

NOV•DEC '26 | Vol. 67 No. 6

GREEN ISLANDS

Summit Metro Parks Bimonthly Magazine



**Summit
Metro** 
Parks®

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- 17 ENJOY – Connect, and Make a Lasting Impact

Our parks are like green islands
in an urban landscape.

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mailing address to contact@summitmetroparks.org
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Green Islands can be downloaded online:
summitmetroparks.org



ON THE COVER

The Metro Parks Ensemble
performs for hundreds of visitors
at Goodyear Heights Metro Park.



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 visitors center at **F.A. SEIBERLING
NATURE REALM** in Akron and online at
bit.ly/MapleLeafGifts.



Discover

YOUR BACK YARD



YOU'LL POLLUTE YOUR EYE OUT, KID!

Want to celebrate the holidays with your friends and family, but worried about your carbon footprint?

No one is saying you should stay home alone for the holidays, but planning your travel (when able) is one of the best ways to shrink your carbon footprint. When choosing between planes, trains and automobiles, you might be surprised to find a car trip can be more efficient than taking a plane. Planes use more fuel per minute taking off and climbing than at any other stage of the flight. By cutting out short-haul flights and layovers, you can save your air miles for longer, more eco-friendly

trips. For trips closer to 200 miles where the option is available, nothing is more efficient than taking the “polar express.” On average, trains produce roughly 6.5 times less carbon dioxide than planes for the same trip. However you choose to travel, you can check your carbon footprint with an online calculator to learn more about the impact of different transportation options. 🍁

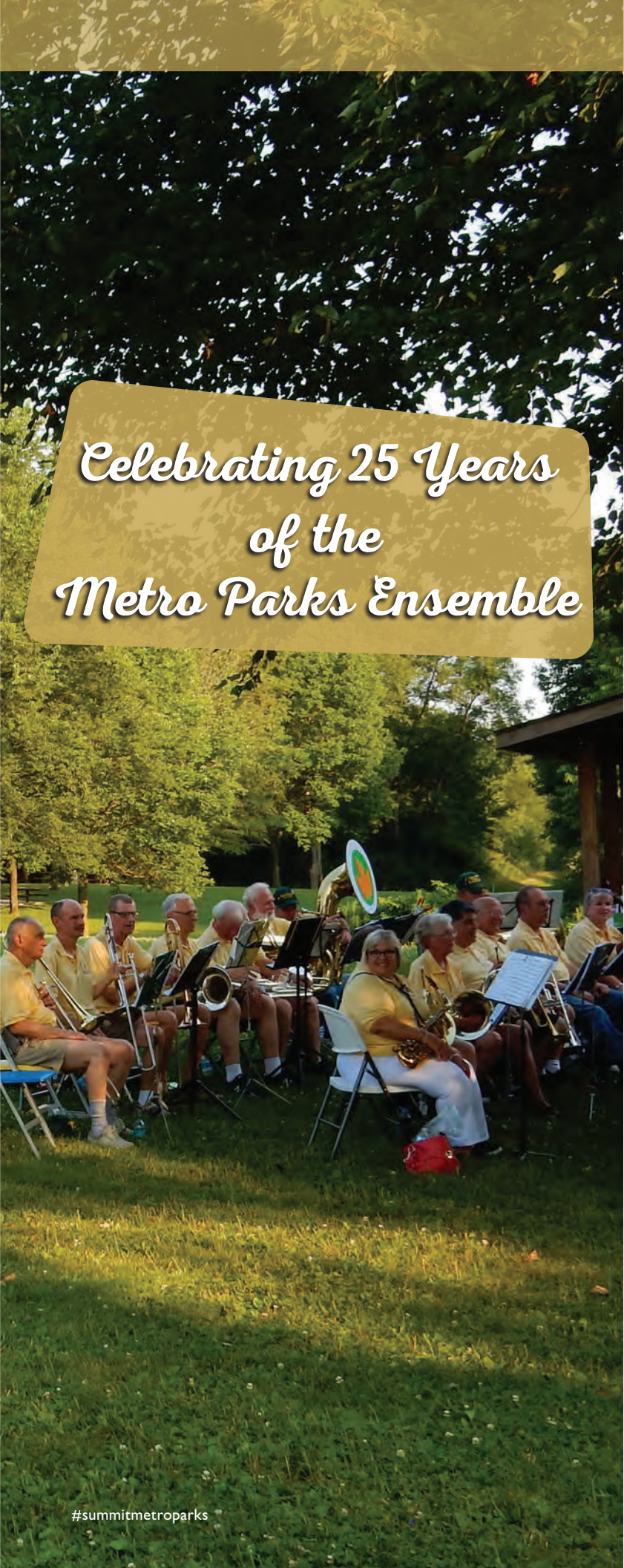
Want to *learn more* ways to navigate the holiday season with the environment in mind? Read the extended article on summitmetroparks.org or attend one of our programs on sustainability beginning on *page 8*.

