

WINTER & SPRING NATURE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Mercer County Park Commission



PUBLIC PROGRAMS

FAMILY PROGRAMS

Registration is not required for family or adult nature education programs unless noted. Public nature programs are open to 20 people and are filled in a first-come, first-serve basis. Participants must pay for the program upon arrival. Cash and checks are accepted, however, the naturalist does not carry change so please have the appropriate bills. Contact jlear@mercercounty.org for more information.

OWLS UP CLOSE

For several years, different owl species have made the Pole Farm their winter home. Gather for an indoor presentation on general owl ecology and the short-eared owl, then carpool to the Pole Farm section of MCPNW to view their crepuscular activities! We may also see other birds of prey scouring the fields for rodents. While at the park, all participants must abide by strict "owl etiquette". Bring a pair of binoculars.

Sunday, February 7 from 3:30 to 6:00 p.m.

At Mercer County Equestrian Center

For ages 7 to adult

Cost: \$4 per person

SUNDAY STROLL SERIES

Put down the newspaper and lace up yours and your little one's sneakers. Spend time as a family and grow closer while playing in nature. Each month's relaxed, Sunday-styled program will send your family along the trail in search of new natural discoveries.



The Sunday Stroll programs are designed for families and cost \$3 per person.

Fur, Fins, Scales and Shells

Sunday, March 14 from 10 to 11:30 a.m.

At Baldpate Mountain Visitor Center

Animal Adaptations

Sunday, April 11 from 10 to 11:30 a.m.

At Mercer County Park

Meet in front of Marina

Pond and Polliwogs

Sunday, May 16 from 10 to 11:30 a.m.

At Roebling Park, Spring Lake section

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

*Children's Programs **do require registration.** To register for these programs please send an email to jlear@mercercounty.org with "program registration" as the title. In the email include the title of the program, names of participants and their age if a child. Payment in the form of check, cash or credit card must be received prior to the start of the program.*



BACKYARD BUDDIES:

Exploring nature in a backyard habitat

Spending time in nature fuels a child's imagination. And, you need not travel far to find it. With the guidance of Mercer County's Naturalist, you and your child will search our nature center's backyard for suburban wildlife! This program will foster your child's hearty curiosity for natural discoveries, which can be continued in your own backyard! Programs include a group story or experiment, an outdoor exploration and a craft. Grow to appreciate nature with your little one.

Thursdays, March 11, April 8, May 6 from 10 to 11:30 a.m.

At Roebing Park, Marsh Nature and Interpretive Center

For children ages 3 to 5 and their parent

Cost: \$8 per program or \$24 for the autumn series

NEW THIS SEASON

HOME SCHOOL NATURE EDUCATION SERIES

The Home School Nature Education Series is especially designed for elementary level home schooled students who have an interest in the natural world. Throughout the series, students will develop their knowledge of the environment and natural relationships as well as pique their interest in conservation all while working together with other home schooled students. Programs include an indoor lesson followed by an interpretive hike and outdoor activities. *These programs are for home school students in grades 3 – 5 and cost \$10 per student.*

Food Webs

Monday, March 29 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

At Baldpate Mountain, Visitor Center/ Lodge

Amphibians

Monday, April 26, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

At Baldpate Mountain, Visitor Center/ Lodge

Stream Ecology

Monday, May 24 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

At Rosedale Park, Picnic area

*this program will be entirely outdoors

ADULT PROGRAMS

Registration is not required for family or adult nature education programs unless noted. Public nature programs are open to 20 people and are filled on a first-come, first-serve basis. Participants must pay for the program upon arrival. Cash and checks are accepted, however, the naturalist does not carry change so please have the appropriate bills. Contact jlear@mercercounty.org for more information.

EARLY BIRDS

Join us for a casual hike -- with your binoculars, of course. These early a.m. walks are dedicated to spotting our fine-feathered friends. Never picked up a pair of binoculars before? No problem. All abilities of birders are welcome. Hikes are free and for adults.

Monday, March 22 from 7 to 8:30 a.m.
At Mercer County Park

Meet in front of the Marina

Monday, April 19 from 7 to 8:30 a.m.
At Baldpate Mountain

Meet at Pleasant Valley Rd. parking lot

Monday, May 3 from 7 to 8:30 a.m.

At Mercer County Park Northwest

Meet at Cold Soil/ Keefe Rd. entrance
Monday, May 17 from 7 to 8:30 a.m.

TRAIL TREKS

Take in fresh air, energize your body and enjoy the sights and sounds of nature with Mercer County's Naturalist on Tuesday morning treks. Wear sturdy hiking shoes and bring a water bottle. Hikes are free and for adults.



Tuesday, February 23 from 9 to 10:30 a.m.

At Roebing Park, Spring Lake section

Tuesday, March 16 from 9 to 10:30 a.m.

At Baldpate Mountain Visitor Center

Tuesday, April 20 from 9 to 10:30 a.m.

At Rosedale Park

Meet in Main Parking Lot

Tuesday, May 11 from 9 to 10:30 a.m.

At Mercer County Park Northwest

Meet at Cold Soil/ Keefe Rd Parking Lot

EXPLORE YOUR PARKS

Get out of the house and go explore! This Sunday afternoon program will unite you and other outdoor enthusiasts for a fun, brisk hike. These hikes are a little faster paced than the Tuesday Trail Treks. Hikes are free and for adults. Feel free to bring a set of hand clippers.

