CREATURES, BIG IMPACT

*Stephanie Rafferty,
Interpretive Naturalist*

Beneath the water's glimmering surface is a unique and fragile ecosystem. Large enough to be seen without a microscope, yet still very small, macroinvertebrates are aquatic creatures that can tell us a lot about the quality of the water without saying a single word. They tell us simply by their presence or absence in these water bodies.

Pollution degrades habitat, and some macroinvertebrates are more sensitive than others. Dragonflies, for example, begin life as an aquatic nymph, living in calm water close to the bottom where they prey on immature insects, such as

caddisflies and mayflies. Dragonflies are sensitive to pollution, but their prey is even more sensitive, meaning they both rely on clean water to survive and thrive. Not only do dragonflies indicate good water quality, but they are also at the center of the food web, feeding fish who then feed birds such as osprey. 🍁

[Beginning in November, join us at Summit Lake Nature Center each month for our Beyond the Summit 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.]

DREDGING IS NEXT STEP TO



FREE THE FALLS

Lindsay Smith, Chief of Marketing & Communications

Earlier this year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. E.P.A.) announced its plans to begin a critical portion of work necessary to eventually remove the Gorge Dam. The effort to “Free the Falls” is broken into four phases. The current work is considered Phase 2, which began in summer 2025, where dredged sediment is transported via temporary pipeline to be safely stored at a sediment placement site that has been prepared at the Chuckery Area of Cascade Valley Metro Park. Phase 3 will include the careful removal of the concrete dam structure and, as the final step, Phase 4 of the project will be to restore the river channel through Gorge Metro Park to assist the river and surrounding landscape in returning to its natural state. The three final phases are expected to take at least seven years to complete.

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Sevenson dredges from a scow barge in Michigan waters

continued from page 5

A closer look at dredging

This year, Sevenson Environmental Services, Inc., a contractor for U.S. E.P.A., began the process of dredging and removing contaminated sediment from the bottom of the Cuyahoga River dam pool. First, crews began at the Highbridge Area of Gorge Metro Park, where large temporary pipelines were constructed over several weeks to transport dredged sediment through the duration of the planned work. Then, specialized equipment went to work on the river itself where a floating scow

barge was used as the platform for a machine (similar to an excavator) with a clam shell bucket to scoop sediment out of the dam pool. The dredged sediment is screened for debris and pumped via pipelines to a sediment processing area within Cascade Valley Metro Park. The dredged sediment is then mixed with Portland cement for stabilization before it is ready to be placed on location. Extensive planning has gone into the sediment placement area's design to avoid impacts to the area and create a final footprint that will be planted with native vegetation to blend in with the surrounding landscape.

Over the course of the project, approximately 865,000 cubic yards of sediment will be removed from the river, laying the groundwork for safely removing the dam.

Why remove the dam?

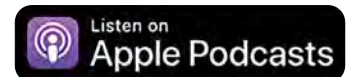
Built more than 100 years ago, the Gorge Dam no longer serves any useful purpose and is one of the largest remaining unresolved water quality problems for the Cuyahoga River. In addition to restoring water quality, removing the dam and the sediment behind it will enhance wildlife habitat

and improve human health in Northeast Ohio and beyond. It will restore the original grandeur of the Gorge, creating a vibrant future for the river, its watershed and its people. That future will provide clean water, natural beauty, potential recreational opportunities and economic development for all to enjoy.

What's next?

While the timeline remains fluid as construction work can be complicated and have unexpected shifts, we are hopeful the dredging process will wrap up by the end of 2027. Next, partners will seek funding for the deconstruction of the dam itself. 🍁

[For additional project background and the latest updates, visit bit.ly/freethefalls and subscribe to the Free the Falls podcast, available on Apple podcasts and Spotify.]



The scow barge will include several spuds, or steel shafts, that work as an anchor for the barge to allow for easier and more precise dredging.





Explore

PROGRAMS & EVENTS



NOVEMBER

Saturday, November 1, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

FINE IN THE PINES HIKE

Learn about the value of pines and several other tree species found along the 2-mile Piney Woods Trail. We'll also talk about wildlife typically found here and highlights of this park's history. **GYH/Pioneer Area: 550 Frazier Ave., Akron**

Saturday, November 1, 2 – 4 p.m.