*Brendan Tisch,
Interpretive Naturalist*



THE Joy OF Music





Celebrating 25 Years of the Metro Parks Ensemble

Kara Herman, Marketing Assistant

All the world's a stage, and these musicians are not merely players. The Metro Parks Ensemble is thought to be the only volunteer band affiliated with a park district in the country. In 2026, the group is celebrating its 25th anniversary of bringing music to Summit Metro Parks.

continued on page 6



2001 Holiday Sing-Along concert at *Firestone Metro Park*



2005 Music by the Lake at *Munroe Falls Metro Park*



2010 Performance at the Mustill Store along the *Ohio & Erie Towpath Trail*



2022 Cycling Without Age on *Firefly Trail at Munroe Falls Metro Park*

continued from page 5

In December 2000, SMP naturalists hosted a traditional Holiday Sing-Along program at Firestone Metro Park. As with many Ohio winters, the weather did not cooperate, and a blizzard drove away the attendees. The only people who showed up were the volunteers — Bill Wilkerson and his sons, John and Paul.

Though they did not have an audience that night, the conversation that followed would mark the beginning of entertaining thousands in the Metro Parks for years to come. They had an idea — instead of playing cassette tapes, what if they could get a live band together?

The Wilkersons were worried it would be difficult to find musicians, but by the following year's Holiday Sing-Along, they had assembled

a 10-piece band with all kinds of instruments: brass, strings, woodwinds — even a banjo! With only one rehearsal before the show, the band was a hit, and the Metro Parks Ensemble was born in 2001.

As the Ensemble has grown over the years, so has its repertoire. From classic rock to patriotic marches, Broadway hits to kids tunes, there's something for everyone. Concerts are performed outdoors in your Metro Parks on select Tuesdays at 7 p.m. from the last week in May through mid-September.

Throughout the years, they've featured many fun additions, such as naturalist displays, Friends of Metro Parks serving dessert, a barbershop quartet, audience participation, mascot appearances and pop-up gift shops. In 2022, Cycling Without Age — a program that features accessible trishaw bike rides — was



2016 Music by the Lake at *Silver Creek Metro Park*



2019 Random Act of Music at *Nimisila Reservoir Metro Park*



2023 Music by the Lake at *Munroe Falls Metro Park*

added to concerts at Munroe Falls Metro Park. Recently, the Ensemble has seen increased popularity, drawing around 2,000 attendees each season.

Paul Wilkerson, who now directs the band, likens the experience on a Tuesday evening to one of their favorite songs to play, Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World." He says, "There's so much to enjoy and appreciate out in the parks, not just the natural world, but families you come across ... joy in the moment."

Today, the Ensemble is made up of 40 musicians — some of whom have been around since the very beginning. Each has a unique story about why they play. Many are retirees who are picking up their instruments for the first time since high school. Others have had a lifelong love of music and are in many community bands.

Trombonist Kathy Jesser plays in memory of her son, Timmy J., who was a music performance major at Otterbein University. She shares, "When I joined the band ... I picked up this trombone, I just sat there crying. I'm blowing hot air into this instrument my son played for years. It brought such immense joy to my soul ... I can honor him."

It's true that music brings people together. Kathy feels her fellow musicians are some of the nicest people she's met; they support and care for each other.

Reflecting on the 25 years of the Ensemble, Paul shares his favorite part: "It's the joy that you see in people's faces, the smiles, the foot taps, getting people engaged in the music ... both the audience and the group. When we're having fun and it shows, the audience will too." 🍁



2025 Metro Parks Ensemble Holiday Concert at *Cascade Valley Metro Park*

[Enjoy a Holiday Concert by the Metro Parks Ensemble.]

**Saturday, November 14
7 p.m.**

**Akron Children's Hospital
Holiday Tree Festival,
John S. Knight Center**



**Sunday, December 13
2-3 p.m.**

**CV / Himelright Lodge
1212 Cuyahoga St., Akron**

Explore

PROGRAMS & EVENTS

NOVEMBER

Sunday, November 1, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

SPREE WITH ME: NUTHATCH TRAIL

Check off one more Fall Hiking Spree trail as you hike the rugged 3.3-mile Nuthatch Trail with a naturalist. **SR/Wadsworth Area: 1400 Sand Run Pkwy., Akron** 

Sunday, November 1, 1 – 3 p.m.

