

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

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** – Program entry only
- Allen County Hanauer Reserve** – 3022 Easterday Road - Rental facility



www.nistem.org

Allen County Parks is a partner in the NISTEM network



www.allencountytrailblazers.org

Allen County Parks is a partner in Allen County Trailblazers

Land Snails at Metea

By Bob Dispenza, Park and Education Manager

A casual stroll along Softshell Turtle Trail here at Metea may turn up many interesting things, depending on the time of year – beech nuts, glowing fungus, railroad worms (a type of lightning beetle), land snails.

Land snails? Here?

Yes, here. They may be found on either side of the trail in the leaf litter (within which their colors match very well). Identifying them can be a challenge, since both printed and online resources are rare. While they may not be seen too often, they are a fascinating part of our ecosystem.

The species we are most likely to encounter is *Neohelix albolabris*, the white-lipped land snail (first named in 1817 by Indiana naturalist Thomas Say). Starting off as eggs laid in rotten logs or damp leaf litter, the new snails are nearly transparent with a thin, fragile shell. As they grow,



Land snails found at Metea

eating live and dead plant material, they add more whorls and more thickness to their shells. They may grow as large as 30 millimeters (about 1.25 inches) in diameter and live to be four years old.



Like most snails, *Neohelix* has four “eyestalks” which contain light- and chemical-sensitive organs. They can find food and potential mates with these and other chemical receptors scatter around their bodies.

During summer dry spells, snails aestivate, going dormant and sealing their shell with a layer of dried slime known as an epiphragm. This keeps the snail from drying out and allows a little air in. They will do the same in winter. Our snails are most active during or after a rain in warmer weather.

Reproduction may or may not involve another snail, since this snail has both needed parts (hermaphroditic). Snails don’t run into each other very often, and each is a potential mate. Courtship and mating can take hours and, like everything else in a snail’s life, it involves slime.

Which brings us back to eggs again. You have now taken the first steps as a malacologist – a studier of snails. To learn more, you might want to read *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating* by Elisabeth Tova Bailey.

Upcoming Programs for Winter

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.

Christmas Bird Count		Fox Island County Park
January 1, 2021, Saturday	8:00am-Noon Chili	Nature Center
Our winter birds are bulking up on their energy reserves for winter. We will have someone stationed at the Vera Dulin Wildlife Observation Building to observe birds at the feeders. If you want to stop in and learn how to count birds, please meet us at the Vera Dulin building after 9:00am until Noon.	Cost: Free, Park Entry paid at front gate or donation of 2 suet cakes per person Pre-register by: 12/27 Min. 0 Max. 25 in building at one time	To register or for more information: Email: foxisland@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-3180 Natalie Haley

Crop or Craft Night		Fox Island County Park
Jan. 7, Jan. 28, Mar. 4 and Apr. 15, Fridays	5:00PM-11:00PM	Nature Center
Scrapbook or Craft while socializing with other adults. We provide some refreshments and snacks. It is optional to chip in on ordering pizza for supper or in whether you want to bring a snack to share. Mask recommended until you sit down at your table. If you send a check ahead of schedule, please specify in the memo line which class(s).	Cost: \$10.00 per person Pre-register by: 5 days before program Min. 5 Max. 20	To register or for more information: Email: foxisland@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-3180 Natalie Haley

Nature Story Time		Metea County Park Nature Center
January 12, Wednesday	10:30 AM	
Birds Join Dawn Stoops from the Grabill Branch Library and Bob Dispenza from Metea County Park as we learn about the great outdoors! Each session will focus on a nature theme with stories, activities and hands-on learning. We'll meet in the Nature Center then do a little outdoor exploring if weather permits.	Cost: FREE Pre-register by: 1/8	To register or for more information: https://acpl.libnet.info/event/5648006 or Email: bdispenza@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-8619 Bob Dispenza

Forest Preschool		Fox Island County Park
Jan. 12, Feb. 16, Mar. 16, Wednesdays	1:00PM-2:30PM	Nature Center
This program is developed for preschool children and their families or teachers. Meet a naturalist at the Fox Island Nature Center. Preschool teachers are free. Jan. 12: "Winter Trees", Feb. 16: "Tracks", Mar. 16: "Spring".	Cost: \$3.00 per child, \$2.00 per adult (Park entry included) Pre-register by: 5 days before program Min. Max.	To register or for more information: Email: foxisland@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-3180 Natalie Haley

