

The Nature Nuts News

2010

“January Rabbit Thaw!”

Welcome to volume 3 issue 1 of “The Nature Nuts News”, a monthly newsletter keeping you updated with Allen County Parks Volunteer activities. Included is a monthly calendar of events for volunteers.

“Owls aren’t wise & bats aren’t blind”

-Warner Shedd

The eastern cottontail rabbit is red-brown or gray-brown (in winter) with large hind feet, long ears (the better to listen for that wiley coyote) and a short, white, cotton-ball fluff of a tail, with a rusty patch. The underside of its fur is white. Their eyes are distinctively large for their size. The eastern cottontail is different from a hare in that their cottontail young are born blind, naked and helpless. Hares are born with their eyes open, fully furred and well developed. They also have longer legs than cottontails. Most domestic or pet “rabbits” are hares.

The eastern cottontail rabbit is found throughout all of Indiana, from the heart of its cities to the depths of its woodland forests. Tracks can often be found in the snow during winter and in mud during the rest of the year. Spring arrives early for the cottontail as the first courting activities may begin as early as January. Courting activity may be observed during early evening and pre-dawn periods. These activities may include males fighting with each other. The male “buck” and female “doe” will also perform a kind of dance with the male chasing the female. Eventually the female will stop, turn, face the male, and box at him with her front paws! -NO COMMENT! One of them will leap two feet into the air and then the other will take a lover’s leap as well. The female will build a nest in a depression (not a hole in the ground) with her front feet and then will line it with soft materials and sacrificial fur from her own chest and abdomen a few days before giving birth. The female gives birth approximately 28 days after mating. She has an average of four or five young, called kits, up to six times each summer. The doe is ready and able to mate again on the same day as giving birth!

The young grow fast. In one week, they have their eyes open. The second week they begin to leave the nest and feed on green plants in lieu of mom’s milk and are fully weaned at seven weeks. The young are easily identified by the white blaze on their forehead. This marking disappears after a few weeks. They only weigh a few ounces at this time. By six months, the young will reach an adult weight of 2.5 to 3 pounds. By then, they will have learned to eat apple, willow, dogwood, hickory, rose, sumac, clover (especially spring shoots), corn, soybeans, and probably much more!

Average life expectancy at birth is four months, so the rabbit starts early and fights for survival. They are active at night and do not hibernate in winter. Predators include hawks, eagles, owls, red fox, coyote, bobcat, lynx, weasels and humans. The red-tailed hawk and great-horned owls prefer them. When running (up to 18 miles an hour) from a predator, the cottontail can jump 15 feet and will run in a zigzag pattern to elude predators from its scent. They prefer to stay in an area where they can hide quickly. Look for tracks and pink spots indicating estrus when tracking rabbits.



Metea Programs

- * Cross Country Ski Clinics with Michael (schedule a time with him—call 449-3777)
- * Mon. Mornings with Michael, Jan. 4 & 25 (8AM at Payton)
- * Mon. Mornings with Michael, Jan. 11, (8AM at Metea), **January 18th at North Metea!!!**
- * Scrapbook Night at Metea, Jan. 15, 6-9PM
- * The Metea Challenge, Jan. 20, 6-8PM
- * Fourth Friday Night Hike, Jan. 22, 7-8:30PM
- * Astronomy, Get Stars in your Eyes, Jan. 28, 7:30-9:00PM

Fox Island Programs

- * Cross Country Ski Clinic, Jan. 9, 10AM-12
- * Owl Prowl, Jan. 9, 5:30-7:30PM
- * Fox E’s Kit Club, Jan. 12, 19 & 26, 9:30-10:30AM
- * Preschool Discovery Hr., Jan. 12, 1-2PM
- * Owl Night Hoot with Soarin’ Hawk, Jan. 16, 5-7PM
- * Scrap-booking, Jan. 22, 6PM-Midnight

Special Volunteer Events

- * Jan. 7, 1-3PM, Trail Trekkers



Eastern Cottontail Rabbit Tracks



Requests for assistance or suggestions on how the county can better meet the needs of those persons with disabilities may be submitted to the ADA Coordinator at:
Human Resources Department, Room 208, 1 East Main Street, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46802, or by telephone at 260-449-7217, TDD 260-449-7881.

Allen County Park VIP's

January 2010

Metea County
Park

Naturalist, Ron Divelbiss and his best sidekick, wife Nancy, enjoying the staff Christmas Party 09.



1 Happy New Year!!! 2

3	4 8AM Mon. Mornings with Michael at Payton Park!	5	6	7	8	9
10	11 8AM Mon. Mornings with Michael at Metea Park!	12	13	14	15 Scrap-book Night, 6-9PM	16
17	18 8AM Mon. Mornings with Michael at North Metea!	19	20 The Metea Chal-lenge, 6-8PM	21	22 Fourth Friday Night Hike, 7:00-8:30PM	23
24	25 8AM Mon. Mornings with Michael at Payton Park!	26	27	28 Astron-omy—Get Stars In Your Eyes, 7:30-9PM	29	30
31						

Metea County Park Activities

Call 449-3777 for info.

Introduce yourself to our new Metea County Park Naturalist — Michael Gobert (mgobert@allencountyparks.org).



Ask Grandpa Grumpy, Ron Divelbiss, how to make one of these spectacular wreaths!

In addition:

***Join the committee for Metea's fall fundraiser in 2010! Contact bdispenza@allencountyparks.org.**

***Join the Friends of Metea. Contact rdivel-**



Is that Father Time, Father Christmas or new Metea naturalist, Michael Gobert?

January 2010

Fox Island County Park

Rabbit chew (note
the 45-degree angle
cut, un-like deer)



1 Happy
New Year!!!

2

3	4	5	6	7 Trail Trekkers 1-3PM	8 Jr. IMN Meeting, 9:30AM	9 X-Ctry. Ski Clinic, 10AM- Noon Owl Prowl, 5:30- 7:30PM
10	11 Fox Is- land Alliance Mtg. 6PM	12 Fox Kit Club, 9:30-10:30AM "Water Cycle" Pre-school Hour, 1- 2PM, Animal Signs	13	14 ACParks Board Meet- ing 4PM	15	16 Owl Night Hoot w/ Soarin' Hawk, 5-7PM
17	18 Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday	19 Fox Kit Club, 9:30- 10:30AM "Animal Fur"	20	21	22 Scrap booking, 6PM- Midnight!	23
24	25	26 Fox Kit Club, 9:30- 10:30AM "Track Hike"	27 Canter- bury Pre-K, 9- 10:15AM & 1:15-2:30PM	28	29	30
31						

Fox Island Park Volunteer Activities

Call 449-3180 for info.

Volunteers needed for all activities on calendar.

Volunteers also needed for:

Informational signs for the exhibits.

Putting together specific program props.

Bulletin Boards.

Trail Guiding.

Special Events.

**Contact Ron Zartman or Natalie Haley for more
information at 449-3186 or 449-3246.**

Email: programs@allencountyparks.org



*"A winter dune is a wonderful scene." -
Nat Haley*



**Allen County Parks
and Recreation**

7324 Yohne Rd.
Fort Wayne, IN 46809

PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE



The Nature Nut News
A Publication for Allen County Parks Volunteers



**Come sit in the snow
for awhile. ..**