FABULOUS FUNGI

Join a naturalist as we explore the hidden world of mushrooms, highlighting their ecological importance, their many possible uses and vast underground networks. Learn simple identification techniques and some species commonly seen in our parks. **LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg**



Beginning Tuesday, November 3

SELF-GUIDED: HISTORY OF THE REALM

Hike the 1.4-mile Seneca Trail through November 15 to explore the rich history of F.A. Seiberling Nature Realm and earn spree credit! **FASN/Nature Realm: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron** 

*Wednesday, November 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*  (10/1). **FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**

Wednesday, November 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*  (10/1).  A Zoom invitation will be emailed to participants after registering.

Thursday, November 5, 9:45 a.m. – 1 p.m.

SENIOR CYCLING

Join like-minded senior Summit Metro Parks supporters as we ride and explore various trails. We will gather to socialize and determine the route, distance and pace before rolling out. Expect to ride at least 10 to 12 miles, at a casual (10-12 mph) pace. Please bring your own helmet and bicycle. Helmets are required. **FT/Middlebury Trailhead: 1324 Middlebury Rd., Kent**

Thursday, 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*  (10/1). **SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron**

Thursday, November 5, 4 – 5:30 p.m.

INTRO TO ARCHERY

Learn international-style target archery and test your 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*  (10/1). **F/Coventry Oaks Lodge: 40 Axline Ave., Akron**

Thursday, November 5, 6 – 7:30 p.m.

GOOD GARDEN TALKS: WINTER SOWING

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, 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*  (10/1). **F/Coventry Oaks Lodge: 40 Axline Ave., 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



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



Friday, November 6, 6 – 7:30 p.m.

WINTER COMMUNITY SCIENCE



Ready to be a scientist? Join us for an overview of community science programs available during the winter months and discover how you

can contribute to local scientific studies. This event will include demonstrations on how to participate in several of the highlighted programs. SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

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 1

SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

Saturday, November 7

Saturday, November 14

Saturday, November 21

Saturday, November 28

FASN/Visitors Center:
1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Friday, November 6, 8 – 10 p.m.

SPREE WITH ME: 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 S. Medina Line Rd., Norton 🦉

Saturday, November 7, 10 – 11:30 a.m.

BIRD NERDS: WILD TURKEY

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/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Saturday, November 7, 2 – 3:30 p.m.

SPREE WITH ME: READING THE FORESTED LANDSCAPE

Earn spree credit on the 1.8-mile Parours Trail while exploring what our current landscape tells us about the past. GYH/Main Entrance: 2077 Newton St., Akron 🦋

Sunday, November 8, 12 – 3 p.m.

EYE SPY & CAMPFIRE

Pick up a scavenger hunt list and hit the 1.3-mile Rock Creek 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 8, 1 – 3 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.

FASN/Nature Realm: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron





KINDEREALM: FOX & COYOTE

Through fun activities, children ages 3 to 6 and their adult companions will explore these two clever and unique wild canines found in our area. Please make other arrangements for younger children unable to remain in infant seats or strollers. *Registration required* (10/1).

10:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Wednesday, November 4
SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

Wednesday, November 11
FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Wednesday, November 18
LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg

Tuesday, November 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* (10/1). LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg

Wednesday, November 11,
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

FOREST BATHING FOR BEGINNERS

Join us for a session of Shinrin-yoku, or forest bathing. Learn the history and benefits of this restorative practice to improve mental and physical wellbeing. Bring water, snacks, a yoga mat or towel and an open mind. We will be spending at least an hour outdoors no matter the weather, so please dress appropriately. This is not a hike. *Registration required* (10/1). SR/Shady Hollow Lodge: 1750 Sand Run Pkwy. Akron

Wednesday, November 11, 6:30 – 8 p.m.

FAMILY FLASHLIGHT WALK

Families with young children: Enjoy an after-dinner stroll along the 1.3-mile Firefly Loop Trail to explore the nocturnal world. A naturalist will greet you at the trailhead, then direct you down the trail to spot wildlife using eyeshine. Please bring a flashlight and a sense of adventure! MF/Lake Area: 521 S. River Rd., Munroe Falls



Thursday, November 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* (10/1). FASN/Nature Realm: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Thursday, November 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* (10/1).  A list of materials and a Zoom invitation will be emailed to participants after registering.

Thursday, November 12, 6:30 – 8 p.m.

HOMEGROWN HABITAT: MILK JUG SEED STARTERS

Calling all people with yards or green spaces big and small! Join us for this monthly series and learn how to rewild 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/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Friday, November 13, 10 – 11:30 a.m.