Cell Energy – Photosynthesis - Respiration		Metea County Park
January 13, Thursday	9:30AM or 1:00PM	Nature Center
Study how carbohydrates are built and how energy is released from them.	Cost: \$10.00 Pre-register by: 1/5 Min. 5 Max. 15	To register or for more information: Email: rdivelbiss@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-3778 Ron Divelbiss

Young Naturalist Homeschool		Fox Island County Park
Jan. 13, 27 Feb. 10, 24, Mar. 10, 24 Thursdays	1:00PM-3:00PM	
This program is developed for students 6-13 and will cover a variety of topics and includes a hike during each class.	Cost \$2.00 per child, \$2.00 per parent Pre-register by: 1/7 Min. 5 Max. 20	To register or more information: Email: jormiston@allencountyparks.org Call: (260) 449-3184 Jeff Ormiston

Cross-Country Ski Workshop		Metea County Park Nature Center
January 15, Saturday	10 AM	
Learn: how equipment works, waxing vs. no-wax, purchasing, ski prep and maintenance, how to dress and receive basic instruction and practice on technique (weather permitting). Leave phone number and shoe size when registering in order to reserve equipment.	Cost: \$8.00 includes one hour rental (weather permitting) or voucher for future ski rental. \$3.00 if bringing your own equipment. Pre-register by: 1/11 Min: 5 Max: 15	To register or for more information: Email: metea@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-8619 Bob Dispenza

Full Wolf Moon Hike		Metea County Park Nature Center
January 17, Thursday	7:30 PM	
We don't hear wolves around here anymore, but we now have coyotes. We'll stalk through the night woods learning about our local predators and how they get through winter.	Cost: \$2.00 Pre-register by: 1/13 Min. 5 Max. 45	To register or for more information: Email: bdispenza@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-8619 Bob Dispenza

Nucleic Acids and Protein Synthesis		Metea County Park
January 20, Thursday	9:30AM or 1:00PM	Nature Center
Study how nucleic acids build proteins	Cost: \$10.00 Pre-register by: 1/12 Min. 5 Max. 15	To register or for more information: Email: rdivelbiss@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-3778 Ron Divelbiss

Hike with Jeff O.		Fox Island County Park
Jan.21, Feb. 25, Mar. 25, Apr. 22 Fridays	1:00PM-2:30PM	
This program is open to the public of all ages and will vary depending on the weather.	Cost \$2.00 entry fee Pre-register by: One week prior Min. 5 Max. 20	To register or more information: Email: jormiston@allencountyparks.org Call: (260) 449-3184 Jeff Ormiston

Trail Guide / Teacher Workshop		Fox Island County Park
January 22, Saturday	9:00AM-Noon	Nature Center
Teach your students how to track animals. If we have time, we will talk about nocturnal mammals, skulls, scat and signs of animals.	Cost: Free Pre-register by: 1/17 Min. 5 Max. 20	To register or for more information: Email: foxisland@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-3180 Natalie Haley

Wild Edibles Class		Fox Island County Park
Jan 22, Feb. 26, Mar 26	10:00AM-12:00PM	
Continue the exploration of wild edible plants with certified edibles specialist Carrie Vrabel	Cost: \$2:00 entry fee Pre-register by: 1 week prior Min. 5 Max. 12	To register or more information: Email: jormiston@allencountyparks.org Call: (260) 449-3184 Jeff Ormiston

Tracks 'N Trails of Fox Island		Fox Island County Park
January 22, Saturday	1:00PM-3:00PM	
Meet a Park Naturalist at Fox Island's Nature Center and learn how to track animals in the park.	Cost \$2.00 per person, Pre-register by: 1/18 Min. 5 Max. 20	To register or more information: Email: nhaley@allencountyparks.org Phone: (260) 449-3246 Natalie Haley

Nature Story Time		Grabill Library
February 2, Wednesday	10:30 AM	
Winter Homes Special guest Bob Dispenza, from Metea County Park, will be here to offer hands-on learning as we share stories and activities all about our big, beautiful world. This special nature story time at the Grabill Branch happens on the first Wednesday of the month. We also meet at Metea County Park on the second Wednesday of the month for a more in-depth look at the natural world; so be sure to register for "Family Storytime at Metea County Park" as well!	Cost: FREE Pre-register by: 1/29	To register or for more information: https://acpl.libnet.info/event/5606627 or Email: bdispenza@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-8619 Bob Dispenza

