

the Conservationist

A Quarterly Publication of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

Spring 2026



A Little Respect

For DuPage County Snakes

This Baby Wildlife Season,

**If You Care,
Leave It There**

Spring Calendar



Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

from the president



Back when I was a Forest Preserve District of DuPage County ranger, spring was an encouraging time of year. Not only were trees budding, early spring wildflowers blooming, and birds returning, but the trails were coming alive with more and more visitors emerging from their own winter hibernations. It meant that I would again have the opportunity to welcome back many forest preserve fans and talk with them about the awakening landscape and the wildlife that call it home.

This spring, the Forest Preserve District is also welcoming wildlife lovers to the visitor center at the DuPage Wildlife Conservation Center at Willowbrook Forest Preserve. This state-of-the-art wildlife hospital (and the District's first net-zero-designed building) offers behind-the-scenes peeks at the wildlife rehabilitation process and exhibits on native wild animals that show how we can do our part to help and protect them. The timing is ideal as baby animal season (and the center's influx of calls from concerned residents) is about to begin. You can read about the young birds and mammals you find in your own backyard and when the center's help might be needed in "If You Care, Leave It There" on Page 6.

I also remember as a ranger talking with people about the subject of some of their not-so-favorite animal encounters: snakes. But as you'll read in "How About a Little Respect?" on Page 19, these sometimes-underappreciated reptiles play invaluable roles.

Of course spring also means our annual native plant sale, guided hikes, fishing and kayaking adventures, and so much more, so check out the calendar to find your next excursion. I just might see you there!

Daniel Hebreard

President, Forest Preserve District of DuPage County



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BOARD MEETINGS

For schedules and agendas or to watch live or recorded meetings, visit dupageforest.org.



THE CONSERVATIONIST

Spring 2026, Vol. 63, No. 2

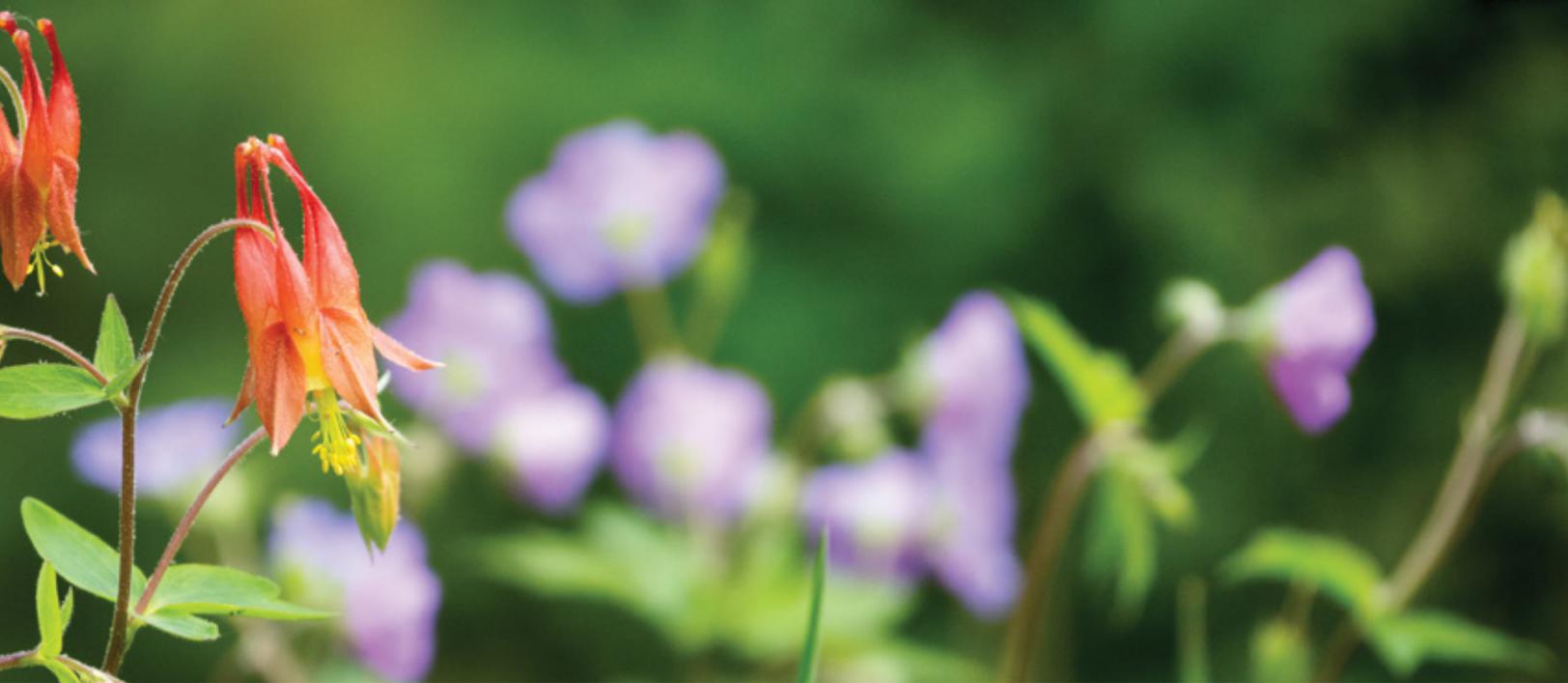


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dupageforest.org

The Conservationist is a quarterly publication of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County. Subscriptions are free for DuPage County residents and \$5 per year for nonresidents. To subscribe or unsubscribe, call 630-933-7248 or email forest@dupageforest.org. You can also read this and previous issues 24/7 at dupageforest.org. To receive an email when each new issue is available online, email forest@dupageforest.org.



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On the cover: Common garter snake Ivan Kuzmin/stock.adobe.com

OUR *Mission*

To acquire and hold lands for the purpose of preserving the flora, fauna and scenic beauty for the education, pleasure and recreation of DuPage County citizens

news & notes



COLLECTIONS *Corner*

Turning raw materials like wool, flax, or cotton fibers into yarn is an arduous task. First you need to “draft” (pull or stretch) the fibers to separate and thin them. You then need to twist them into a tight straight line, making a thread. Fortunately, spinning wheels can make the process quicker and easier.

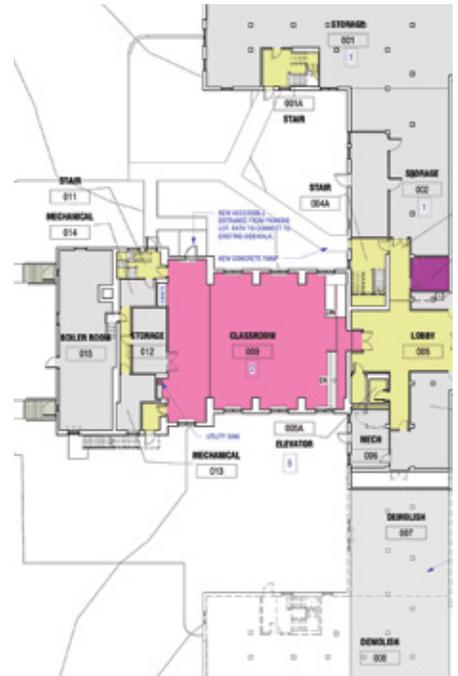
It’s unclear when the first spinning wheel was made, although it was likely in Asia or the Middle East thousands of years ago. A “great wheel,” such as the one shown above, is one of many forms a spinning wheel can take. The large wheel connects to a spindle via a cord. The person spinning pushes the wheel with one hand while using the other hand to draft the fibers. This type of wheel is also called a “walking wheel” due to the way the fibers are drafted and how yarn is deposited on the wheel. By holding the fiber at different angles as the spindle turns, a spinner can alternate between drafting and twisting the fibers and wrapping finished yarn onto the spindle. Often this means a spinner is shuffling forward and backward at the side of the wheel, almost like a dance.