NATURE WRITING WORKSHOP

Join a writer-turned-naturalist for a session on writing about nature, cultural history and the environment. Bring work to learn how to reach its full potential or get started on something new. If you bring work, it must follow Verdant Wonders guidelines (for guidelines, visit summitmetroparks.org). *Registration required* (10/23). **FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**

Beginning Sunday, November 2

SELF-GUIDED STORY TRAIL: COMPOST STEW



Enjoy exploring late fall while following a self-guided story trail based on the book "Compost Stew." Look for it along the 1.4-mile Quarry Trail through November 30.

DLQ/Quarry Trail: 5779 Riverview Rd., Peninsula

Sunday, November 2, 12 – 1:30 p.m.

NATURE DRAWING FOR KIDS

Join our interpretive artist for this entertaining lesson in nature drawing for kids ages 6 to 12. All materials will be provided. *Registration required* (10/22). **FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**

Sunday, November 2, 1 – 2:30 p.m.

INDIGENOUS PATHWAYS

Join a naturalist as we explore how the pathways used by Indigenous Peoples and early settlers were transformed into many of the roads and interstates throughout Ohio. Discover their vital role in trade, travel, military strategy, settlement and the resulting displacement of Indigenous cultures. **LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg**

Sunday, November 2, 1 – 3 p.m.

CAMPFIRE AND S'MORES

Join a naturalist for a campfire and enjoy some delicious s'mores (while supplies last)! **FASN/Campfire Area: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**

Sunday, November 2, 2 – 3 p.m.

VIRTUAL: NATURE DRAWING FOR KIDS

Join our interpretive artist online for this entertaining virtual lesson in nature drawing for kids ages 6 to 12. All you need is a pencil and paper. *Registration required* (10/22). A Zoom invitation will be emailed to participants after registration.

**Monday, November 3,
10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.**

SPREE WITH ME: FALL FLOWERS

It's not too late to finish your hiking spree! Take a lap around the 1.6-mile Prairie Trail and see what remains after fall blooms along the way. **SFB/Prairie Trail: 1400 Portage Line Rd., Springfield Twp.**



Key



CALL: 330-865-8065 Advance registration required, beginning at 10 a.m. on the date in parentheses.



ZOOM: ZOOM.US/JOIN
Key in the Meeting ID number.



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

(date) Registration start date

\$ Fee



Fall Hiking Spree credit

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

Wednesday, November 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 📞 (10/30). FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Wednesday, November 5, 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 📞 (10/30). 📺 A Zoom invitation will be emailed to participants after registering.

Wednesday, November 5, 4:30 – 6 p.m.

INTRO TO ARCHERY

Participants 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 📞 (10/29). F/Coventry Oaks Lodge: 40 Axline Ave., Akron

Wednesday, November 5, 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 📞 (10/29). F/Coventry Oaks Lodge: 40 Axline Ave., Akron



Wednesday, November 5, 6:30 – 8 p.m.

FULL MOON OWL PROWL

Join a naturalist for a quiet evening hike along the 1.4-mile Quarry Trail in search of owls beneath the light of a full moon. Learn some common owl calls, how they are adapted to nighttime life and how to safely spot them. Bring a small flashlight if you wish. DLQ/Quarry Trail: 5779 Riverview Rd., Peninsula 📞

Thursday, November 6, 6 – 7:30 p.m.

GOOD GARDEN TALKS: BIRD HOUSE GOURDS

Join us in collaboration with Let's Grow Akron and OSU Extension to make a bird house from a gourd! All supplies will be provided. GYH/Goodyear Heights Lodge: 2077 Newton St., Akron

Friday, November 7, 12 – 2 p.m.

NATURE SAUNTER

Appreciate the outdoors at a leisurely pace with a stroll to look for woodpeckers and other fall wildlife along portions of Downy Loop Trail. Enjoy a warm beverage and more nature conversation afterward. WH/Downy Loop Trail: 2121 Barlow Rd., Hudson

Saturday, November 8, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

WATERFOWL IN THE FALL

Join a naturalist for a walk at Summit Lake to search for waterfowl as they undergo their fall migration. Binoculars available to borrow on a first-come, first-served basis. SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

Sunday, November 9, 12 – 2:30 p.m.

