



The Wild Grapevine

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The Wild Grapevine will provide you with nature-related articles and upcoming event information four times per year. All annual pass holders will receive this newsletter free as part of their benefits. Send your email address to metea@allencountyparks.org for free e-mailed copies.

Allen County Parks website:
www.allencountyparks.org

Fox Island Alliance website:
www.foxislandalliance.org

Friends of Metea website:
www.friendsofmetea.org

Your Allen County Parks

Fox Island County Park, 7324 Yohne Road, southwest Fort Wayne (260) 449-3180

Metea County Park, 8401 Union Chapel Road, at State Route 1, Leo-Cedarville (260) 449-3777

Payton County Park, 13928 Dunton Rd. just east of Hometown between Gump and Hathaway Roads

Cook’s Landing County Park, corner of Shoaff and Coldwater Roads

Deer Run Wilderness Area – access by permission only



www.nistem.org

Allen County Parks is a partner in the NISTEM network

The Secret Love Life of Birds, or, The Birds Part of “The Birds and the Bees”

By Bob Dispenza, Park and Education Manager, Allen County Parks

“Let me tell you 'bout the birds and the bees
and the flowers and the trees
and the moon up above
and a thing called love”
- Herb Newman

With spring upon us, the grass growing, flowers blooming and birdies singing, the thoughts of our fellow animals turn to “love,” as in keeping the species going. Birds are especially noisy about their intentions, but not all is bliss in the bird world, at least from a human perspective. Modern genetic techniques allow us to get an idea of what our feathered friends are actually up to.

To get involved in a “relationship,” birds engage in courtship behaviors. These can include preening, singing, displays, feeding, dancing and nest building. All of these can be compared to various human behaviors.

Preening birds will lightly arrange each other’s feathers and sit very close, overriding their usual territoriality (like human couples holding hands and touching each other’s faces and hair).

Singing lets everyone know what's on a bird's mind. If a male is singing, females of the same species hear of his strength and maturity and intelligence and what a good mate he would be. Males of the same species hear "Get out of my territory!" Sometimes couples sing together. Compares to karaoke and possibly rap.

Displays involve special blingy feathers (hummingbirds, red-winged blackbirds), skin coloration (turkeys, prairie chickens) or body shape. These could be indicators of biologic health. Compare to fancy, expensive clothing, jewelry, or cars in humans, which could be indicators of financial health.

Feeding – usually the male feeding the female – shows he can provide food for her and a growing family. Kind of like taking her out to a fancy restaurant.

Dancing demonstrates the health and maturity of the bird. It shows he knows the moves and has the ability to do them with style. Sometimes she just watches (woodcocks), and sometimes they dance together (grebes). You can find the same at any disco or country-western dance venue.

Nest building shows the male's skills at construction, at claiming a territory, and sometimes at decorating with eye-catching materials. She picks the one she likes best. To quote the humans, "If the women don't find you handsome, they should at least find you handy."

Birds have several types of "relationships" (also called pair-bonding strategies), depending on the species. They could be monogamous (long-term or short-term), polygamous (polygynous or polyandrous), or promiscuous.

Monogamy is not necessarily the life-long commitment that we might expect – only 14% of bird species have this (bald eagles, trumpeter swans). Most birds are monogamous for one breeding season or for a single nesting. Recent DNA studies show that most "monogamous" birds engage in "extra-pair mating" (affairs). So the bond is more social than sexual. Social monogamy is by far the most common pair bonding strategy in the bird world.

Polygamy comes in two flavors – polygyny (one male with many females, about 2% of bird species) and polyandry (one female with many males, less than 1%). Polygynous red-winged blackbird males don't help with the kids much, but they are very aggressive in keeping potential predators out of the area, and in keeping the females from wandering off. Polyandrous shore birds and rails have many sex roles reversed – females tend to be bigger, more colorful, and may perform courtship rituals and territory defense usually associated with males. Females lay their eggs in several nests, while males stay at home and raise the babies.

Promiscuity is the strategy for about 6% of birds, including our hummingbirds. Pair bonds are very temporary, and females often raise young alone. No promises made, no promises kept.

Since bees usually only mate once in their lifetime (and only the queen mates), much more can be learned from the birds than the bees. But take their example with a grain of salt – what works for them might not work so well for us.

(Some information for this article came from a presentation at a recent National Association for Interpretation Region 4 Workshop session.)