Spinning wheels fell out of favor around the Industrial Revolution, when mechanized inventions greatly outpaced them, but you can see this great wheel in action at the Graue Mill and Museum, which opens for the season mid-April.

MAYSLAKE HALL 2026 CLOSURE

Mayslake Hall at Mayslake Peabody Estate is closed as the Forest Preserve District works to renovate the interior of the 100-year-old building. The extensive project will upgrade mechanical systems to meet code, add or replace plumbing so there’s access to water for cleaning purposes on all levels, remove the unused south section of the retreat wing, and upgrade the storage area that houses the District’s collection of historic and natural history artifacts.

The surrounding forest preserve and access to Trinity and Mays lakes will remain open. For updates visit dupageforest.org.

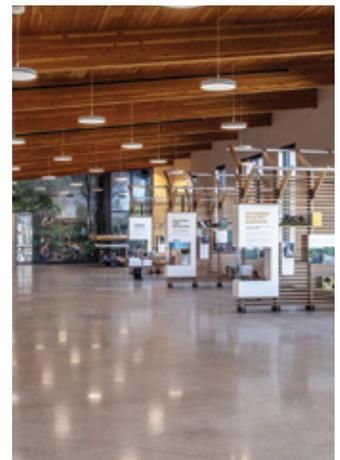


DUPAGE WILDLIFE *Visitor Center*

The visitor center at the DuPage Wildlife Conservation Center at Willowbrook Forest Preserve is welcoming guests with behind-the-scenes looks at the science of wildlife rehabilitation and exhibits on native wild animals and how residents can coexist with them in their own backyards.

The visitor center and the animal admittance area are open Wednesdays 9 a.m. – noon and Thursday – Tuesday 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. They’re closed on Thanksgiving, the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day. The center accepts most wildlife patients, but please call 630-942-6200 before arriving.

Upcoming programs at the center are in the calendar starting on Page 8 and online at dupageforest.org/wildlife-conservation.



THANK YOU for Being a Friend

The Friends of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County gratefully acknowledges those who donated \$500 or more during the fourth quarter 2025 (or reached \$500 cumulative annual giving in that same quarter). The Friends advances the Forest Preserve District's vision through philanthropic endeavors and fundraising to benefit habitat restoration, wildlife preservation, and education and recreation programs.

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Learn more or donate at dupageforest.org/friends or mail your gift to the Friends of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County at 3S580 Naperville Road in Wheaton 60189. To discuss your giving plans or learn about Friends' board service opportunities, please contact Partnership & Philanthropy at 630-871-6400 or fundraising@dupageforest.org.

CELEBRATING OUR AWESOME VOLUNTEERS!

In recognition of National Volunteer Week, April 19 – 25, the Forest Preserve District applauds its 786 long-term volunteers, 1,514 one-time volunteers, and 93 volunteer groups, who combined donated a total of more than 66,600 hours with an in-kind value of nearly \$2.3 million in 2025.

With a variety of one-time, seasonal, and yearlong opportunities across 12 programs, the District is sure to have something to fit your schedule, pique your interest, and ignite your passion. For details visit dupageforest.org and click on "Get Involved" and "Volunteer," or contact us at 630-933-7233 or volunteer@dupageforest.org.





◀ It may be the size of a tennis ball, but this eastern cottontail is old enough to be living on its own.

If You Care, Leave It There

Lee/stock.adobe.com

We've all come across one. That tiny ridiculously cute stray baby bunny wiggling its nose as it rests in the grass in the backyard.

And we've all thought it. "That poor thing! All alone and abandoned by its mom!" And we were all most likely wrong.

This time of year the Forest Preserve District's DuPage Wildlife Conservation Center at Willowbrook Forest Preserve gets hundreds of calls from people reporting baby wild animals seemingly orphaned by their parents. But in most cases, the animals are just doing what wild animals do. Young wild animals are not like humans. They're not constantly watched by their parents. They spend large amounts of time alone or with their siblings.

In the case of those cute little eastern cottontails, if you find one hopping around with ears up and eyes open, believe it or not it's old enough to be on its own. Cottontails stay with their moms only a few short weeks.

If it doesn't look that physically developed, don't immediately grab a shoebox with the intent to rescue. Look for the nest. It'll likely be a shallow depression lined with fur and grass clippings (not a burrow as many may think). Gently place the bunny back in the nest and cover it with grass. It's okay to handle a cottontail with gloved hands; the mother will not reject it. If the nest is in an area frequented by your dog, flip over a laundry basket, place it over the nest, and weigh it down with a rock. Remove the basket every night, though, so



Phone First

The Forest Preserve District's DuPage Wildlife Conservation Center in Glen Ellyn is open Wednesdays 9 a.m. – noon and Thursday – Tuesday 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. It provides care and medical treatment to most injured, orphaned, and sick native wild animals, but **always call 630-942-6200 before you drive over**. The animal may not need the center's help. Additionally, the center can only care for so many animals at a time and may seasonally set capacity limits.

If the center isn't open when you call, you can find detailed information online 24/7 at dupageforest.org/wildlife-conservation.

the mother can reach her babies. But don't be surprised if you never see her. She only visits once or twice a night.

If you're still concerned, you can check to see if the mother returns by placing twigs over the nest in a crisscross pattern. If they've moved overnight, the mom has likely been there, especially if the babies are warm and active with round bellies. If they're cold and lethargic with flat bellies, they may truly be orphans, which means it's time to give the DuPage Wildlife Conservation Center a call.

For birds, if you find a featherless downy or incompletely feathered chick, find the nest, and place the bird inside. Again, the parents won't reject it because you've touched it. The wildlife center's webpage shows how to create a makeshift nest if the original was destroyed or is out of reach. It also advises what to do if the parents don't return.

If the bird is on the ground, has most of its feathers, and looks healthy but is unable to fly, leave it alone. It's a fledgling, an older bird that can't fly but can perch and hop, and its parents are likely nearby. Fledglings can live on the ground for up to two weeks while they learn to fly. During that time their parents will feed them and teach them how to protect themselves against predators. The adults may even swoop by or squawk at people or animals that get too close to their young.

For tree squirrels, just one storm can destroy a large leafy nest, leaving babies stranded on the ground. If this happens (or the nest is there but you can't reach it), place the young in a box near the tree or on a branch. You can borrow a wooden box from the DuPage Wildlife Conservation Center or make one of your own. Details are on the center's webpage as are instructions on what to do if the mom doesn't come back.

Virginia opossums – North America's only marsupials – are an exception to the idea of "leave it there." Young are born the size of honeybees in an undeveloped embryonic form. To survive, they must make their way in their first few minutes to their mother's pouch, where they'll nurse for about 80 days. If a baby falls out of the pouch, its mom will not be looking for it, so it will need the wildlife center's help.

Of course there may be times when medical care is needed. If you see bleeding, signs of a fracture, a severe head tilt, swollen and crusty red eyes, maggots, or parasites, call the DuPage Wildlife Conservation Center.

Regardless of the situation, never take matters into your own hands and care for wildlife at home, even for a short time. It's not only illegal but also harmful. These animals have specialized nutritional, housing, and handling needs only licensed facilities can provide. Babies in particular are high maintenance because they require multiple feedings a day. Inexperienced individuals who attempt to raise or treat them inevitably create unhealthy, tame animals that can no longer survive in the wild where they belong.

Although the DuPage Wildlife Conservation Center can successfully raise young native wildlife, in most cases animals fare better when you leave them there – in their parents' instinctive care. •



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▲ Fully feathered "fledglings," like this American robin, can spend up to two weeks on the ground as they learn to fly.



