



Lake Maria Messenger

October 2019

News for the Friends of Lake Maria State Park

Outdoors, Engaged, Excited: Nature Day 2019



Photo by Jerry Tangen

After pouring a mustard solution into the soil, students watch intently for worms to emerge. The activity was part of a forest floor exploration during Third Grade Nature Day at Lake Maria State Park.

Ask third graders about their favorite Nature Day activity and you'll hear many enthusiastic stories of bugs and birds, turtles and tortoises, pond creatures and trees, and lots of worms munching their way through the forest floor.

In other words, Nature Day 2019 was a success. Thanks to the leadership of Pinewood Elementary teacher Sharon Stoick, a grant from the Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota, a matching amount from the Friends group and the help of many volunteers, the students spent a fall day exploring the outdoors and learning about nature.

Encouraged by the program's success, the Friends group is thinking of expanding it to other schools and grades. The discussion is ongoing and you are invited to join. To share your ideas, come to the next meeting or contact Friends chairman Steve Brown.

Special thanks to Nature Day instructors Chris and Jim Poff, Kjersten Cook, Deanna Leigh, Gregg Hermerding, Cynthia McSherry, Stephen Saupe, Emily Roberts and Sharon Stoick, along with the many chaperones and guides who made it all run smoothly.

About the Friends

The Friends of Lake Maria State Park help preserve the park's environment and support park activities. To learn more, come to a meeting, visit our Facebook page or email any of the Friends members listed below.

Next meeting:

Saturday, December 7, at 10 a.m. in the Trail Center. We'll plan for Winter Fun Day and the Candlelight Hike at this meeting.

Friends contacts:

General email:

friendsoflakemaria@gmail.com

Steve Brown

Chairman

nsbrown113@gmail.com

Kim Mooney

Program Coordinator

plantladydaughter@yahoo.com

320-558-6833

Wendy Suddard-Bangsund

wendy.suddard@gmail.com

Park location and contact info:

11411 Clementa Avenue NW

Monticello, MN 55362

763-878-2325

lakemaria.statepark@state.mn.us

Fiscal agent:

Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota

275 4th St. E, #250

St. Paul, MN 55101-1626

Owl at the Moon

Although clouds hid the full moon, visitors to the October 12 program were still wowed by The Raptor Center. Interpretive naturalist Kelly Shanahan introduced a bald eagle, a red-tailed hawk, a falcon and, at right, a great horned owl. With their ragged wing tips, these owls can silently approach their prey, a varied diet of frogs, mice, squirrels, rabbits, waterfowl and even medium-sized mammals, such as skunks and porcupines. They mate in winter and lay eggs by March.



After the Raptor Center presentation, kids made owl masks and went on a nature hike. While they walked, they cupped their hands behind their ears to augment their hearing, much like an owl directs sounds to its ears using the feathers on its facial disc.

Late Fall and Early Winter Programs

All programs begin at the Trail Center unless otherwise noted.

Opt Out Day **Friday, November 29, all day**

Looking for a Black Friday alternative? Come to the Park for Opt Out Day, an opportunity to enjoy nature's many gifts. No program is planned, but entrance to all state parks will be free. The Trail Center will be open and Friends members will keep the wood stove burning. Stop in to warm up and ask questions.

Winter Fun Day **Saturday, January 18, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.**

Come for a day of activities for children and adults. Snowshoeing, hiking, skiing, winter camping, bird watching, and more are planned for that day. Volunteers will be needed.

Candlelight Hike **Saturday, February 1, 5:30 p.m.-8 p.m.**

Beginning and ending at the Trail Center, one mile of trail will be lined with luminaries for hiking or snowshoeing. Enjoy a bonfire and s'mores at the halfway point. Volunteers will be needed to set luminaries starting at 3 p.m. You are invited to stay and enjoy the lighted trail.



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Friends of Lake Maria State Park
PO Box 29
Maple Lake, MN 55358