Sunday, February 21 from 4 to 6 p.m.

At MCPNW, meet at Blackwell Road parking lot

**note the time change. We'll be hiking with hopes of finding active owls.

Sunday, March 14 from 1 to 3 p.m.

At Rosedale Park, meet at main parking lot by lake

Sunday, April 11 from 1 to 3 p.m.

At Mercer County Park, meet in front of Marina

Sunday, May 16 from 1 to 4 p.m.

At "Area E" of Baldpate Mountain, meet at Pleasant Valley Parking lot

PROGRAMS FOR GROUPS

These programs are appropriate for any scout group, school trip or organized group. Programs for groups can be requested by emailing jlear@mercercounty.org. Group programs run 60 – 90 minutes and are hosted at Mercer County Parks and offsite areas. Fees for group programs are as follows: \$25 for an onsite program, \$35 for an offsite program.

OUTDOOR GROUP PROGRAMS

These walks include an introduction activity, followed by an interpretive hike.

Ahh, Arthropods!

Six legs, eight legs, fourteen and more! Explore the fields and forest for these small, over-looked organisms that are ever so important. Learn how and why we humans rely upon them.

Animal Evidence

Our parks and natural areas are home to a great number of wildlife. But, we rarely see them. On this walk, we'll look for animal tracks, nests and holes, browsed plants and other animal evidence to learn about the animals and their habits.

Hoo-rah Habitat

You need habitat, I need habitat and animals and plants too. During this walk, learn what habitat is and what it provides while we search different habitats for the plants and animals that use it.

Stream Ecology

Get your feet wet exploring the stream habitat and search for the tiny organisms that hide under rocks and in crevices. Learn who and what each organism is and how they indicate a stream's health. To conclude, we'll participate in an activity that exemplifies the importance of clean streams.

General Nature Walk

General nature walks feature current natural events such as blooming wildflowers, or how organisms prepare for winter. During the hike the group will seek common insects and birds, and animal tracks and signs.

INDOOR GROUP PROGRAMS

Wildlife Guess Who (Pre-K to 1st)

Using different “virtual puzzles” and animal artifacts, students will learn the defining characteristics of animal families, including insect, amphibian, fish, reptile, bird and mammal.

Food Webs (3rd to 5th)

Food is essential for existence. You and I gather our food from a grocery store, but how do different organisms feed themselves? During this program, children will learn to make a food web and will gain a deeper understanding of the interdependence between organisms.

Animal Evidence (2nd – 5th)

A presentation and hands-on activities will engage students as they learn to infer the activities of wildlife. “Evidence” items include animal tracks, skulls and skins, and animal scat! Younger students will create a track stamp story.

Scout Leaders:

Email jlear@mercercounty.org to get more information on nature education programs specifically designed to earn badges or fill badge requirements!

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Spring Cleaning At MCP Trails

Bring your favorite pruning tool and a pair of work gloves as we get the nature trails at Mercer County Park looking spectacular for the spring season. In addition to trimming, we'll re-mark some of the trail system and pick up litter. Volunteers, bring a bag lunch. Call 883-6606 x 112 or email

jlear@mercercounty.org to sign up.

Friday, March 26 from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Meet at Lakeside Pavilion next to the Marina in Mercer County Park

Become a Volunteer Naturalist

Your enthusiasm is wanted.... To share the beauty and wonder of nature with all! If you have some knowledge of natural history, are passionate about the outdoors and enjoy the company of others, then volunteering as a naturalist is for you! Volunteer naturalists lead interpretive hikes, teach nature education programs and assist with special events. Other opportunities can include leading pontoon boat nature tours, removing invasive species, monitoring nest boxes, and maintaining park trails. Volunteer naturalists will be expected to lead at least 1 – 2 programs per month and one weekend program a year.

This spring, the County Naturalist is hosting a volunteer naturalist training. Training will cover our group programs and the related natural history, effective teaching techniques, identification and damage of invasive species, and in-depth instruction in a few select topics. Prior to teaching, each volunteer will observe one or two nature education programs led by the County Naturalist.

To apply, email jlear@mercercounty.org for a Volunteer Naturalist Application or go to the Park Commission website to download a form. All applications are due by February 23, 2010.

Tuesdays, March 9 – April 27 from 9 a.m. to noon

At Baldpate Mountain Visitor Center

G.R.I.P: Group for Removing Invasive Plants

Invasive species are becoming one of our greatest threats to biodiversity. Exotic plants that spread rapidly and out-compete native plant species are considered invasive plants. Invasives degrade the quality of the habitat they occupy, by reducing its flora diversity and decreasing the food supply for wildlife. In New Jersey, at least 94 species of invasive plants have been identified.

This group will meet once a month to remove invasive species from different parks. Join us once or each month! Volunteers need to bring work/gardening gloves and a pair of pruners, if available.

Email jlear@mercercounty.org to sign up.

Friday, April 9 from 10 a.m. to noon

At Baldpate Mountain Visitor Center

Friday, May 14 from 10 a.m. to noon

At Herrontown Woods

Friday, June 11 from 10 a.m. to noon

At Mercer County Park Northwest

Meeting location TBA



(Volunteers in a tangle of wisteria vines)