▲ The wildlife center will take in baby tree squirrels when efforts to place them in nest boxes fail.



▲ Crisscrossing sticks over an eastern cottontail nest can show if the mother returns overnight.



KristinaStock-Adobe.com

▲ Ducks, geese, and opossums are exceptions to "leave it there." These babies are constantly with their moms. If they're alone, their moms aren't coming back.

spring calendar

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April

- 1** Evening Hike Club
Wednesday Wilderness Walk
- 2** Volunteer Restoration Workday
- 3** Peabody's Pages Book Club Three-Part Program Begins
- 4** Fishing: Spring Trout Season Opener
Volunteer Restoration Workday
Wild Baby Brunch
- 5** Earth Month: Preserve Litter Pickup
Sheep Shearing
- 6** Forest Hike
- 7** Native Landscaping: Creating Your Garden Plan: Online
- 8** CCC at Fullersburg: A Guided History Hike
Evening Hike Club
Spinning for Beginners
Wednesday Wilderness Walk
- 9** Native Landscaping: Creating Your Garden Plan
Volunteer Restoration Workday
- 11** CCC at Fullersburg: A Guided History Hike
Earth Month: Preserve Litter Pickup
Fledgling Naturalists
Nature Study Explorers
Volunteer Restoration Workday
- 13** Forest Hike
Volunteer Workday at the Nursery
- 14** Native Landscaping: Creating Your Garden Plan: Online
Volunteer Restoration Workday
- 15** CCC at Fullersburg: A Guided History Tram Tour
Evening Hike Club
Wednesday Wilderness Walk
- 16** Early-Birds Stroller Hike
Volunteer Restoration Workday
- 17** Bird Walk
Fullersburg Wildflower Walk
- 18** CCC at Fullersburg: A Guided History Tram Tour
Fullersburg Wildflower Walk
Storytime With the Miller
Volunteer Restoration Workday
Volunteer Workday at the Nursery
- 19** Archery: Adults
Volunteer Restoration Workday
- 20** Forest Hike
- 21** Homeschool Historians
Native Landscaping: Creating Your Garden Plan: Online
Volunteer Restoration Workday
- 22** Earth Month: Roadside Litter Pickup
Evening Hike Club
Spring Brook: Back From the Dead
Volunteer Restoration Workday
Wednesday Wilderness Walk
- 23** Spring Ephemeral Wildflower Hike
Volunteer Restoration Workday
- 24** Bird Walk
Volunteer Workday at the Nursery
- 25** Earth Month: Roadside Litter Pickup
Volunteer Restoration Workday
- 26** Earth Month: Roadside Litter Pickup
Volunteer Restoration Workday
- 27** Forest Hike
- 28** Native Landscaping: Creating Your Garden Plan: Online
Volunteer Restoration Workday
- 29** Evening Hike Club
Volunteer Workday at the Nursery
Wednesday Wilderness Walk

May

- 1** Bird Walk
- 2** Archery: All Ages
Spring Ephemeral Wildflower Hike
Volunteer Restoration Workday
- 3** Volunteer Restoration Workday
- 4** Forest Hike
Volunteer Workday at the Nursery
- 5** Archery: Games for All Ages
Volunteer Restoration Workday
- 6** Evening Hike Club
Wednesday Wilderness Walk
- 7** Spring Ephemeral Wildflower Hike
- 8** Bird Walk
- 9** Fledgling Naturalists
Volunteer Restoration Workday
Volunteer Workday at the Nursery
- 10** Fishing: With Mom
Raw to Roving: Preparing Sheep's
Wool for Spinning
Warbler Walk
Wild Baby Brunch
- 11** Forest Hike
- 12** Volunteer Restoration Workday
- 13** Spinning for Beginners
Wednesday Wilderness Walk
- 15** Bird Walk
DuPage Night Life
Native Plant Sale
Volunteer Workday at the Nursery
- 16** Native Plant Sale
Paws and Play
Salt Creek Restoration Hike
Storytime With the Miller
Volunteer Restoration Workday
- 17** Archery: All Ages
Volunteer Restoration Workday
Warbler Walk
- 18** Forest Hike
- 19** Homeschool Historians
- 20** Volunteer Workday at the Nursery
Wednesday Wilderness Walk
- 21** Early-Birds Stroller Hike
Kayaking: Basics
- 22** Bird Walk
Fullersburg Wildflower Walk
- 23** Fullersburg Wildflower Walk
Knuts About Knots
Volunteer Restoration Workday
- 24** Fishing: Explore Your Tackle Box
Volunteer Restoration Workday
- 25** Volunteer Restoration Workday
- 27** Volunteer Workday at the Nursery
Waycar Wednesday
Wednesday Wilderness Walk
- 28** Archery: Adults
Climate Conversations:
Combating Climate Change
With Natives
- 29** Bird Walk
Build a Wattle Fence
- 30** Intro to Wildflower ID
Volunteer Restoration Workday

June

- 1** Volunteer Workday at the Nursery
- 3** Archery: Just for Kids
- 4** Kayaking: Just for Kids
- 5** Bird Walk
Ice Cream Social
Tractor-Drawn Wagon Ride
- 6** Milking Demonstration
Volunteer Restoration Workday
Volunteer Workday at the Nursery
Wild Baby Brunch
- 7** Kayaking: Basics
Milking Demonstration
- 10** Spinning for Beginners
- 11** Early-Birds Stroller Hike
Pre-K Nature Play
- 12** DuPage Night Life
Ice Cream Social
Tractor-Drawn Wagon Ride
Volunteer Workday at the Nursery
- 13** Fledgling Naturalists
Milking Demonstration
Nature Study Explorers
Volunteer Restoration Workday
- 14** Behind the Scenes at the DuPage
Wildlife Conservation Center
Fishing: Just for Kids Fishing Derby
Mammoth Gotcha Day
Mammoths in Our Midst
Milking Demonstration
Volunteer Restoration Workday
Wild Baby Brunch
- 16** Dairy Time
Fishing: Beginners
- 17** Kayaking: Basics
Volunteer Workday at the Nursery
Waycar Wednesday
- 18** Dairy Time
- 19** Fullersburg Wildflower Walk
Ice Cream Social
Tractor-Drawn Wagon Ride
- 20** The Art of St. James Farm
Fullersburg Wildflower Walk
Milking Demonstration
Native Landscaping: Family
Container Gardening
Storytime With the Miller
Volunteer Restoration Workday
- 21** Fishing: With Dad
Milking Demonstration
- 22** Volunteer Workday at the Nursery
- 26** Ice Cream Social
Tractor-Drawn Wagon Ride
- 27** Milking Demonstration
Volunteer Restoration Workday
Volunteer Workday at the Nursery
- 28** Milking Demonstration
Volunteer Restoration Workday



Plants & Wildlife

Behind the Scenes at the DuPage Wildlife Conservation Center 28643

Get a behind-the-scenes look at a working wildlife hospital as you learn about the rehabilitation process from the arrival and examination to the rehabilitation and release of our wildlife patients. Learn, too, about sustainable features of this state-of-the-art net-zero-designed facility. Ages 12 and up; under 18 with an adult. \$25 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-942-6200.

June 14	1:30 – 3 p.m.	Wildlife Center
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Bird Walk 28660

Bring your binoculars and enjoy birding camaraderie as you learn ID tips and tricks and look for migrating birds on a casual 2-mile guided walk for beginning to advanced birders. Ages 18 and up. \$5 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248.