SPREE WITH ME: SCAVENGER HUNT

Head out with a naturalist on a scavenger hunt while earning spree credit on the 1.1-mile Missing Link Trail. Learn about each item as we look for it along the trail. CV/Valley View Area: 1134 Cuyahoga St., Akron 

Friday, November 13, 10:30 – 11 a.m.

NATURE TALES

Young children and their adult companions can enjoy an interactive nature-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 13, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

CREATURES OF THE NIGHT

Brave the night on Friday the 13th to explore Bath Nature Preserve for creatures that howl and things that prowl. We'll start with an indoor presentation and activities to learn about the incredible adaptations of nocturnal animals before heading out on the trail to look and listen for some "creepy" creatures. Please bring a flashlight if you have one. No dogs, please. *Registration required* (10/1). The University of Akron Field Station (Bath Nature Preserve): 4240 Ira Rd., Akron



Saturday, November 14, 10 – 11 a.m.

YOUNG BIRDERS: CLEVER CORVIDS

Kids ages 8 and up are invited to discover the cleverness of family Corvidae and what they're up to this season through a short presentation and bird walk. An adult companion is required to remain for the entirety of the program. GYH/Pioneer Area: 550 Frazier Ave., Akron



Saturday, November 14, 1 – 3 p.m.

FEED THE CHICKADEES

Drop by during Shield Assistance for a hands-on encounter with some of Ohio's winter birds. Dress warm and bring a camera. Seeds will be provided for the birds and s'mores for the rest of us! **FASN/Campfire Area: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**

Saturday, November 14, 1 – 3 p.m.

GEOLOGY OF THE LEDGES

Join a naturalist as we stroll back in time 250 million years ago to understand how the ledges at Liberty Park were formed. Learn about their size, composition and the importance of what is called "Sharon conglomerate." Learn why this is one of the most unique ecosystems in our park district, home to an incredible amount of biodiversity. **LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg**

Saturday, November 14, 2 – 3:30 p.m.

AUTUMN IN THE PRAIRIE

Although the bright colors of summer flowers have faded, these habitats still offer plenty of interest. Join a naturalist to hike the 1.6-mile Prairie Trail and explore the changing of seasons amidst the grasses. **SFB/Prairie Trail: 1400 Portage Line Rd., Springfield Twp.**

Sunday, November 15, 1 – 2:30 p.m.

HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN FOREST

Join a naturalist as we explore the fascinating history of lumber in North America, from Indigenous uses of forests to the rise of the timber industry that helped build cities, railroads and economies. This program will examine how the industry has evolved while learning about the people who shaped it. We will discuss the formation of the Forest Service and examine how the industry changed after WWII into what it is today. **LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg**

Sunday, November 15, 2 – 3:30 p.m.

SPREE WITH ME: FIRESTONE HISTORY HIKE

Cross this spree trail off your list as we walk along the 1.6-mile Willow Trail. We'll look for wildlife that are hanging around this winter as we learn about the long history of this park and how it came to be. **F/Tuscarawas Meadows Area: 2620 Harrington Rd., Akron**

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

HOMESCHOOLERS: PARK CAREERS

Homeschoolers aged 7-12: Do you have what it takes to be a naturalist, park police officer or park technician? We'll take a deep dive into careers in parks and recreation, from field biologist to customer service, through a variety of hands-on activities. *Registration required* (10/1). **FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**



Thursday, November 19, 6 – 7:30 p.m.

GOOD GARDEN TALKS: BIRD-FRIENDLY GARDENS

Join us in collaboration with Let's Grow Akron and OSU Extension to learn how to design a garden that is fit for the birds. Learn what plants to grow to feed the birds year-round as well as how to enhance your garden features for best wintertime bird viewing. The program will be held in the West Room. **GYH/Goodyear Heights Lodge: 2077 Newton St., Akron**





Friday, November 20, 7 – 9 p.m.

NATURE TRIVIA NIGHT

So, you think you know nature? Grab your crew of two to four adults and compete against other teams to prove yourselves at the return of SMP's nature-themed trivia night. From bees to trees and rocks to hawks, our topics will test your knowledge on everything natural about Ohio. Refreshments will be available all night, and prizes will be waiting for those who climb to first, second and third place. *Registration required* (10/1). **F/Coventry Oaks Lodge: 40 Axline Ave., Akron**



Saturday, November 21, 9 – 10:30 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**

Saturday, November 21,

11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

LEAVE THE LEAVES HIKE

Explore the 1.4-mile Seneca Trail to discover who's hiding in the leaf litter this season and why you should leave your leaves. **FASN/Nature Realm: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**

Sunday, November 22, 2 – 3:30 p.m.