EYE SPY & CAMPFIRE

Pick up a scavenger hunt list and hit the 1.4-mile Old Mill Trail in search of animals, plants, fungi and more. Afterward, stop by the campfire ring to enjoy s'mores and return your completed list for a prize (while supplies last). FR/Brushwood Area: 4955 Townsend Rd., Richfield 📞

Sunday, November 9, 1 – 3 p.m.

NATIVE SEED COLLECTION

Join a naturalist and learn how to identify seedheads, then try your hand at collecting and processing native seeds to take home. Please bring your own garden gloves and we'll supply the rest! CV/Valley View Area: 1212 Cuyahoga St., Akron

Monday, November 10, 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.

CAMPFIRE CHEMISTRY

Create a campfire with glowing greens, baffling blues and pristine purples. It's not magic, it's chemistry! Experience a unique fire and learn how to make a dazzling light show using the periodic table. Meet at the beach by the Lake House. SC/Lake House Area: 5000 Hametown Rd., Norton

Tuesday, November 11, 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 📞 (10/30). LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg



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.

1 – 3 p.m.

Sunday, November 2

SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

Saturday, November 8

Saturday, November 15

Saturday, November 22

Saturday, November 29

FASN/Nature Realm:

1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Sunday, December 7

GYH/Lodge: 2077 Newton St., Akron



KINDEREALM: WOODPECKERS

Children ages 3 to 6 and their adult companion will learn about the incredible lives of woodpeckers through a story, craft and outdoor activity. *Please make other arrangements for younger children unable to remain in infant seats or strollers.* Registration required 📞 (10/29).

10:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Wednesday, November 5
SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

Wednesday, November 12
FASN/Nature Realm: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Wednesday, November 19
LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd.,
Twinsburg

Thursday, November 13,
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 📞 (11/7). FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Thursday, November 13,
10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

HOMESCHOOLERS: BIRDS

Homeschoolers ages 7 to 12: Dress for the weather and join a naturalist to explore the many forms and methods birds have developed to overcome the challenges of survival. Registration required 📞 (11/6). F/Coventry Oaks Lodge: 40 Axline Ave., Akron

Thursday, November 13, 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 📞 (11/7). 📺 A list of materials and a Zoom invite will be emailed after registering.

Thursday, November 13, 6:30 – 8 p.m.

HOMEGROWN HABITAT: NATIVE SEED STARTING

Calling all people with yards or green spaces big and small: Join us for this monthly series and learn how to re-wild your home landscape. This month we'll discuss native seed starting, then start some seeds of our own. Please bring clean and dry milk jugs for your own planting. Some milk jugs will be available, while supplies last. FASN/Nature Realm: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron



Friday, November 14, 9 – 10:30 a.m.

MORNING MEADOW WALK

Take a walk along the 2-mile Meadow Trail as we discuss and observe the meadow on a fine fall morning. MF/Tallmadge Meadows Area: 1088 North Ave., Tallmadge 📍

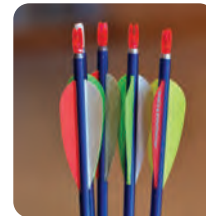
Friday, November 14, 10:30 – 11 a.m.

AUTUMN NATURE TALES

Young children and their adult companions can enjoy an interactive autumn-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, November 14,
4 – 5:30 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 📍 (11/6). F/Coventry Oaks Lodge: 40 Axline Ave., Akron

Saturday, November 15,
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

BIRD NERDS: FINCH ID

Newbies and experts alike are welcome to join our ongoing series to unpack a unique bird identification challenge each month. After an indoor presentation, we'll head out to the field to put our skills to the test. This month, we'll work through our fantastic finches. FASN/Nature Realm: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Beginning Sunday, November 16

SELF-GUIDED: TRACKS AND SCAT

Enjoy this self-guided hike along the 0.6-mile Cherry Lane Trail and learn all about the sights and signs animals leave behind. This experience is available through 11/23. FASN/Nature Realm: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Sunday, November 16, 1 – 3 p.m.