April 17	7:30 – 9:30 a.m.	Danada
April 24	7:30 – 9:30 a.m.	Fullersburg
May 1	7:30 – 9:30 a.m.	McDowell Grove
May 8	7:30 – 9:30 a.m.	Meacham Grove
May 15	7:30 – 9:30 a.m.	St. James Farm
May 22	7:30 – 9:30 a.m.	W. DuPage Woods
May 29	7:30 – 9:30 a.m.	Waterfall Glen
June 5	7:30 – 9:30 a.m.	Dunham

Fledgling Naturalists 28604

Learn about wildlife on a half-mile hike that's perfect for little ones with a big interest in animals. Ages 3 – 8 with an adult. \$5 per child. Register on ActiveNet, at 630-942-6200, or at the hike.

April 11	9:30 – 10:30 a.m.	Wildlife Center
May 9	9:30 – 10:30 a.m.	Wildlife Center
June 13	9:30 – 10:30 a.m.	Wildlife Center

Fullersburg Wildflower Walk 28371

Meet a plant expert for a leisurely walk through the first blooms of spring. You'll learn about spring flowers, how to identify them, and what varieties you can grow at home. Ages 18 and up. \$5 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-850-8110.

April 17 & 18	10:30 – 11:30 a.m.	Fullersburg Woods
May 22 & 23	10:30 – 11:30 a.m.	Fullersburg Woods
June 19 & 20	10:30 – 11:30 a.m.	Fullersburg Woods

Intro to Wildflower ID 28638

Learn basic botanical ID techniques and then put your new skills to the test on a guided hike to see what's blooming. Ages 12 and up; under 18 with an adult. \$5 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-942-6200.

May 30	10 – 11:30 a.m.	Wildlife Center
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Mammoth Gotcha Day 28346

Celebrate the discovery of the Blackwell mammoth (now on display at Fullersburg Woods) with storytelling, games, and a craft for curious kids. This fun, interactive program brings the Ice Age to life! Ages 5 – 7 with an adult. \$5 per child. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-850-8112.

June 14	1 – 2 p.m.	Fullersburg Woods
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Mammoths in Our Midst 28355

Discover incredible evidence of the Ice Age that's right beneath your feet! Learn how mammoths and mastodons once roamed DuPage County, and explore the fascinating stories behind local discoveries of their remains. Ages 18 and up. \$5 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-850-8112.

June 14	6 – 7:30 p.m.	Fullersburg Woods
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Salt Creek Restoration Hike 28351

Take a 2-mile hike along Salt Creek to learn about river restoration and other habitat restoration projects happening in the preserve. Ages 18 and up. \$5 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-850-8112.

May 16	10:30 a.m. – Noon	Fullersburg Woods
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How to Register on ActiveNet

1. Visit dupageforest.org. Scroll down and click "Find a Program."
2. Click "Search Programs on ActiveNet."
3. In the search box, enter the five-digit number next to the program name in this calendar.
4. If a program has more than one date, time, or location, click "View Subactivities" to find the one you want.

Spring Brook: Back From the Dead 28315

Learn how Spring Brook was restored to ecological health and continues to better the environment on this 2-mile creekside nature walk. Ages 18 and up. \$5 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248.

April 22	10:30 – 11:45 a.m.	St. James Farm
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Spring Ephemeral Wildflower Hike 28629

Welcome the season on a guided hike where you'll learn about the first wildflowers of the year. Spring ephemerals aren't here for long, so catch them while you can! Ages 12 and up; under 18 with an adult. \$5 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-942-6200.

April 23	2 – 3 p.m.	W. DuPage Woods
May 2	2 – 3 p.m.	Meacham Grove
May 7	2 – 3 p.m.	Wood Dale Grove

Warbler Walk 28654

Search for the bright, colorful feathers of neotropical migrants on a guided bird walk. Ages 18 and up. \$5 per person. Register on ActiveNet, at 630-942-6200, or at the walk.

May 10	7:30 – 9:30 a.m.	St. James Farm
May 17	7:30 – 9:30 a.m.	W. DuPage Woods

Wednesday Wilderness Walk 28644

Take a guided nature hike, observing the flora and fauna in the greatly diverse Lincoln Marsh. Join us for a cup of coffee or tea as we discuss some of nature's wonders before we start. Ages 18 and up. \$5 per person. Register on ActiveNet, at the walk, or at 630-942-6200.

April 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29	8 – 10 a.m.	Lincoln Marsh
May 6, 13, 20 & 27	8 – 10 a.m.	Lincoln Marsh

Wild Baby Brunch 28633

Get glimpses of the wildlife rehabilitation process through the observation windows, including baby animals as they're fed, and learn from staff what it takes to care for young wildlife. All ages; under 18 with an adult. Free. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-942-6200.

April 4	10:30 – 11:30 a.m.	Wildlife Center
May 10	10:30 – 11:30 a.m.	Wildlife Center
June 6 & 14	10:30 – 11:30 a.m.	Wildlife Center

Ways to Play

Archery

Adults 28614

Whether you're new to the sport or looking for a refresher, join us to learn safety tips, proper shooting techniques, and basic skills. Equipment provided. Ages 18 and up. \$5 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248.

April 19	11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	Maple Grove
May 28	5 – 6:30 p.m.	Blackwell

All Ages 28617

Whether you're new to the sport or looking for a refresher, join us to learn safety tips, proper shooting techniques, and basic skills. Equipment provided. Ages 9 and up; under 18 with an adult. \$5 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248.

May 2	10 – 11:30 a.m.	Salt Creek Park
May 17	1 – 2:30 p.m.	York Woods

Games for All Ages 28622

Compete with others in fun games for all skill levels. Equipment provided. Ages 9 and up; under 18 with an adult. \$5 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248.

May 5	5 – 6:30 p.m.	Blackwell
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Just for Kids 28623

Learn the basics in a kid-friendly setting. Equipment provided. Ages 7 – 12 with an adult, who must be present for the entire program. \$5 per child. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248.

June 3	5:30 – 6:30 p.m.	Blackwell
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Early-Birds Stroller Hike 28639

It's never too early to get the little ones outside! Grab the stroller and get some fresh air while you socialize and learn simple nature activities on a 1-mile hike along a limestone trail. All ages; under 18 with an adult. \$5 per family. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-942-6200.

April 16	9:30 – 10:30 a.m.	Wildlife Center
May 21	9:30 – 10:30 a.m.	Wildlife Center
June 11	9:30 – 10:30 a.m.	Wildlife Center

spring calendar



More Ways to Play

KAYAK, CANOE, PADDLEBOAT, AND BOAT RENTALS

Rentals end one hour before closing and are \$16 per hour for single kayaks or rowboats; \$20 for canoes or two-person kayaks; and \$22 for paddleboats. Questions? Call 630-933-7248.

Blackwell

Weekends May 2 – Sept. 27

Weekdays May 25 – Aug. 14

11 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Herrick Lake

Weekends May 23 – Sept. 7

11 a.m. – 6 p.m.

SCENIC OVERLOOK

Greene Valley

Get a bird's-eye view of Greene Valley — and the Chicago skyline — from 190 feet above the landscape. Weather or IEPA work may affect hours without notice. Free. Questions? Call 630-792-2100.

May 2 – Oct. 25 Saturdays & Sundays

One hour after sunrise until 6 p.m.

FAMILY CAMPGROUND

Blackwell

Enjoy nature under the stars at one of 60 sites. For weekend reservations visit dupageforest.org and click "Get a Permit." For additional nights around the holidays, call 630-933-7248.

May 1 – Oct. 12 Friday & Saturday Nights

Plus Select Additional Holiday Nights

Fishing

Beginners 28608

Don't rely on luck to catch fish. Learn basic skills to improve your confidence and make your family outings successful. We'll cover equipment, knots, where and how to find fish, and what to do when you catch them. Equipment and bait are provided, but you can bring your own. All ages; under 18 with an adult. \$5 per person ages 5 and up; under 5 free. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248.