BACK YARDS GONE WILD: BERRIES FOR BIRDS

Join a naturalist to wrap up our year-long series of welcoming nature into our yards. This month, we will learn about native berry-producing trees, shrubs and vines to attract birds to your yard and feed them through winter. If weather allows, all are invited on a short walk after the presentation to see some of these species growing wild. **LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg**

Sunday, November 22, 4 – 5:30 p.m.

SPREE WITH ME: THE GIFT OF OAKS

Earn spree credit hiking the 2-mile Chippewa Trail and learn about the generous role of oaks in our ecosystems. We will cover the ecological and cultural significance of oaks along the way and finish with a visit to an ancient oak tree that calls Silver Creek Metro Park home. **SC/Pheasant Run Area: 5000 S. Hametown Rd., Norton**



Tuesday, November 24, 4:30 – 5:30 p.m.

FULL BEAVER SUPERMOON HIKE

Bundle up for an evening hike to admire the Beaver Supermoon and learn about the history of the animal that inspired its name. **SFB/Prairie Trail: 1400 Portage Line Rd., Springfield Twp.**

Beginning Wednesday, November 25

SELF-GUIDED TRAIL: WINTER BIRD DISCOVERY

Through December 8, enjoy a self-guided hike along the 0.6-mile Cherry Lane Trail and learn all about our resident birds that tough it out through the winter. **FASN/Nature Realm: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**

Saturday, November 28, 8 – 10 p.m.

MOONLIGHT PAINTINGS

Join us for a night painting under the moon and around a campfire! Learn about our moon, then only using white on a black canvas, paint what inspires you in the night from the moonlight glow. *Registration required* (10/1). **FASN/Seneca Deck: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**



Sunday, November 29,

11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

SPREE WITH ME: LAST CHANCE HIKE

It's your last chance for a guided Fall Hiking Spree hike. Explore the canal to see nature at work in the built environment and turn in your spree form along the way at the nature center. **TT/Wilbeth Road Trailhead: 392 W. Wilbeth Rd., Akron**



December 1 is
#GivingTuesday

foundation.summitmetroparks.org

DECEMBER

*Wednesday, December 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* 📍 (11/1). FASN/ Nature Realm: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Wednesday, December 2, 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* 📍 (11/1). 📺 A Zoom invitation will be emailed to participants after registering

Wednesday, December 2, 6:30 – 8 p.m.

OWL PROWL

Join a naturalist for a quiet evening hike along the 1.2-mile Downy Loop Trail in search of owls. We'll begin in the shelter for a short presentation to 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. WH: 2121 Barlow Rd, Hudson

Thursday, December 3, 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* 📍 (11/1). SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

*Thursday, December 3,
6 – 7:30 p.m.*

GOOD GARDEN TALKS: GROWING INDOORS

Join us in collaboration with Let's Grow Akron and OSU Extension to learn how to grow sprouts and microgreens indoors during the winter season. SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron



*Friday, December 4,
10:30 – 11 a.m.*

NATURE TALES

Young children and their adult companions can enjoy an interactive nature-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

*Saturday, December 5,
10 a.m. – 12 p.m. & 1 – 3 p.m.*



HOLIDAY WREATH MAKING

Make a beautiful and festive holiday wreath out of mostly native plant materials. After a short presentation on native evergreen trees, participants will create their own holiday wreath with provided greenery and decor. Space is limited. Cost: \$35/per person. *Registration required* 📍 (11/1). LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg

Saturday, December 5, 12 – 1:30 p.m.