Congratulations, *Pyrectomenda angulate!*

By Jeff Ormiston. Allen County Parks Naturalist

After over 200 years as a state, Indiana now has an Official State Insect! On February 27th, 2018, Gov. Holcomb signed bill SAE 236 declaring the Say's Firefly the official Indiana State Insect. The Say's Firefly was first suggested to the state legislature in a letter by then second grader Kayla Xu during the 2014–2015 school year. Kayla was a student at Cumberland Elementary School in Lafayette, Indiana.

Say's Firefly (*Pyrectomenda angulate*) was first described, identified and named by Indiana entomologist and naturalist Thomas Say in 1826. Thomas Say was born in Philadelphia in 1787 and moved to New Harmony, Indiana in January of 1826 after several expeditions to Florida, Georgia, Mexico and the Rocky Mountains. Say also served as Professor of Natural History at the University of Pennsylvania. Say is credited with describing over 1000 new species of beetles, more than 400 orders of other insects and seven species of well-known snakes.

The firefly, sometimes called a “Lightning Bug”, is neither a fly nor a bug but a true winged beetle. Fireflies produce their light by a chemical reaction using enzymes, magnesium ions and oxygen known as “bioluminescence”. This flashing light is a means of attracting a mate and starts at sunset and lasts for several hours. Firefly larvae, commonly known as “glow worms”, also have the ability to produce a light and Fox Island County Park Manager Ron Zartman leads a late September hike looking for these little “jewels of the night”. Metea County Park Manager Bob Dispenza also has a Lightning Beetle Fest in late July.

The Say's Firefly was picked as the state insect largely due to the firefly's popularity with most Indiana residents and the connection with Posey County resident Thomas Say. There are few people who have not caught “lightning bugs” as a child and marveled at their ability to flash their tiny lights as we hold them in our hands. It was through the persistence of the young students at Cumberland Elementary that the Say's Firefly became the State Insect.



Upcoming Programs for Spring

Program fees are usually \$2.00 per person unless otherwise stated, and are used to provide operating funds (which are not supported by tax revenue) for Allen County Parks. Most programs require pre-registration to allow resource and staff allocation planning. There may be requirements for a minimum number registered to offer the program. You will be notified at least 1 day before the program if it has been cancelled due to minimum registrations not being met.

Tai Chi

March 28 – May 16, Wednesdays

Instructor Sandy Gebhard will teach the Sun Twenty-four form in this eight week Tai Chi class. These gentle, non-strenuous forms can be practiced by all. Be prepared to have fun as you join this light hearted group.

6:00 – 7:00 PM

Cost: \$50.00 for eight weeks.

\$8.00 drop-in fee.

Registration thru 4/11

Min: 10 Max: 25

Fox Island County Park

To register or for more information:

Email: rzartman@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3186

Ron Zartman

Note: Registration accepted through 3rd week.

Spring Tree Identification Workshop

Learn to Identify the Trees of Metea County Park (Good trail guide review)

April 8, Sunday

Learn how to identify trees before there are leaves on the trees. We will identify several of the tree species that grow in the park. Materials included.

MUST PRE-REGISTER.

1:00 to 3:00 PM

Cost: free for trail guides, \$3.00 for all others.

Pre-register by: 4/13

Min. 5

Max. 15

Metea County Park Nature Center

To register or for more information:

Email: rdivelbiss@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3778

Ron Divelbiss

Fox Kit Club Adventures – “Animal Sounds”

April 10, Tuesday

This program has been developed for pre-school children and their families or teachers. Meet a naturalist at the Fox Island Nature Center to learn about animal sounds. Fees include a snack and drink for children. Paid pre-school teachers of attending students are free. Pre-register at 449-3246.

10:00AM-11:00AM

Cost: \$3.00 per child, \$2.00 per parent

Pre-register by: 4/5

Min. 5

Max. 25

Fox Island County Park

To register or for more information:

Email: nhaley@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3778

Natalie Haley

Preschool Discovery Hour – Animal Tracks

April 10, Tuesday

Gather indoors to cast a plaster animal footprint to take home. Wear mud shoes and dress for the weather to take a hike to look for tracks and other animal signs. Finish with a snack.

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Cost: \$ 3.00 / child
\$ 2.00 / adult

Pre-register by: 4/5

Min: 5

Max: 20

Fox Island County Park

To register or for more information:

Email: rzartman@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3186

Ron Zartman

Frog and Toad Hop

April 12, Thursday

Our destination: trails at North Metea above the flood plain.