June 16 5:30 – 7 p.m. Wood Dale Grove

Explore Your Tackle Box 28603

Bring your tackle box and learn how to use what's inside. See what lures look like underwater to a fish, and get your questions answered. Ages 12 and up; under 18 with an adult. \$5 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248.

May 24 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Herrick Lake

Just for Kids Fishing Derby 28676

Bring the family to this friendly fishing competition just for kids 15 and younger with raffles and prizes for the biggest catches. Ages 15 and under with an adult. Free. Register on ActiveNet, at 630-933-7248, or at the event.

June 14 8 – 11 a.m. Blackwell



Riding Lessons 28389

Danada Equestrian Center

Learn valuable horsemanship and riding skills in a friendly group setting, or receive one-on-one instruction and progress at your own pace with individual lessons or individual four-pack lessons. Ages 12 and up. \$44 – \$320 per DuPage County resident; \$56 – \$380 per nonresident. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-668-6012.



How to Register on ActiveNet

1. Visit dupageforest.org. Scroll down and click "Find a Program."
2. Click "Search Programs on ActiveNet."
3. In the search box, enter the five-digit number next to the program name in this calendar.
4. If a program has more than one date, time, or location, click "View Subactivities" to find the one you want.

Spring Trout Season Opener

Drop a line for this popular sport fish at Silver, Grove, and Pickerel lakes. Anglers 16 and older must carry valid Illinois fishing licenses with inland trout stamps. All ages. Free. No registration. Questions? Call 630-933-7248.

April 4	6 a.m.	Blackwell, Pratt's Wayne and Wood Dale Grove
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With Dad 28602

Spend the morning by the lake with the dads and other paternal figures in your life, creating memories and learning skills to increase your fishing successes. Equipment and bait are provided, but you can bring your own. All ages. \$5 per person ages 5 and up; under 5 free. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248.

June 21	11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	Hidden Lake
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With Mom 28601

Spend the morning by the lake with the moms and other maternal figures in your life, creating memories and learning skills to increase your fishing successes. Equipment and bait are provided, but you can bring your own. All ages. \$5 per person ages 5 and up; under 5 free. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248.

May 10	11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	Hidden Lake
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Kayaking

Basics 28609

Learn about equipment, strokes, and safety from a certified American Canoe Association kayak instructor. Equipment provided. Ages 12 and up; under 18 with an adult. \$20 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248.

May 21	5 – 7 p.m.	Herrick Lake
June 7	10 a.m. – Noon	Mallard Lake
June 17	5 – 7 p.m.	Songbird Slough

The Indoor Riding Arena

St. James Farm

RIDING YOUR HORSE IN THE INDOOR RIDING ARENA

Exercise and school your horse at this historic venue in April. Ages 12 and up; under 18 with an adult. \$10 per horse-rider combo per hour. Register at 630-580-7027.

Just for Kids 28613

Learn the basics in a kid-friendly setting. Equipment provided. Ages 7 – 12 with an adult, who must be present on shore for the entire program. \$10 per child. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248.

June 4	5:30 – 6:30 p.m.	Herrick Lake
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Knuts About Knots 28624

Have fun learning the basics of knot tying with hands-on instruction showing how to tie different knots for daily use or your next outdoor adventure. Supplies provided. Ages 12 and up; under 18 with an adult. \$5 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248.

May 23	Noon – 2 p.m.	St. James Farm
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Paws and Play

Take a "paws" from your screen to celebrate the spring bird migration with your family through self-guided and self-paced activities. All ages; under 18 with an adult. Free. No registration. Questions? Call 630-942-6200.

May 16	9 a.m. – Noon	Wildlife Center
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Pre-K Nature Play 28677

Bring your little ones to a guided morning of nature play in the forest, where you'll stretch, sing, move, and explore together. Ages 2 – 5 with an adult. \$5 per child. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248.

June 11	9:30 – 11:30 a.m.	Fullersburg Woods
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Health & Well-Being

Evening Hike Club 28678

Boost your outdoor wellness in a friendly group setting on a quick-paced 3-to-5-mile guided hike. Ages 18 and up. \$5 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248.

April 1	6 – 7:30 p.m.	Oldfield Oaks
April 8	6 – 7:30 p.m.	Greene Valley
April 15	6 – 7:30 p.m.	McDowell Grove
April 22	6 – 7:30 p.m.	Blackwell
April 29	6 – 7:30 p.m.	Mayslake
May 6	6 – 7:30 p.m.	Waterfall Glen

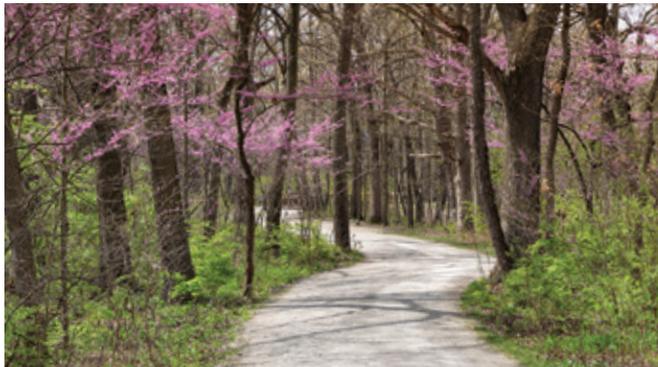
spring calendar



Forest Hike 28685

Join a nature expert on a quick-paced hike through a popular preserve. Gear up to enjoy healthy exercise as you walk 3 – 5 miles while enjoying the wonders of your surroundings. Ages 18 and up. \$5 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248.

April 6	8:30 – 10 a.m.	West Branch
April 13	8:30 – 10 a.m.	Meacham Grove
April 20	8:30 – 10 a.m.	Greene Valley
April 27	8:30 – 10 a.m.	St. James Farm
May 4	8:30 – 10 a.m.	Fullersburg Woods
May 11	8:30 – 10 a.m.	Springbrook
May 18	8:30 – 10 a.m.	Waterfall Glen



Living Green

Climate Conversations: Combating Climate Change With Native Plants 28693

Learn about native wildflowers, how to identify them, and how to grow them at home. Sip a signature cocktail made with native plant ingredients while you pot up your own container of native flowers, grasses, and sedges for home. Supplies and plants provided. Ages 21 and up. \$40 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248. For dining reservations at the Greenway Table & Tap before the program, visit dupagegolf.com/greenway-tap.

May 28	6:30 – 8:30 p.m.	Oak Meadows
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Native Landscaping: Creating Your Garden Plan

Bring drawings or photos of your garden space, and then get customized recommendations at a meeting with a plant expert who will help you select native plants to match your garden goals and growing conditions. Ages 18 and up. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248.

In Person 28669

45 minutes. \$20 per session.

April 9	5, 6 & 7 p.m.	St. James Farm
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Online 28727

1 hour. \$30 per session.

April 7, 14, 21 & 28	3 & 5:30 p.m.	Online
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Native Landscaping: Family Container Gardening 28674

Celebrate Pollinator Week with the family by bringing a bit of nature to your backyard. Learn about common native wildflowers, how to identify them, and why they're important to wildlife. Then get your hands dirty mixing dirt and potting up your own container of native plants for home. Supplies and plants provided. All ages; under 18 with an adult. \$25 per family. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248.

June 20	10 – 11:30 a.m.	St. James Farm
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Native Plant Sale: New Location

DuPage Event Center and Fairgrounds

Shop in person for native flowers, grasses, shrubs, and trees. For a list of plants, visit dupageforest.org/native-plant-sale. Get ready for this year's sale by signing up for one of our native landscaping programs on this page. Questions? Call 630-933-7248.