GEOLOGY OF THE LEDGES

Join a naturalist as we walk back into time 250 million years ago...long before the dinosaurs! Explore how the ledges in this area were formed and then exposed by the last ice age. Learn why this unique ecosystem is so important. Boots are highly recommended as we will be hiking off-trail. LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg





Sunday, November 16, 1 – 2:30 p.m.

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE, RETHINK!

Join a naturalist for a presentation on the history of recycling, best practices for successful sorting and what the future holds in the world of waste management. Other eco-friendly practices like composting and upcycling will also be covered. FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Sunday, November 16, 2 – 3:30 p.m.

BETTER THAN SLEEPY HOLLOW HIKE

Surely Ichabod Crane would prefer this glacially formed, scenic 1.9-mile Spring Hollow Trail in Adam Run Valley! Wear hiking boots as the trail crosses several seasonal streams. HH/Main Entrance: 2925 Akron Peninsula Rd., Akron

Monday, November 17, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

SPREE WITH ME: AFTER WORK OWL PROWL

Less work, more birding. Escape the office and enjoy a relaxed night hike on the 1.1-mile Redwing Trail for spree credit. F/Tuscarawas Meadows Area: 2620 Harrington Rd., Akron

Thursday, November 20, 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 (10/30). SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

Thursday, November 20, 6 – 7:30 p.m.

GOOD GARDEN TALKS: PLANT NATIVE TREES

Learn how and why adding native trees to your home landscape can transform it into a more welcoming, biodiverse and healthy green refuge benefiting you, your family and wildlife. SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron



Friday, November 21, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

SUBTERRANEAN SECRETS OF SILVER CREEK

Hike the 2.0-mile Chippewa Trail and learn about the secrets below our feet including soils, animals, abandoned coal mines and more. SC/Big Oak Area: 5199 Medina Line Rd., Norton

Saturday, November 22, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

BEYOND THE SUMMIT: LAKE ERIE WATER QUALITY

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 Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve to talk about Lake Erie water quality. SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

Saturday, November 22, 1 – 2:30 p.m.

AN OLD FIELD IN FALL

Over 40% of Ohio wildlife depend on "old field" habitats! Learn a little about these special places and then hike the 0.6-mile Bluebird Trail to observe life in the field during late fall. LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg

Saturday, November 22, 6 – 7:30 p.m.

DATE AT THE LAKE

Bring a date and join us for a night of great views and memorable fun. Dress for the weather — we're campfire cooking! No babysitter? No problem! Drop them off downstairs for a simultaneous kids camping program for ages 5 to 13. Registration required (11/13). SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

Sunday, November 23, 8 – 9:30 a.m.

FALL BIRD WALK

Join a naturalist to bird along the 1.6-mile Willow Trail. Whether you're a birding beginner or an avian expert, we will discuss which species will overwinter in Ohio and tips for identifying them. Several extra pairs of binoculars will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. F/Tuscarawas Meadows Area: 2620 Harrington Rd., Akron





Sunday, November 23, 2 – 3:30 p.m.

BACK YARDS GONE WILD: WOODPECKER FEEDER WORKSHOP

Join a naturalist to learn about the fascinating lives of woodpeckers and how to attract them to your yard. After a short presentation, we'll bring out the hammers and nails to create a suet feeder to take home. Cost: \$10/kit. *Registration required (11/12).* LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg

Saturday, November 29, 9 – 11 a.m.

DEEP LOCK WALK

On the last weekend of the Fall Hiking Spree, join a naturalist for a walk at Deep Lock Quarry as we discuss birds, plants and more! DLQ/Quarry Trail: 5779 Riverview Rd., Peninsula 



Saturday, November 29, 1 – 2:30 p.m.

CAMPFIRE S'MORES

Join a naturalist for a campfire to stay warm. We will enjoy delicious s'mores (while supplies last). FASN/Seneca Deck: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Sunday, November 30, 1 – 2:30 p.m.

GHOSTS FROM THE NORTH

Join a naturalist to uncover the secrets of a mysterious winter visitor from the north: the snowy owl. Learn how this fierce predator survives subzero temperatures, raises young and lives in the barren Arctic wilderness. Discover what an "irruption" is, why it happens, and which other owls and raptors migrate to Northeast Ohio for the winter. LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg



Sunday, November 30, 3 – 4:30 p.m.