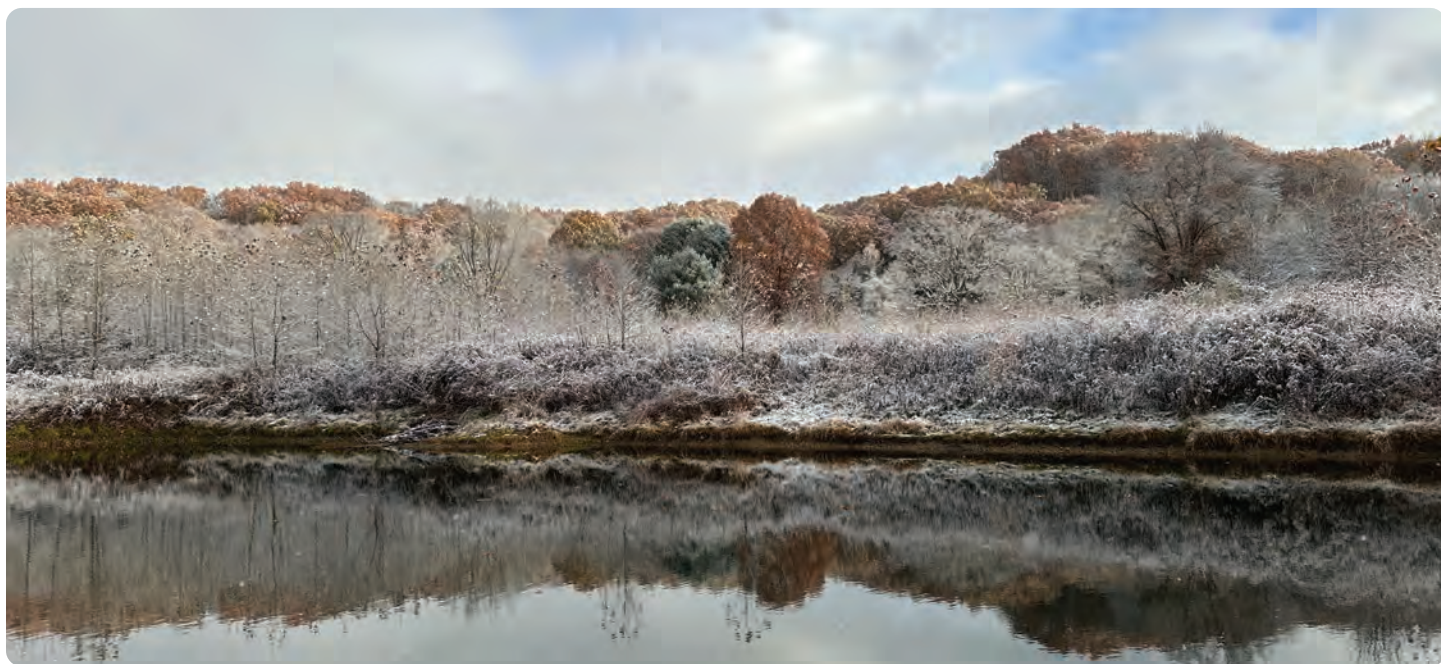
BIRD NERDS: PILEATED WOODPECKER

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/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Saturday, December 5, 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. Carry on the tradition and make your own tasty butter, while supplies last. SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron





KINDEREALM: HAPPY HIBERNATORS

Children ages 3 to 6 and their adult companions will discover who's snoozing this snowy season! Explore hibernation through a story, craft and short hike. *Please make other arrangements for younger children unable to remain in infant seats or strollers.* Registration required 🐾 (11/1).

10:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Wednesday, December 9

FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Wednesday, December 16

LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd.,
Twinsburg

Wednesday, December 30

SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

Sunday, December 6, 10 – 11:30 a.m.

LICHEN LOOK ABOUT

More than just trees stay evergreen! Join a naturalist for a guided exploration of lichens and mosses growing along the trails. Magnifying tools will be provided. LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg



Sunday, December 6, 12 – 3 p.m.

EVERGREEN ARRANGEMENTS

Cozy up inside 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 provided while supplies last, but feel free to bring additional clippings, decor or a small vase if you wish. LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg

Sunday, December 6, 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. GYH/Goodyear Heights Lodge: 2077 Newton St., Akron

Tuesday, December 8, 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 🐾 (11/1). LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg

Wednesday, December 9,
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

FOREST BATHING FOR BEGINNERS

Join us for a session of Shinrin-yoku, or forest bathing. Learn the history and benefits of this restorative practice to improve mental and physical well-being. Bring water, snacks, a yoga mat or towel and an open mind. We will be spending at least an hour outdoors no matter the weather, so please dress appropriately. This program is geared for adults. This is not a hike. Registration required 🐾 (11/1). SR/Shady Hollow Lodge: 1750 Sand Run Pkwy. Akron

Wednesday, December 9, 6 – 7:30 p.m.

VIRTUAL BOOK CLUB: NEVER HOME ALONE



Bring your open minds to discuss Rob Dunn's fascinating book, "Never Home Alone," about the thousands of tiny lives that share our everyday spaces. All readers are welcome.

Zoom Meeting ID:
895 1903 0598

Thursday, December 10, 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 🐾 (11/1). FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron



Thursday, December 10, 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. A list of materials and a Zoom invite will be emailed after registering. Registration required 🐾 (11/1).

Thursday, December 10, 6:30 – 8 p.m.

HOMEGROWN HABITAT: BRING ON THE BIRDS

Calling all people with yards or green spaces big and small: Join us for this monthly series and learn how to rewild your home landscape. This month we'll discuss plantings and practices to create a bird-friendly space at home. From berries to window decals and keeping cats indoors, you'll learn simple but effective ways to properly welcome birds this winter. FASN/Visitors Center: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Friday, December 11, 5 – 7:30 p.m.