May 15	May 16
10 a.m. – 7 p.m.	9 a.m. – 2 p.m.



How to Register on ActiveNet

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4. If a program has more than one date, time, or location, click "View Subactivities" to find the one you want.

Heritage

The Art of St. James Farm 28296

Take a guided walking tour of the preserve's seven outdoor pieces of artwork. Learn about the inspiration for each piece, the artists and their creative processes, and how the artwork came to be at St. James Farm. Ages 18 and up. \$5 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248.

June 20 2 – 3 p.m. St. James Farm



Build a Wattle Fence 28350

Learn how to weave your own old-school fencing using scraps from your yard as you help the Graue Mill and Museum and master gardeners set up the final stage of their demonstration grain garden: a wattle fence. Ages 12 and up; under 18 with an adult. \$5 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-850-8112.

May 29 1 – 2:30 p.m. Graue Mill

CCC at Fullersburg: A Guided History Hike 28364

Visit trails and structures built by the Civilian Conservation Corps and examine rare photographs on a 2.5-mile guided hike that explores the legacy of the World War I veterans who helped shape Fullersburg Woods during the Great Depression. Ages 16 and up; under 18 with an adult. \$10 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-850-8112.

April 8 3 – 5 p.m. Fullersburg Woods
 April 11 1 – 3 p.m. Fullersburg Woods



1890s Living

Kline Creek Farm

Suggested admission donation of \$5 per person ages 3 and up to enter the farm. All ages; under 18 with an adult. No registration. Questions? Call 630-876-5900 or visit facebook.com/klinecreekfarm.

CHORES ON A DAIRY FARM

Try your hand at different activities and learn about the importance of dairy farms in the 1890s and how their legacy is still around today.

June 1 – 29

Mondays & Thursdays 1:30 – 3:30 p.m.

HOUSE TOUR: DAIRY MONTH

Join us for a guided tour of the 1890s farmhouse with discussions on dairy farming, heritage breed cows, butter making, and more.

June 1 – 29

Thursday – Monday 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. on the hour

HOUSE TOUR: SPRINGTIME ON THE FARM

Take a guided tour of the 1890s farmhouse focusing on the busy spring season, when the farm comes to life! Newborn lambs and calves bring new life to the farm as the draft horses prepare the fields for planting. Learn about the work that went into the kitchen garden and the crop fields, and see us freshen up the house after a long winter.

April 2 – May 31 (except May 25)

Thursday – Monday 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. on the hour

STORY TIME

Bring the family and rest under the shade of a tree while a costumed interpreter shares lessons from the world of stories with different historic tales each week.

June 1 – Aug. 31

Mondays 10 a.m. – Noon

spring calendar



CCC at Fullersburg: A Guided History Tram Tour 28367

Visit trails and structures built by the Civilian Conservation Corps and examine rare photographs on a 2.5-mile accessible guided ride that explores the legacy of the World War I veterans who helped shape Fullersburg Woods during the Great Depression. Ages 16 and up; under 18 with an adult. \$10 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-850-8112.

April 15	3 – 5 p.m.	Fullersburg Woods
April 18	1 – 3 p.m.	Fullersburg Woods

Dairy Time

Explore St. James Farm's dairy heritage with interesting facts about cows, milk, and the farm's dairy buildings, which were used in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s. Help hand-churn butter, and then enjoy a fun themed craft. All ages; under 18 with an adult. Free. No registration. Questions? Call 630-580-7025.

June 16 & 18	1:30 – 3:30 p.m.	St. James Farm
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DuPage Night Life 28625

Explore a preserve after dark on a guided hike where you'll learn about nighttime wildlife adaptations through hands-on sensory activities that will allow you to experience the adaptations for yourself. All ages; under 13 with an adult. \$5 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248.

May 15	9 – 10:30 p.m.	Waterfall Glen
June 12	9 – 10:30 p.m.	Blackwell

Homeschool Historians 28345

Bring your homeschooled students on a guided exploration followed by related crafts or activities. We'll explore the Civilian Conservation Corps in April and homestead hobbies in May. Ages 8 – 16 with an adult. \$10 per student. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-850-8112.

April 21	10 a.m. – Noon	Graue Mill
May 19	10 a.m. – Noon	Graue Mill

Ice Cream Social

At this delicious program, learn about 1890s ice cream and help churn a simple vanilla recipe that we'll serve once it's done. Suggested admission donation of \$5 per person ages 3 and up to enter the farm. All ages; under 18 with an adult. Free. No registration. Questions? Call 630-876-5900 or visit facebook.com/klinecreekfarm.

June 5, 12, 19 & 26	1:30 – 2:30 p.m.	Kline Creek Farm
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Milking Demonstration

See Kline Creek Farm's heritage Shorthorn cows hand-milked the 1890s way. Suggested admission donation of \$5 per person ages 3 and up to enter the farm. All ages. Free. No registration. Questions? Call 630-876-5900 or visit facebook.com/klinecreekfarm.

June 6, 7, 13, 14, 20, 21, 27 & 28	9:30 – 10 a.m.	Kline Creek Farm
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Celebrating America 250

St. James Farm

STARS AND STRIPES: OUR AMERICAN FLAG

Celebrate America's 250th birthday by learning the history of the United States flag and viewing variations from our museum collection. All ages; under 18 with an adult. Free. No registration. Questions? Call 630-580-7025.

May 1 – June 28

Friday – Sunday 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.



How to Register on ActiveNet

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3. In the search box, enter the five-digit number next to the program name in this calendar.
4. If a program has more than one date, time, or location, click "View Subactivities" to find the one you want.

Nature Study Explorers

Have you ever wanted to explore the outdoors just like kids did in the 1890s? Then take a step back in time and learn from the nature-study movement of the late Victorian era with craft projects or science experiments geared to the time of year. Suggested admission donation of \$5 per person ages 3 and up to enter the farm. All ages; under 18 with an adult. Free. No registration. Questions? Call 630-876-5900 or visit facebook.com/klinecreekfarm.

April 11	1:30 – 3:30 p.m.	Kline Creek Farm
June 13	1:30 – 3:30 p.m.	Kline Creek Farm

Raw to Roving: Preparing Sheep's Wool for Spinning

Learn how a raw sheep fleece goes from being a stinky, matted mess into soft, beautiful roving ready for spinning. If you're interested in spinning from wool you've prepared yourself or you're just curious about how the process of making wool yarn begins, this program is for you. Ages 8 and up; under 18 with an adult. \$5 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-850-8112.

May 10	10 – 11:30 a.m.	Graue Mill
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Sheep Shearing

Watch farmers hand shear our heritage Cotswold sheep, and learn about the role of sheep on an 1890s farm. Suggested admission donation of \$5 per person ages 3 and up to enter the farm. All ages. Free. No registration. Questions? Call 630-876-5900 or visit facebook.com/klinecreekfarm.

April 5	1:30 – 3:30 p.m.	Kline Creek Farm
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Spinning for Beginners

Learn about the basics of spinning wool into yarn and how this ancient craft helped clothe a nation. Then try it for yourself on an old-fashioned spinning wheel. Ages 12 and up; under 18 with an adult. \$5 per person. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-850-8112.

April 8	1 – 2:30 p.m.	Graue Mill
May 13	1 – 2:30 p.m.	Graue Mill
June 10	1 – 2:30 p.m.	Graue Mill

Storytime With the Miller

See history come alive through literature as you hear a historic tale, and then try your hand at a craft, activity, or chore from the story. Ages 8 – 12 with an adult. \$5 per child. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-850-8112.