Our objective: hear and learn about our spring singing amphibians. They will make quite a racket if the weather cooperates.

Be prepared for muddy trails.

7:30 PM

Cost: \$2

Free to park pass holders

Pre-register by: 4/8

Min. 5

Max. 30

Metea County Park North

Big Trees Lot on Hursh Rd.

To register or for more information:

Email: bdispenza@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-8619

Bob Dispenza

Daylight to Dark Hike

April 13 , Friday

Many animals are active as the day ends. Enjoy a sunset as we watch for evening activities of birds and mammals. We will observe courtship flights of the American Woodcock at dusk. Then, return through darkness listening for owls, coyotes and amphibians.

8:00 – 9:30 PM

Cost: \$2.00 / person

Pre-register by: 4/8

Min: 5

Max: 20

Fox Island County Park

To register or for more information:

Email: rzartman@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3186

Ron Zartman

Soundscapes Hike

April 15, Sunday

Take a hike with Naturalist Nat and listen to the backyard soundscapes found at Metea. Contact Natalie Haley at 449-3778 for required pre-registration

1:30PM-3:30PM

Cost: \$2

Pre-register by: 4/11

Min. 5

Max. 25

Metea County Park

To register or for more information:

Email: nhaley@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3778

Natalie Haley

Stockbridge Audubon Society Birding Fieldtrip

April 21, Saturday

Join local bird enthusiasts as they search for spring migrants and resident birds.

8:00 AM

Cost: \$2.00 entry fee

Fox Island County Park

Vera Dulin Obs. Bldg. Lot

For more information:

Email: rzartman@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3186

Ron Zartman

Metea's EARTH at Night

April 22, Sunday

This event will recognize the valuable resources provided by Meno-aki or "Mother Earth". Enjoy a relaxing evening walking among the stars on Metea's Meno-aki trail. Maximum registration 40. Call 449-3778 to reserve your spot. Hiking in the dark will be highly encouraged.

7:30PM-9:00PM

Cost: \$2

Pre-register by: 4/18

Min. 5

Max. 40

Metea County Park

To register or for more information:

Email: nhaley@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3246

Natalie Haley

Scrapbooking/Craft Nights

April 27, May 18 (No class in June/July), Fridays

Join Naturalist, Natalie Haley, in scrapbooking memories to last a lifetime. We provide refreshments. Pizza can be ordered for an additional \$5.00. Bring an optional snack to share (not required). Crafters may spend their time sewing, crafting or socializing for the same fee. Paid pre-registration is required five days in advance. Just send a check made out to Allen County Parks, with a note letting me to know to reserve your spot!

6:00PM-Midnight

Cost: \$10.00 per class

Pre-register by: 4/22 & 5/15, respectively

Min. 5

Max. 22

Fox Island County Park

To register or for more information:

Email: nhaley@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3778

Natalie Haley

National Arbor Day Hike

April 27, Friday

What better way to spend Arbor Day than learning about our native trees and the ecosystems they live in? Park Manager Bob Dispenza will be filling in for the Lorax and speak for the trees, telling stories of their lives and uses, important to nature and humans.

7 PM

Cost: \$2

Pre-register by: 4/23

Min. 5

Max. 30

Metea County Park Nature Center

To register or for more information:

Email: bdispenza@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-8619

Bob Dispenza

Trail Specific Trail Guide Training

April 28, Saturday

This is a must for those that plan on trail guiding in the fall. Materials included will cover how to lead a student group, biological and historical information, and knowledge about features that are encountered on the trail. Lunch after the IMN meeting, with the group, at Olde Town Diner in Leo. Dutch Treat.

2:00 to 4:00 PM

Cost: Free for IMN class members.
Pre-register by: 4/22
Min. 5
Max. 15

Metea County Park Nature Center

To register or for more information:
Email: rdivelbiss@allencountyparks.org
Call: 449-3778
Ron Divelbiss

Fox Island Sol Fest



May 5, Saturday

May 6, Sunday

The birds are back, the wildflowers are blooming and there's music in the air. Celebrate the sun and the environment with a full weekend of music and activities. Enjoy live bands, hayrides, children's activities and visit environmental groups' activities and displays. Paddle a canoe or kayak, shop vendors, munch festival foods, or relax in the Mad Anthony Brewery beer and wine garden.