NATURE BOARD GAME NIGHT

Too cold to hike across the United States? Join a naturalist for a tabletop tour of our national parks with the game "PARKS," or try a selection of other nature-themed board games. SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron



Friday, December 11, 7 – 9 p.m.

UGLY SWEATER NIGHT HIKE

Bust out your ugliest holiday sweater and come de-stress on a lively hike in the woods! We'll hike about half a mile, then head back to the campfire for s'mores, hot chocolate and games. Ugly sweaters are not mandatory but highly encouraged! **FASN/Campfire Area: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**

Saturday, December 12, 10 – 11 a.m.

YOUNG BIRDERS: WAKE UP WITH WATERFOWL

Kids ages 8 and up are invited to wake up with waterfowl! Discover what it means to dabble and dive through a short presentation and bird walk. An adult companion is required to remain for the entirety of the program. **SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron**

Saturday, December 12, 12 – 1:30 p.m.

INTRO TO ARCHERY

Learn international-style target archery and test your 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* (11/1). **F/Coventry Oaks Lodge: 40 Axline Ave., Akron**



Saturday, December 12, 1:30 – 3 p.m.

EXPLORING EVERGREENS

More than just holiday decorations, evergreen trees come in many forms, each with their own natural history and ecosystem roles. Hike with a naturalist to learn more about these incredible trees. **GYH/Main Entrance: 2077 Newton St., Akron**



Saturday, December 12, 2:30 – 4 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* (11/1). **F/Coventry Oaks Lodge: 40 Axline Ave., Akron**

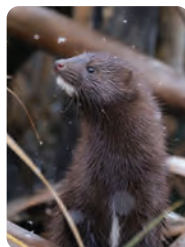
Sunday, December 13, 8:30 – 11 a.m.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT WALK

It's bird counting time! Discover the history of the Christmas Bird Count while gathering community science data as we count birds on about 3 miles of trails. Please bring binoculars and dress for the weather. **FASN/Nature Realm: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**

Sunday, December 13, 1 – 2:30 p.m.

HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN FUR TRADE



Discover the fascinating history of the early American fur trade and its lasting impact on North America. Explore the roles that Indigenous peoples, voyagers, mountain men and

trading companies played in the industry, and how it shaped exploration, commerce and settlement. We'll also examine the environmental and cultural impact of the fur trade and how it continues to influence the world today. **LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg**

Sunday, December 13, 2 – 3 p.m.

METRO PARKS ENSEMBLE HOLIDAY CONCERT

Celebrate the season and get cozy indoors with a performance by the Metro Parks Ensemble! Light refreshments will be provided. Enjoy holiday shopping at the Maple Leaf Gifts pop-up shop (credit cards only). **CV/ Himelright Lodge: 1212 Cuyahoga St., Akron**

Wednesday, December 16, 6:30 – 8 p.m.

OWL PROWL

Join a naturalist for a quiet evening hike along the 1.4-mile Seneca Trail in search of owls beneath the light of the moon. Learn some common owl calls, how they have adapted to nighttime life and how to safely spot them. Bring a small flashlight if you wish. **FASN/ Nature Realm: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron**



Thursday, December 17,
10:30 a.m. – 12:30 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**

Thursday, December 17, 6 – 7:30 p.m.

GOOD GARDEN TALKS: EVERGREENS & WINTER DECOR

Join us in collaboration with Let's Grow Akron and OSU Extension to learn all about evergreens, winterberry and other plants to add seasonal interest and wildlife benefits to your landscapes. Staff will demonstrate simple winter arrangements you can make with cuttings from these plants and other natural materials. Bring a small jar or natural materials to craft along and take home if you'd like. The program will be held in the West Room. GYH/Goodyear Heights Lodge: 2077 Newton St., Akron

Friday, December 18, 8 – 10 a.m.

WINTER BIRD STROLL

Join a naturalist on a winter stroll to witness both the migrators and resident birds that settle down in our fields and forests this season. Binoculars will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. CV/Valley View Area: 1134 Cuyahoga St., Akron



Saturday, December 19,
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

WARM UP FOR WINTER HIKE

Brave the cold with a 2.2-mile round-trip hike from the nature center to the Wilbeth Road Trailhead. Afterward, warm up in the nature center's Lakeview Room with hot beverages. SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron

Saturday, December 19, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

DROP-IN: WINTER ORNAMENTS

Celebrate the season by using nature as inspiration for painting a wood cookie ornament to take home, while supplies last. FASN/Nature Realm: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Saturday, December 19, 2 – 4 p.m.