LAST HIKE

It's your last chance to finish the Fall Hiking Spree! Join a naturalist on a guided hike on the 0.9-mile Fernwood Loop in search of wildlife, then turn in your form at the visitors center to receive your reward! FASN/Nature Realm: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron 

DECEMBER



Wednesday, December 3, 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 (11/26).*  A Zoom invitation will be emailed to participants after registering.

Beginning Thursday, December 4

SELF-GUIDED: WINTER BIRDS DISCOVERY

Learn about resident and visiting winter birds at your own pace with this self-guided hike along the 1.6-mile Willow Trail. This experience is available *through December 18.* F/Tuscarawas Meadows Area: 2620 Harrington Rd., Akron

Thursday, December 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 (11/26).* SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

Thursday, December 4, 6 – 7:30 p.m.

GOOD GARDEN TALKS: WINTER SOWING

Some call it the lazy way to start your seeds — we call this method smart and fun! Join us in collaboration with Let's Grow Akron and OSU Extension to learn winter sowing. Grow your seedlings by planting seeds outdoors in vented containers to foster the naturally timed germination of climate-tolerant varieties. SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

Thursday, December 4, 6:30 – 8 p.m.

HOMEGROWN HABITAT: WOODY PLANT PROPAGATION

Calling all people with yards or green spaces big and small: Join us for this monthly series and learn how to re-wild your home landscape. This month we'll learn the art of woody plant propagation, then get hands-on and prune to start trimmings. Please bring your own garden gloves and we'll supply the rest! **FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**

Friday, December 5, 10:30 – 11 a.m.

AUTUMN NATURE TALES

Young children and their adult companions can enjoy an interactive late autumn-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, December 5, 6 – 7 p.m.

WORDS OF THE SEASON: WINTER

Join a writer-turned-naturalist for a seminar on winter and flowery literature. It will make this frigid season more inviting! **FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**

Saturday, December 6,
10 a.m. – 12 p.m. & 2 – 4 p.m.

HOLIDAY WREATH MAKING



Join a naturalist to make holiday wreaths! Learn which evergreens make the best decor and which of those are native to Ohio. You'll also learn how to use other native plant

materials such as winterberry, dried grasses and vines to add accents to your wreath. Each person will take home one wreath for the holiday season. Cost: \$35/person. *Registration required* (11/19). **LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg**



**December 2 is
#GivingTuesday**

foundation.summitmetroparks.org



Saturday, December 6, 1:30 – 3:30 p.m.

DROP IN: BUTTER MAKING

Still a household staple, butter has played a crucial role in preserving dairy throughout human history. Drop in to carry on the tradition and make your own tasty butter, while supplies last. **SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron**

Beginning Sunday, December 7

SELF-GUIDED STORY TRAIL: TIME TO SLEEP

Enjoy some crisp winter air while following a self-guided story trail based on the book "Time to Sleep." Look for it along the 2.1-mile Black Bear Trail *through December 28*. **LP/ Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg**

Sunday, December 7, 12 – 1:30 p.m.

NATURE DRAWING FOR KIDS

Join our interpretive artist for this entertaining lesson in nature drawing for kids ages 6 to 12. All materials will be provided. *Registration required* (11/28). **FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**

Sunday, December 7, 12 – 2 p.m.

EVERGREEN ARRANGEMENTS: CENTERPIECES AND SWAGS

Cozy up in the nature center with a crackling fire and hot cocoa as you create a beautiful, seasonal centerpiece or door hanger using pine boughs and other natural elements. All materials including greenery, ribbon, containers and more are available while supplies last, but feel free to bring additional clippings, décor or a small vase if you wish. **LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg**

Sunday, December 7, 2 – 3 p.m.

VIRTUAL: NATURE DRAWING FOR KIDS

Join our interpretive artist online for this entertaining virtual lesson in nature drawing for kids ages 6 to 12. All you need is a pencil and paper. *Registration required* (11/28).  A Zoom invitation will be emailed to participants after registration.