World Wetlands Day – a Fox Island View		Fox Island County Park
February 2, Wednesday	Noon-4:00PM	Nature Center
Program at 1:00PM in the nature center (limited to the first 66 visitors). Wetland Hike at 2:00PM (limited to the first 25 people – meet in front of the nature center). Clean up ye old Fox Island (anytime Noon-4:00PM). We have a dumpster in the center road parking lot. Please pick up trash bags and rubber gloves at the nature center and deposit them into the dumpster. We appreciate your help keeping Fox Island clean.	Cost: Park entry of \$2.00 paid at gate post or reception desk. Free to annual pass holders. Min. N/A Max. N/A	To register or for more information: Email: foxisland@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-3180 Natalie Haley

Groundhog Day		Metea County Park
February 2, Wednesday	4 PM	Nature Center
As the weather continues cold, we all wonder when spring warmth will be arriving. One of our native animals has a reputation for being able to tell when – the groundhog. We are going to encourage him with a little celebration held in his honor. Learn about hibernation, the history of woodchuck weathermen, sing some Groundhog Day songs, and go looking for our own Metea Park Marvin. Will he see his shadow? Or will he just hibernate through his special day?	Cost: \$2.00 Pre-register by: 1/30 Min. 5 Max. 20	To register or for more information: Email: bdispenza@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-8619 Bob Dispenza

Cell Division - Mitosis		Metea County Park
February 3, Thursday	9:30AM or 1:00PM	Nature Center
Study how cells produce more cells.	Cost: \$10.00 Pre-register by: 1/26 Min. 5 Max. 15	To register or for more information: Email: rdivelbiss@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-3778 Ron Divelbiss

Nature Story Time		Metea County Park Nature Center
February 9, Wednesday	10:30 AM	
Winter Homes Join Dawn Stoops from the Grabill Branch Library and Bob Dispenza from Metea County Park as we learn about the great outdoors! Each session will focus on a nature theme with stories, activities and hands-on learning. We'll meet in the Nature Center then do a little outdoor exploring if weather permits.	Cost: FREE Pre-register by: 2/5	To register or for more information: https://acpl.libnet.info/event/5648018 or Email: bdispenza@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-8619 Bob Dispenza

Genetics - Meiosis		Metea County Park
February 10, Thursday	9:30AM or 1:00PM	Nature Center
Study how organisms produce more organisms.	Cost: \$10.00 Pre-register by: 2/2 Min. 5 Max. 15	To register or for more information: Email: rdivelbiss@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-3778 Ron Divelbiss

Explore the Universe - Beginning Astronomy		Metea County Park Nature Center
February 10, 17, 24, Thursdays	7:30 PM	
If you want to learn about astronomy and space first hand (rather than from a TV show or podcast), this is for you. We will use telescopes and various optics, have close encounters with outer space objects, explore our solar system, and venture outside our galaxy. Includes handouts and star charts, along with instruction for using your own scopes. We will go outside to observe when weather permits, so prepare for cold weather.	Cost: \$20 for the series Pre-register by: 2/3 Min. 5 Max. 30	To register or for more information: Email: bdispenza@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-8619 Bob Dispenza

February Full Moon Hike		Fox Island County Park
February 16, Wednesday	6:00PM-8:00PM	Nature Center
Take an evening saunter in the snow or winter terrain of Fox Island and enjoy the Storm Moon, the Hunter Moon or the Snow Moon.	Cost: \$2.00 (Park entry included) Pre-register by: 2/11 Min. 5 Max. 25	To register or for more information: Email: foxisland@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-3180 Natalie Haley

Full Hunger Moon Hike		Metea County Park Nature Center
February 16, Wednesday	7:30 PM	
Even though it's the shortest month, February seems to last a long time. For native wildlife trying to survive, it could last a lifetime. We'll look at the strategies the survivors use to get to spring.	Cost: \$2.00 Pre-register by: 2/12 Min. 5 Max. 45	To register or for more information: Email: bdispenza@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-8619 Bob Dispenza