DROP-IN: CROCHET AND COCOA

Come enjoy a warm drink and learn the art of crocheting just in time for the holidays. All materials will be provided for a simple snowflake and garland project that's perfect for gifting. Beginners and other fabric arts welcome. SLNC: 411 Ira Ave., Akron



Sunday, December 20, 12 – 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 20, 2 – 4 p.m.

DROP-IN: CANDLEMAKING

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

Monday, December 21, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

WINTER SOLSTICE STROLL

Join a naturalist on the shortest day of the year — the winter solstice — as we stroll along the 0.25-mile Maple Loop Trail, beautifully lit by luminaries in the snow. We will hear the tale of "Mother Deer" and learn about the holiday songs and traditions that are based on facts and folklore about reindeer. After the stroll, we'll enjoy hot chocolate and a warm fire in the nature center. LP/Nature Center: 9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg



Wednesday, December 23, 1 – 2:30 p.m.

JOLLY FOR HOLLY

Enjoy a naturalist-led hike on the 1.4-mile Alder Trail as we uncover how hollies keep their leaves year-round. GYH/Pioneer Area: 550 Frazier Ave., Akron

Sunday, December 27, 1 – 2:30 p.m.

COOL WINTER'S HIKE

Take a hike along the 1.4-mile Seneca Trail as we enjoy the winter! We'll be on the lookout for seasonal happenings, learning a bit about the history of Nature Realm and the benefits of being outdoors year-round. FASN/Nature Realm: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

Sunday, December 27, 6:30 – 8 p.m.

OWL PROWL

Join a naturalist for a quiet evening hike along a section of the 2-mile Meadow Trail in search of owls. We'll begin in the shelter for a short presentation to learn some common owl calls, how owls are adapted to nighttime life and how to safely spot them. Please leave dogs at home and bring a small flashlight. MF/ Tallmadge Meadows Area: 1088 North Ave., Tallmadge

Wednesday, December 30,
12:30 – 1:30 p.m.

SCHOOL'S OUT S'MORES

School's out! Join a naturalist for campfire stories while making deluxe s'mores over a campfire, while supplies last. The program will be moved to Seneca Deck if it rains. FASN/ Campfire Area: 1828 Smith Rd., Akron

2027
Happy New Year

MAKE SOME GREEN RESOLUTIONS
FOR THE NEW YEAR!

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



Enjoy

SUMMIT METRO PARKS

Connect, and Make A LASTING IMPACT

Jen M. Harvey, Chief of Philanthropy

Summit County has extensive multipurpose greenways that serve as recreational travel ways in natural settings. Connections to the greenways are vital because they transform individual trails into cohesive, continuous networks and become another way to enjoy nature. Connecting people and nature is part of the Summit Metro Parks mission, and it's also one of the long-term goals of our current strategic plan.

Trails link neighborhoods, schools, workplaces and recreational spaces. By providing safe, off-road alternatives to driving, these networks reduce emissions, boost public health and stimulate local economies through increased tourism and recreation.

The Munroe Falls-Freedom Trail Connector, to be built in 2027, will connect the Freedom Trail greenway with the many

recreational amenities at Munroe Falls Metro Park — the picnic shelters, playground, scenic lake and park trails. It will be built to a high standard of accessibility for all trail users.

Although short in length, the long-awaited connector will provide a parking and access point at the longest stretch of the Freedom Trail without a trailhead. This connector brings many benefits — the most important of which is improved access — and that is why the Summit Metro Parks Foundation is backing the project and seeking your support as well through the *Support Your Parks!* fundraising campaign.

This season, consider a gift to the Summit Metro Parks Foundation to *Support Your Parks!*

Find out more at:
foundation.summitmetroparks.org.



Here's how to connect and make a lasting impact:

- > 330-867-5511
- > foundation@summitmetroparks.org
- > Summit Metro Parks Foundation
975 Treaty Line Rd.
Akron, OH 44313



To make your gift online, scan the QR code or visit
foundation.summitmetroparks.org

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Summit Metro Parks FOUNDATION



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, 2026, through June 30, 2026. 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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We're grateful to those who have made a planned gift to Summit Metro Parks or the Summit Metro Parks Foundation. Those who have done so are recognized here as part of the Green Islands Legacy Society. Planned gifts (such as bequests) are a wonderful way to make a lasting difference for your parks.

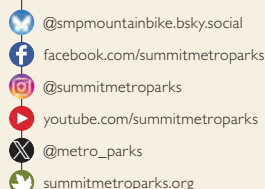
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