Sunday, December 7, 2 – 3:30 p.m.

WINTER IS ALIVE

Enjoy a wintry hike on the 2.1-mile Black Bear Trail to learn how wildlife survives and thrives in colder temperatures, then enjoy a cup of hot cocoa afterward! **LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg**



Sunday, December 7, 2 – 4:30 p.m.

DROP IN CANDLE MAKING

Not much of a butcher or a baker? You can still be a candlestick maker! Enjoy making your own candles with assistance from a naturalist. **SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron**



KINDEREALM: SQUIRRELS

Children ages 3 to 6 and their adult companions will learn about squirrels, the backyard critters we all know because of their playful antics, curiosity and bird feeder raids! A craft, game and story time are part of the program. *Please make other arrangements for younger children unable to remain in infant seats or strollers.* Registration required 📞 (11/21).

10:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Wednesday, December 3

SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

Wednesday, December 10

FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Wednesday, December 17

LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg

Sunday, December 7, 7 – 8 p.m.

HOLIDAY CONCERT

Celebrate the season and get cozy indoors with a holiday performance by the Metro Parks Ensemble! Light refreshments will be provided. CV/Himelright Lodge: 1212 Cuyahoga St., Akron

Monday, December 8, 6 – 7 p.m.

VIRTUAL: HISTORY OF FIRESTONE METRO PARK



Discover over a century of Firestone history through stories and images. From coal mining and dairy farming to the acquisition and design of the park, join us

for this virtual stroll through time. 📺 Zoom meeting ID: 896 3603 4055

Tuesday, December 9, 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 📞 (11/26).

LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg

Thursday, December 11,

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 📞 (12/5).

FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Thursday, December 11, 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 📞 (12/5). A list of materials and a Zoom invite will be emailed after registering.

Thursday, December 11,

4 – 5:30 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 📞 (12/4). F/Coventry Oaks Lodge: 40 Axline Ave., Akron

Friday, December 12, 12 – 2 p.m.

NATURE SAUNTER

Appreciate the outdoors at a leisurely pace with a stroll to explore late autumn nature along portions of Coyote Run Trail. Enjoy a warm beverage and more nature conversation afterward. LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg

Saturday, December 13, 9:30 – 11 a.m.

SQUIRREL WATCHING

Hike along the 1.4-mile Alder Trail to learn about squirrels and enjoy their antics. A pair of binoculars is recommended. Some pairs will be available to borrow on a first-come, first-served basis. GYH/Pioneer Area: 550 Frazier Ave., Akron



Saturday, December 13,

10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

CHICKADEE DROP IN & CRAFT

Drop in to learn about these special winter birds, make a craft and try your luck at hand-feeding the chickadees. LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg





Saturday, December 13, 12 – 1:30 p.m.

BIRD NERDS: GULL ID

Newbies and experts alike are welcome to join our ongoing series to unpack a unique bird identification challenge each month. After an indoor presentation, we'll head out to the field to put our skills to the test. This month, we will cover the basics of identifying one of the most infamous and daunting groups of birds out there: gulls. **FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**

Sunday, December 14, 9 – 11 a.m.

WINTER BIRD WALK

Stroll the picturesque 1.8-mile Seven Ponds Trail to learn about northern species that migrate to Ohio and consider us a tropical winter paradise! We'll search the pines for red-breasted nuthatches, golden-crowned kinglets and maybe even an owl! Dress for the weather and bring binoculars (some pairs will be available to borrow). Parking is limited, so please carpool if possible. **LP/Tinkers Creek State Nature Preserve: 1230 Old Mill Rd., Aurora**

**Sunday, December 14,
12 – 2 p.m. & 3 – 5 p.m.**

WINTRY BLING TREE CRAFT

Add zing to your holidays by creating a beautiful upcycled "bling" tree. We will use small mismatched/discarded pieces of silver and gold jewelry, buttons, screws, pins, sequins, etc. that you bring from home. A limited amount of additional bling pieces and all other supplies will be provided. *Registration required* 📞 (12/4). **FASN/Nature Realm: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**

Wednesday, December 17, 1 – 2:30 p.m.