12:00 Noon – 7:00 PM

12:00 Noon – 7:00 PM

Cost: \$5.00
Kids 11 and under free,
Children's activity fees
may apply

Annual passes not honored on May 5 and May 6.

Fox Island County Park

Bowman Lake Area

For more information:
Email: rzartman@allencountyparks.org
Call: 449-3186
Ron Zartman

Fox Kit Club Adventures – “May Bird Hike”

May 15, Tuesday

This program has been developed for pre-school children and their families or teachers. Meet a naturalist at the Fox Island Nature Center to learn about birding. Fees include a snack and drink for children. Paid pre-school teachers of attending students are free.

10:00AM-11:00AM

Cost: \$3.00 per child,
\$2.00 per parent
Pre-register by: 5/10
Min. 5
Max. 25

Fox Island County Park

To register or for more information:
Email: nhaley@allencountyparks.org
Call: 449-3778
Natalie Haley

Preschool Discovery Hour – Tadpoles and Frogs

May 15, Tuesday

Youngsters will enjoy a frog story and hunt outdoors for frogs and tadpoles. Wear mud shoes, bug spray and dress for the weather. Finish with a snack.

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Cost: \$3.00 / Child
\$2.00 / Adult
Pre-register by: 5/10
Min: 5
Max: 20

Fox Island County Park

To register or for more information:
Email: rzartman@allencountyparks.org
Call: 449-3186
Ron Zartman

Trail Guiding Training for Adults - Geology

May 17, Thursday

This class is designed for new and experienced Trail guides who want to learn more about the geology Of Fox Island and surrounding area.

1:00 PM – 2:30 PM

No charge for Park trail guides and volunteers
Pre-registration required by 5/11
Min:5
Max: 30

Fox Island Nature Center

To register or for more information:
Email: jormiston@allencountyparks.org
Call: 449-3180
Jeff Ormiston

May Bird Hike

May 20, Sunday

Take a hike with Naturalist Nat and learn how to bird! Work on your bird list and whistle while you work. We have a few binoculars that may be loaned out for new birders.

1:30PM-3:30PM

Cost: \$2
Pre-register by: 5/15
Min. 5
Max. 25

Metea County Park

To register or for more information:
Email: nhaley@allencountyparks.org
Call: 449-3778
Natalie Haley

Wildflower Walk

May 20, Sunday

If you've always wanted to know more about our spring wildflowers, this is for you. We'll see which field guides work best for you, hike out to see the flowers and learn their stories, uses and ecology.

4 PM

Cost: \$2
Pre-register by: 5/17
Min. 5
Max. 30

Caving Adventure

May 24, Thursday – Pre-caving class

June 2, Saturday – Cave trip

Go underground with Allen County Parks. Bob Dispenza will be leading a trip to a cave in southern Indiana on Saturday, June 2. We'll be exploring a wild cave in the area and going off the beaten path, looking for cave wildlife and unusual formations. Mandatory pre-caving class is Thursday, May 24, 7:30 PM at the Metea Visitor Center. Class fee covers maps and caving instruction. Learn about geology, cave life, needed equipment and cave formation. This activity is somewhat strenuous, but suitable for beginners in good physical condition.

7:30 PM

All day
Cost: \$25.00
Pre-register by: 5/20
Min. 5
Max. 15

Explore Metea County Park's Ecosystems (Good trail guide review)

May 27, Sunday

Come to Metea County Park, we will study the park's ecosystems. Then we will take a hike and see different habitats first hand. We will walk in the woods. Walk along Cedar Creek, and then meander through the prairie. Materials included.
MUST PRE-REGISTER.

3:00 to 5:00 PM

Cost: free for trail guides, \$3.00 for others.
Pre-register by: 5/23
Min. 5
Max. 15

Preschool Discovery Hour – Bug Hunt

June 12, Tuesday

We will learn a little about insects and "bugs", and then grab some bug boxes to hunt for and catch some. Snack and drink provided.

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Cost: \$3.00/Child
\$2.00/adult
Pre-register by: 6/7
Min:5 Max: 20

Summer Tree Identification Workshop

Learn to Identify the Trees of Metea County Park (Good trail guide review)

June 12, Tuesday

Learn how to identify several of the tree species that grow in the park. Materials included.
MUST PRE-REGISTER.