April 18	11 a.m. – Noon	Graue Mill
May 16	11 a.m. – Noon	Graue Mill
June 20	11 a.m. – Noon	Graue Mill

Tractor-Drawn Wagon Ride

Enjoy a 30-minute ride while learning about the forest preserve's heritage and natural areas. Rides begin at 1, 1:45, and 2:30 p.m. All ages; under 13 with an adult. \$5 per person ages 5 and up; under 5 free. No registration. Questions? Call 630-580-7025.

June 5, 12, 19 & 26	1 – 3 p.m.	St. James Farm
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Waycar Wednesday

Walk through our 1906 waycar (also called a caboose) and hear how it was first used on the rails and then by Brooks McCormick after its retirement. All ages; under 18 with an adult. Free. No registration. Questions? Call 630-580-7025.

May 27	11 a.m. – 3 p.m.	St. James Farm
June 17	1:30 – 3:30 p.m.	St. James Farm

Nature Art & Culture

Peabody's Pages Book Club

Three-Part Program 28600

Discuss great reads with fellow book fans at these enriching meetups. In April we'll discuss *Finding the Mother Tree* by Suzanne Simard; in May, *We'll Prescribe You a Cat* by Syou Ishida; and in June, *The Birth of the Republic* by Edmund S. Morgan. Due to work at Mayslake Hall, these meetings will be at the Graue House next to the Graue Mill and Museum. Ages 18 and up. \$10 per person for all three discussions. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-206-9566.

April 3, May 1 & June 5	10 – 11:30 a.m.	Graue Mill
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Volunteer

Earth Month: Preserve Litter Pickup 28246

Support wildlife and beautify the preserves by picking up litter along trails and waterways. Ages 8 and up; under 18 with an adult. Free. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248.

April 5	10 a.m. – Noon	Wood Dale Grove
April 11	10 a.m. – Noon	Pratt's Wayne

Earth Month: Roadside Litter Pickup 28249

Support wildlife and beautify the preserves by picking up litter along the road. Ages 18 and up. Free. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-933-7248.

April 22	10 a.m. – Noon	Greene Valley
April 25	10 a.m. – Noon	Waterfall Glen
April 26	10 a.m. – Noon	Springbrook



Volunteer Workday at the Nursery 28572

Lend a hand weeding, watering, or collecting and cleaning seeds from native grasses and flowers. Ages 12 and up; under 18 with an adult. Free. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-206-9630 at least five days in advance (10 days ahead for groups of five or more).

April 13, 18, 24 & 29	9 a.m. – Noon	Blackwell
May 4, 9, 15, 20 & 27	9 a.m. – Noon	Blackwell
June 1, 6, 12, 17, 22 & 27	9 a.m. – Noon	Blackwell

Volunteer Restoration Workday 28508

Help improve a forest preserve prairie or woodland by collecting seeds or removing nonnative plants. Ages 8 and up; under 18 with an adult. Free. Register on ActiveNet or at 630-206-9630 at least five days in advance (10 days by phone for groups of five or more).

Big Woods

April 14, 21 & 28	2:50 – 4:30 p.m.	Big Woods
May 5 & 12	2:50 – 4:30 p.m.	Big Woods

Churchill Woods

April 18, 19, 25 & 26	8:30 – 11 a.m.	Churchill Woods
May 2, 3, 16, 17, 23, 24 & 25	8:30 – 11 a.m.	Churchill Woods
June 13, 14, 27 & 28	8:30 – 11 a.m.	Churchill Woods

Churchill Woods Glacial Ridge

April 11, 22 & 25	9 a.m. – Noon	Churchill/Glacial
May 23 & 30	9 a.m. – Noon	Churchill/Glacial
June 6 & 20	9 a.m. – Noon	Churchill/Glacial

Maple Grove

April 4 & 18	9 a.m. – Noon	Maple Grove
May 9 & 23	9 a.m. – Noon	Maple Grove
June 6	9 a.m. – Noon	Maple Grove

Springbrook Prairie

April 2, 9, 11, 16 & 23	9 a.m. – Noon	Springbrook
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St. James Farm

April 25	9 a.m. – Noon	St. James Farm
May 16	9 a.m. – Noon	St. James Farm

Wayne Grove

April 4 & 18	9 a.m. – Noon	Wayne Grove
May 2 & 16	9 a.m. – Noon	Wayne Grove



◀ Sometimes mistaken for rattlesnakes (and often killed because of it), nonvenomous fox snakes play a key role in keeping populations of rodents in check.

How About a Little Respect?

© Annette

by **DAN THOMPSON**, ECOLOGIST

In the world of wildlife, snakes are some of the most misunderstood and underappreciated creatures, feared, loathed, and persecuted by many. With a little understanding, though, we can learn why we should respect snakes and all they do.

DuPage County is home to 13 types of snakes, the most prevalent being the common garter, eastern fox, midland brown, and northern water snake. Like alligators, turtles, and lizards, snakes are reptiles, which means they're "ectothermic," or cold-blooded. Instead of producing heat from what they eat, they draw it from the environment to elevate their body temperatures and increase metabolism. Snakes often do this by basking in the sun. When it gets too hot, though, snakes need to find shade or only emerge at night. Like other ectotherms they can't pant or sweat to cool themselves, and abnormally high body temperatures can be lethal.

Also like other ectotherms, snakes have efficient metabolic systems. Their calories go much further than they do in warm-blooded animals such as mammals and birds, which continually burn calories to maintain internal body temperatures. These animals may use 90% or more of their calories to maintain temperature, but snakes can survive and grow using only 10% of that amount. Of course, the drawback

is when things get cold, metabolism slows as does mobility, making snakes more vulnerable to predators.

To survive long-term cold temperatures, snakes enter a state of dormancy called "brumation." It's similar to hibernation but with a few subtle differences. To conserve energy, their metabolism, heart rate, and respiration slow, and their body temperature drop significantly. They enter a deep prolonged semiconscious slumber but will move around to drink water and bask if conditions allow. In preparation for this phase they seek out brumation chambers called "hibernaculum," dark areas that typically have stable temperatures and moist air, which is critical to preventing dehydration. Larger chambers can house hundreds to thousands of snakes, even snakes from different species. You can read more about animals that brumate at dupageforest.org in the 2023 winter issue of the *Conservationist*.

When brumation ends in spring, breeding begins and can continue throughout the warmer months. Female snakes can store sperm for a few years and still produce young if they don't encounter a mate.

Some snakes, such as the eastern fox, milk, smooth green, and North American racer, are "oviparous," which means they lay leathery eggs. Others, such as the common garter, brown,



© Riley Stanton

▲ Blue racers (shown here) and smooth green snakes have smooth scales, making them faster on the ground.



© Corthill

▲ Most snakes, like this northern water snake, have “keeled” scales, each with a center ridge for better traction when climbing.

red-bellied, Kirtland’s, queen, and northern water snake, are “ovoviviparous” or “live-bearing.” Live-bearing is a deceptive term, though, that describes something different than the way mammals give birth. The young snakes develop inside the female but do so in thin membranes, where they’re nourished via a yolk. There’s no placenta or direct connection with the mother. But no matter how they develop, once young snakes are born, they live independently without any parental care.