BEYOND THE SUMMIT: LAKE ERIE WATERSHED

Beyond the Summit is a speaker series featuring environmental professionals discussing topics related to water in Northeast Ohio. From watershed health to best fishing 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 The Ohio State University Ohio Sea Grant and Stone Laboratory to talk about the Lake Erie watershed's critical issues and solutions. **SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron**

**Thursday, December 18,
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.**

S.T.E.A.M. DROP-IN

Drop in to get your science, technology, engineering, arts and math on! Try your hand at various table-top activities including crafts, simple machines and building projects. Who knows what you'll create! **FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**

Friday, December 19, 9 – 11 a.m.

WINTER WILDLIFE WALK

Come enjoy nature on this 4-mile morning stroll discussing the winter season as we hike to Memorial Parkway and back along the Towpath Trail. Along the way, we will explore what wildlife is active this time of year and search for signs they've left behind. Remember to dress for the weather! Several pairs of extra binoculars will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. **SR/Big Bend Area: 1337 Merriman Rd., Akron**

Friday, December 19, 4:30 – 6 p.m.

INTRO TO ARCHERY

Participants will learn international-style target archery and test their marksmanship at an outdoor range. All equipment and hands-on instruction provided. Must be 9 years old and 50 inches or taller. Cost: \$10/person. *Registration required* 📞 (12/11). **F/Coventry Oaks Lodge: 40 Axline Ave., Akron**

Friday, December 19, 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* 📞 (12/11). **F/Coventry Oaks Lodge: 40 Axline Ave., Akron**

Saturday, December 20, 9 – 11 a.m.

WINTER BIRD WANDER

Join a naturalist to look for winter resident birds and discuss why they're here and how you can support them this winter. Bring binoculars and dress for the weather! **CV/Valley View Area: 1134 Cuyahoga St., Akron**



**Saturday, December 20,
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.**

WINTER TREE AND SHRUB ID

Join a naturalist as we learn how to identify several of the trees and shrubs that live in the woodlands of Northeast Ohio. By the end of the program, you will be able to easily identify several trees and shrubs by their bark and branches, no need for leaves! **LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg**



Saturday, December 20, 6 – 7:30 p.m.

DATE AT THE LAKE

Bring a date and join us for a night of great views and memorable fun. Brush up on your natural history, it's trivia night! No babysitter? No problem! Drop them off downstairs for a simultaneous kids nature trivia program for ages 5 to 13. *Registration required* 📞 (12/11). SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

Sunday, December 21, 7:30 – 9 a.m.

SUNRISE ON THE SOLSTICE

More sunlight is on the way! Join a naturalist for a reflective and uplifting hike along the banks of the Cuyahoga River to welcome the solstice. Please bring your own travel mug — hot beverages will be provided after the hike when we gather around the campfire. Meet at the river access. CV/Valley View Area: 1134 Cuyahoga St., Akron

Sunday, December 21, 1 – 2:30 p.m.

NATURE JOURNALING 101

Join a naturalist to learn the basics of nature journaling. Using a journal in the field can enhance observation skills and help foster a deeper understanding of the world around us. Materials to make journals will be provided. SR/Chestnut Lodge: 1501 Sand Run Pkwy. Akron

Sunday, December 21, 5:30 – 7 p.m.

SILENT SOLSTICE HIKE

Reflect on the passage of another year and take in the peace of the year's longest night with a silent hike on the 1.6-mile Prairie Trail. SFB/Prairie Trail: 1400 Portage Line Rd., Springfield Twp.

Sunday, December 21, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

WINTER SOLSTICE AND THE TALE OF MOTHER DEER

Join a naturalist as we take a winter solstice walk through luminaries along the 0.25-mile Maple Loop Trail, listening to the folk tale of Mother Deer. Discover how we know that Santa's reindeer are all female and that Rudolph isn't the only red-nosed reindeer! After the hike warm up with hot chocolate and a warm fire inside the nature center. LP/ Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg

Monday, December 22, 10:30 – 11:30 a.m.

TRACKS & SCAT FOR KIDS



Kids, let's team up and discover whodunnit! Explore the meadow with a naturalist in search of clues winter wildlife have left behind. MF/ Tallmadge Meadows

Area: 1088 North Ave., Tallmadge

Saturday, December 27, 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.