3:00 to 5:00 PM

Cost: free for trail guides, \$3.00 for others.
Pre-register by: 6/6
Min. 5
Max. 15

Metea County Park Nature Center

To register or for more information:
Email: bdispenza@allencountyparks.org
Call: 449-8619
Bob Dispenza

Metea County Park Nature Center and a cave in southern Indiana

To register or for more information:
Email: bispenza@allencountyparks.org
Call: 449-8619
Bob Dispenza



Metea County Park Nature Center

To register or for more information:
Email: rdivelbiss@allencountyparks.org
Call: 449-3778
Ron Divelbiss

Fox Island County Park

To register or for more information:
Email: rzartman@allencountyparks.org
Call: 449-3186
Ron Zartman

Metea County Park Nature Center

To register or for more information:
Email: rdivelbiss@allencountyparks.org
Call: 449-3778
Ron Divelbiss

Dragonflies and Damselflies

June, 16, Saturday

Learn about Fox Island's most common Odonata and try your luck at netting a specimen.

1:00p pm – 3:00pm

Cost: \$2 regular park admission.

Under 7 free
Free to park pass holders

Pre-registration required by 6/8.

Min: 5

Max: 30

Fox Island County Park

Dulin Observation Bldg.

To register or for more info:

Email: jormiston@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3180

Jeff Ormiston

Fox Fish and Canoe Camp

June 18-22, Monday-Friday

Allen County Summer Camps... where a kid can canoe, fish and swim the summer away! Fish and canoe camp activities include: canoeing 101, how to pack a canoe for long trips, how to rig and bait your own fishing pole, practice casting, fishing, canoe races and more! Register for summer day camps at www.allencountyparks.org! Just click on the Programs and Day Camps link for registration forms. Forms are also available at each of the nature centers and may be emailed to you.

9:30AM-3:30PM

Cost: \$100

Pre-register by: 6/6

Min. 10

Max. 20

Fox Island County Park

To register or for more information:

Email: nhaley@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3778

Natalie Haley

Fox Survival Camp

June 25-29, Monday-Friday

Allen County Summer Camps ... where a kid can spend the summer outdoors! Survival camp activities include: canoeing 101, debris shelter-building, snares and water stills, fire safety and so much more! Register for summer day camps at www.allencountyparks.org! Just click on the Programs and Day Camps link for registration forms. Forms are also available at each of the nature centers and may be mailed to you.

9:30AM-4:30PM

Cost: \$100

Pre-register by: 6/15

Min. 5

Max. 20

Fox Island County Park

To register or for more information:

Email: nhaley@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3778

Natalie Haley

Canoe Camps I & II

July 9-13 & July 16-20, Monday-Friday

Allen County Summer Camps ... where a kid can canoe, and tube and creek-stomp the summer away! Canoe camp activities include, canoeing 101, tube floats, canoe races, packing your canoe, creek hikes and more! Register for summer day camps at www.allencountyparks.org! Just click on the Programs and Day Camps link for registration forms. Forms are also available at the nature centers or via email.

9:30AM-3:30PM

Cost: \$100 per week

Pre-register by: 6/29

Min. 5

Max. 20/week

Metea County Park

To register or for more information:

Email: nhaley@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3778

Natalie Haley

Lightning Beetle Fest – Celebrate Indiana’s State Insect!

July 21, Saturday

Learn all about our favorite natural night light! We will have an evening of programs and hikes to “enlighten” you. Park and Education Manager Bob Dispenza will share about what lightning beetles live here, how to attract and identify them, and then go out in the park to see them in action. We might even try to catch a few to observe closely.

8:30 PM

Cost: \$2

Pre-register by: 7/18

Min. 5

Max. 30

Metea County Park Nature Center

To register or for more information:

Email: bdispenza@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-8619

Bob Dispenza



*We're on on the web at
www.allencountyparks.org*

Our Mission

To establish and manage a permanent park system incorporating conservation, education, outdoor values, and nature preservation, and to provide recreational opportunities for the people of Allen County within this structure.

Allen County does not discriminate because of disability in the admission to, or treatment or employment in, its programs or activities. The Human Resources Director has been designated to coordinate compliance with nondiscrimination requirements contained in Section 35.107 of the Department of Justice regulations. Information concerning the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the rights provided therein, and Allen County’s ADA policy is available from the ADA Coordinator. Suggestions on how the County can better meet the needs of persons with disabilities may be submitted to the ADA coordinator at: Human Resources Department, 200 East Berry Street, Suite 380, Fort Wayne, IN 46802, or by phone at (260) 449-7217.