Earthworm Dissection		Metea County Park
February 17, Thursday	9:30AM or 1:00PM	Nature Center
Study the external and internal structures of an earthworm.	Cost: \$10.00 Pre-register by: 2/9 Min. 5 Max. 15	To register or for more information: Email: rdivelbiss@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-3778 Ron Divelbiss

Introduction to Whittling Figures		Fox Island County Park
Feb 19, Saturday	10:00AM-12:00PM	
This is a chance to learn how to get started with wood carving animals and figures. We'll discuss tools, wood, whittling safety, painting and much more.	Cost: \$2.00 entry fee Pre-register by: 2/11 Min. 5 Max. 30	To register or more information: Email: jormiston@allencountyparks.org Call: (260) 449-3184 Jeff Ormiston

Cross-Country Ski Workshop		Metea County Park Nature Center
February 19, Saturday	10 AM	
Learn: how equipment works, waxing vs. no-wax, purchasing, ski prep and maintenance, how to dress and receive basic instruction and practice on technique (weather permitting). Leave phone number and shoe size when registering in order to reserve equipment.	Cost: \$8.00 includes one hour rental (weather permitting) or voucher for future ski rental. \$3.00 if bringing your own equipment. Pre-register by: 2/15 Min: 5 Max: 15	To register or for more information: Email: metea@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-8619 Bob Dispenza

Crayfish Dissection		Metea County Park
February 24, Thursday	9:30AM or 1:00PM	Nature Center
Study the external and internal structures of a crayfish.	Cost: \$10.00 Pre-register by: 2/16 Min. 5 Max. 15	To register or for more information: Email: rdivelbiss@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-3778 Ron Divelbiss

Full Sap Moon Hike		Metea County Park Nature Center
March 18, Friday	8:00 PM	
With warmer weather, the ground begins to thaw and the sap rises in the maple trees. Sugaring season is here! Weather permitting, we will visit a maple syrup operation and see what else – besides sap - is coming up in the woods.	Cost: \$2.00 Pre-register by: 3/14 Min. 5 Max. 45	To register or for more information: Email: bdispenza@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-8619 Bob Dispenza

Fish Dissection		Metea County Park
March 10, Thursday	9:30AM or 1:00PM	Nature Center
Study the external and internal structures of a fish.	Cost: \$10.00 Pre-register by: 3/2 Min. 5 Max. 15	To register or for more information: Email: rdivelbiss@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-3778 Ron Divelbiss

Frog Dissection		Metea County Park
March 17, Thursday	9:30AM or 1:00PM	Nature Center
Study the external and internal structures of a frog.	Cost: \$10.00 Pre-register by: 3/9 Min. 5 Max. 15	To register or for more information: Email: rdivelbiss@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-3778 Ron Divelbiss

Leopold Land Ethic – Waterfowl Migration		Fox Island County Park
March 19, Saturday	1:00PM-3:00PM	Nature Center
Waterfowl migration class on the spring migration of the Canada geese and other waterfowl.	Cost: \$3.00 (includes park entry, free to park volunteers) Pre-register by: 3/14 Min. 5 Max. 25	To register or for more information: Email: foxisland@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-3180 Natalie Haley

Spring Equinox Night Hike		Fox Island County Park
March 20, Sunday	6:30PM-8:30PM	Nature Center
Meet at Park Naturalist at the nature center for this night experience. Celebrate the coming of spring!	Cost: \$2.00 Pre-register by: 3/15 Min. 5 Max. 25	To register or for more information: Email: foxisland@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-3180 Natalie Haley

Spring Equinox Hike		Metea County Park Nature Center
March 20, Sunday	8 PM	
While the weather may lag behind, spring officially arrives on this day. We will look into the mysticism and science behind this astronomical event, bust some myths, and go for a walk in the woods to look and listen for signs of spring.	Cost: \$2.00 Pre-register by: 3/16 Min. 5 Max. 45	To register or for more information: Email: bdispenza@allencountyparks.org Call: 449-8619 Bob Dispenza

Salamanders and Amphibians		Fox Island County Park
Apr 9, Saturday	1:00PM-3:00PM	
We'll discuss salamanders and amphibians and hike in search of salamander eggs.	Cost: \$2.00 entry fee Pre-register by: 4/01 Min. 5 Max. 30	To register or more information: Email: jormiston@allencountyparks.org Call: (260) 449-3184 Jeff Ormiston

Allen County Parks 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.