LITTLE HIKERS: GOODBYE FALL, HELLO WINTER

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 changing seasons. Consider a stroller or carrier for younger children unable to hike. F/Tuscarawas Meadows Area: 2620 Harrington Rd., Akron

Sunday, December 28, 12 p.m. – 3 p.m.

CAMPFIRE OPEN HOUSE

Join us for "snow" much winter fun! Toast marshmallows over a fire for s'mores, try your hand at feeding the chickadees and hit the trail for a self-guided game of Eye Spy. Afterward, stop inside the nature center to warm up at our hot chocolate bar and create a simple winter craft. Weather permitting, snowshoes may be available for loan. LP/ Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg

Sunday, December 28, 1 – 2 p.m.

SNOWY STORYTIME

Gather 'round the campfire with a naturalist to read a winter-themed story (or two) for little ones! Hot cocoa will be provided, but be sure to dress for the weather. FASN/Campfire Area: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron



Sunday, December 28, 2 – 3 p.m.

WINTER WEATHER HIKE

Have a relaxing walk on the 1.6-mile Willow Trail. Take time to listen to the absence or abundance of sound that is found during this season. Make sure to dress warm and, above all, enjoy the serenity of the outdoors. F/Tuscarawas Meadows Area: 2620 Harrington Rd., Akron

Sunday, December 28, 5 – 7:30 p.m.

NATURE BOARD GAME NIGHT

Settle in for a cozy evening of nature-themed board games. Join a naturalist for a featured game or try a selection of other popular tabletop games. SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

2026
Happy New Year

MAKE SOME GREEN RESOLUTIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR!

Visit us online for sustainability updates from the park district and tips:
<https://bit.ly/SMPGreenerFuture>

Enjoy

SUMMIT METRO PARKS

The Understory

Jen M. Harvey, Chief of Philanthropy



⤴ *Common witch hazel (Hamamelis virginiana)*

Spicebush (Lindera benzoin) branch with berries ⤵



Hidden beneath the easy-to-notice fall colors in our woodlands is an underappreciated layer of forest.

If you know what to look for, you'll find the trees that never reach canopy height, but provide an important forest layer, nonetheless. In many ways, graceful trees like witch hazel and spicebush are like the donors to the Summit Metro Parks Foundation — under-recognized, but essential.

Witch hazel is the only native tree that blooms exclusively in autumn. It's easy to walk past a witch hazel grove in full bloom and not know it! The light, clean scent of the blooms may tip you off, or the small-diameter twisted multi-trunk growth form and ripple-edged leaves. Look closely and you'll be rewarded with branches flowered with ribbony bright-yellow petals.

Spicebush's brilliant red berries are a valuable high-fat food source for fall-migrating wood thrushes, veeries and eastern kingbirds. It's better known as a host plant for spicebush swallowtail butterflies, which seek it out to lay their eggs on the leaves. The leaves smell distinctively like lemon furniture polish.

The understory of North American forests is a lifeline for bird populations and plays a key role in water

continued on page 20

The Summit Metro Parks Foundation connects, conserves and inspires as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization established in 1991 where donors can create a lasting legacy by supporting the park district. We are grateful to the many people, organizations, businesses and agencies who made gifts, grants and sponsorships January 1, 2025, through June 30, 2025. These donations and other forms of support create thriving parks that are a cornerstone of Summit County's quality of life.

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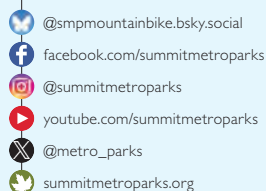
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NOV•DEC '25 | Vol. 66 No. 6

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continued from page 17

availability and nutrient cycling. You can plant native to support our wildlife and human health, too — find out more through the Wild Back Yards program.

These native plants, like the supporters of the Summit Metro Parks Foundation, have deep roots here in Summit County. They provide reliable, important food for wildlife, a critical role in our forest ecosystem and eye-level beauty as we walk the trails. Most of all, they are an important layer to the overall health of our parks.

Your contribution supports exceptional parks, for everyone.

Scan to learn more about how you can make a lasting local impact.