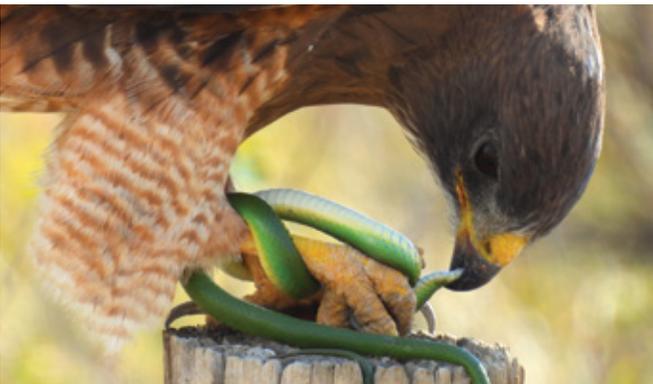
A snake’s body is covered in scales, either smooth or keeled. Both help reduce moisture loss, and both have their advantages. Smooth scales reduce drag and allow snakes to move more quickly, especially in dense vegetation. Smooth green snakes and North American racers both have these types of scales. Keeled scales have ridges that improve traction when climbing. Their texture also reduces light reflection, which helps conceal the snake. Queen, northern water, common garter, brown, red-bellied, Kirtland’s, and eastern fox snakes all have keeled scales.

One way to tell if these reptiles have been in an area is to look for snake skins. Humans continually replace skin cells almost unnoticeably, but snakes replace theirs all at once. When new skin is ready, the old outer layer starts to loosen and fade. The snake’s eyes become opaque, and the animal becomes reclusive. It also stops eating. When it’s ready to

shed, the snake rubs on rough surfaces and squeezes through tight spots until the old layer catches. It then slithers out of its old skin, often leaving it behind in one piece. The process can take up to two weeks, but once completed, the snake emerges fresh with vibrant colors – and a ravenous appetite.

When it comes to hunting, all DuPage snakes rely on similar physical adaptations. A snake doesn’t have eardrums, but it can detect vibrations caused by movement by resting its jaw on the ground. Snakes do have nostrils, but they mostly pick up scents by flicking their forked tongues to collect odors and other chemical cues in the air. A special “Jacobson’s organ” on the roof of a snake’s mouth lets it process those cues. As it repeatedly samples its environment and the scents get stronger, the snake is able to zero in on its prey. Once its prey is in its grasp (most snakes have teeth but for grasping not chewing), a snake can swallow it hole – even an animal 10 times larger than the snake’s head – thanks to an elastic ligament that connects the skull to the jaw and allows for extensive separation.

Some snakes use venom to subdue their prey, but of all the snakes recorded recently in DuPage, none are venomous. (Some DuPage snakes produce a toxic saliva, but it’s not harmful to humans.) The venomous eastern massasauga was once a resident but hasn’t been reliably identified here in over



© Tai Floyd

▲ For hawks and other birds of prey, snakes are a vital part of their diets.



© Owen J.

▲ This eastern garter snake is using its forked tongue to pull chemicals from the air to locate prey.



© Isabelle Summers

▲ Small snakes, like this red-bellied, are often mistaken for twigs on the trails, so be on the lookout (and go slow) when biking.

40 years. The similar-looking fox snake, which is known to make rattling sounds by shaking its tail in dry leaf litter, is most likely to be misidentified as one.

Snakes may not be everyone’s favorite forest preserve finds, but their ecological value cannot be overstated. As prey, they feed hawks, owls, and mammals. As predators, they’re critical in preventing other species from becoming overpopulated. Snakes eat crayfish, slugs, worms, frogs, fish, birds, and even other snakes, but most notable on the menu are small rodents, whose populations can explode if left unchecked, starting harmful environmental chain reactions. If large numbers of small rodents are left to overgraze on plants, other populations that rely on the same diets can decline. And when rodent numbers increase, so do those of fleas, mites, and ticks and the presence of pathogens that affect humans, such as Lyme disease, hantavirus, leptospirosis, and salmonellosis. In the case of ticks, a single snake can consume thousands in a season just by eating the rodents ticks use as hosts. As eastern milk, Graham’s crayfish, Kirtland’s, smooth green, red-bellied, and other snakes become locally rare, the value of the snakes we do have becomes even more noticeable.

Snakes aren’t aggressive, and they don’t want confrontation. They simply want respect and to be left alone. And don’t they deserve it? •



© drishnelow

▲ Before molting, smooth green snakes turn pale, and their eyes become opaque.

A Snake You Should Know

Common garter snakes (often mistakenly called “garden snakes”) are the species most often encountered in DuPage, in part because they live in a range of habitats from wetlands to woodlands to prairies. The county’s two most abundant subspecies — the eastern and Chicago — are a benefit to any forest preserve or backyard because they eat a variety of prey.

Garter snakes can vary widely in color. Most have three light stripes — white, yellow, or even blue — that run along the length of their black, brown, gray, or olive green bodies, which can be up to 3 feet long.

If handled, a garter snake may bite out of self-defense, but it’s more likely to just emit an unpleasant musky odor, an adaptation that makes garter snakes less appetizing to hungry predators.

Following brumation a male garter snake looking to raise its body temperature may emit a pheromone that mimics the scent of a female. This attracts other males, often several at a time. As they swarm over the deceptive male, their bodies help it warm up.



© Alexis Williams



© Heather Haughn

▲ After molting, smooth green snakes emerge a fresh vivid green.

directory

HEADQUARTERS

35580 Naperville Road
Wheaton • 630-933-7200
TTY 800-526-0857
dupageforest.org
forest@dupageforest.org

Visitor Services

630-933-7248
Monday – Friday 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Office

Monday – Friday 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Volunteer Services

630-933-7233

Partnership & Philanthropy Friends of the Forest Preserve District

630-871-6400

Law Enforcement

630-933-7240

FOREST PRESERVE *Hours*

Most forest preserves are open daily from one hour after sunrise until one hour after sunset.

PARTNER *Sites*

DANADA HOUSE

Wheaton • 630-668-5392

FISCHER FARM

Bensenville • 630-766-7015

BARTLETT NATURE CENTER

Bartlett • 847-608-3120

LYMAN WOODS NATURE CENTER

Downers Grove • 630-963-9388

EDUCATION *Centers*

DANADA EQUESTRIAN CENTER

35507 Naperville Road
Wheaton • 630-668-6012

Office

Monday – Friday 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Closed Saturdays & Sundays

Barn

Monday – Friday 8 a.m. – 8 p.m.
Saturdays & Sundays 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.

DUPAGE WILDLIFE CONSERVATION CENTER

525 S. Park Blvd.
Glen Ellyn • 630-942-6200

Suggested admission donation \$5 per person ages 3 and up

Wednesdays 9 a.m. – Noon
Thursday – Tuesday 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

FULLERSBURG WOODS NATURE EDUCATION CENTER

3609 Spring Road
Oak Brook • 630-850-8110

Mid-April – Mid-November
Daily 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Mid-November – Mid-April
Monday – Saturday 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Closed Sundays

GRAUE MILL AND MUSEUM

3800 York Road • Oak Brook
630-451-3430

Mid-April – Mid-November
Wednesday – Sunday 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Closed Mondays & Tuesdays

Mid-November – Mid-April
Closed

KLING CREEK FARM

1N600 County Farm Road
West Chicago • 630-876-5900

Suggested admission donation \$5 per person ages 3 and up

Thursday – Monday 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Closed Tuesdays & Wednesdays

MAYSLAKE PEABODY ESTATE

1717 W. 31st St.
Oak Brook • 630-206-9566

Mayslake Hall is under renovation and closed for the year. For updates visit dupageforest.org.

ST. JAMES FARM

25541 Winfield Road
Warrenville • 630-580-7025

Office and Visitor Center

Please call for hours.

GOLF *Courses*

THE PRESERVE AT OAK MEADOWS

900 N. Wood Dale Road
Addison • 630-595-0071

MAPLE MEADOWS GOLF PRESERVE

272 S. Addison Road
Wood Dale • 630-616-8424

Maple Meadows is under renovation and closed for the year. For updates visit dupagegolf.com.

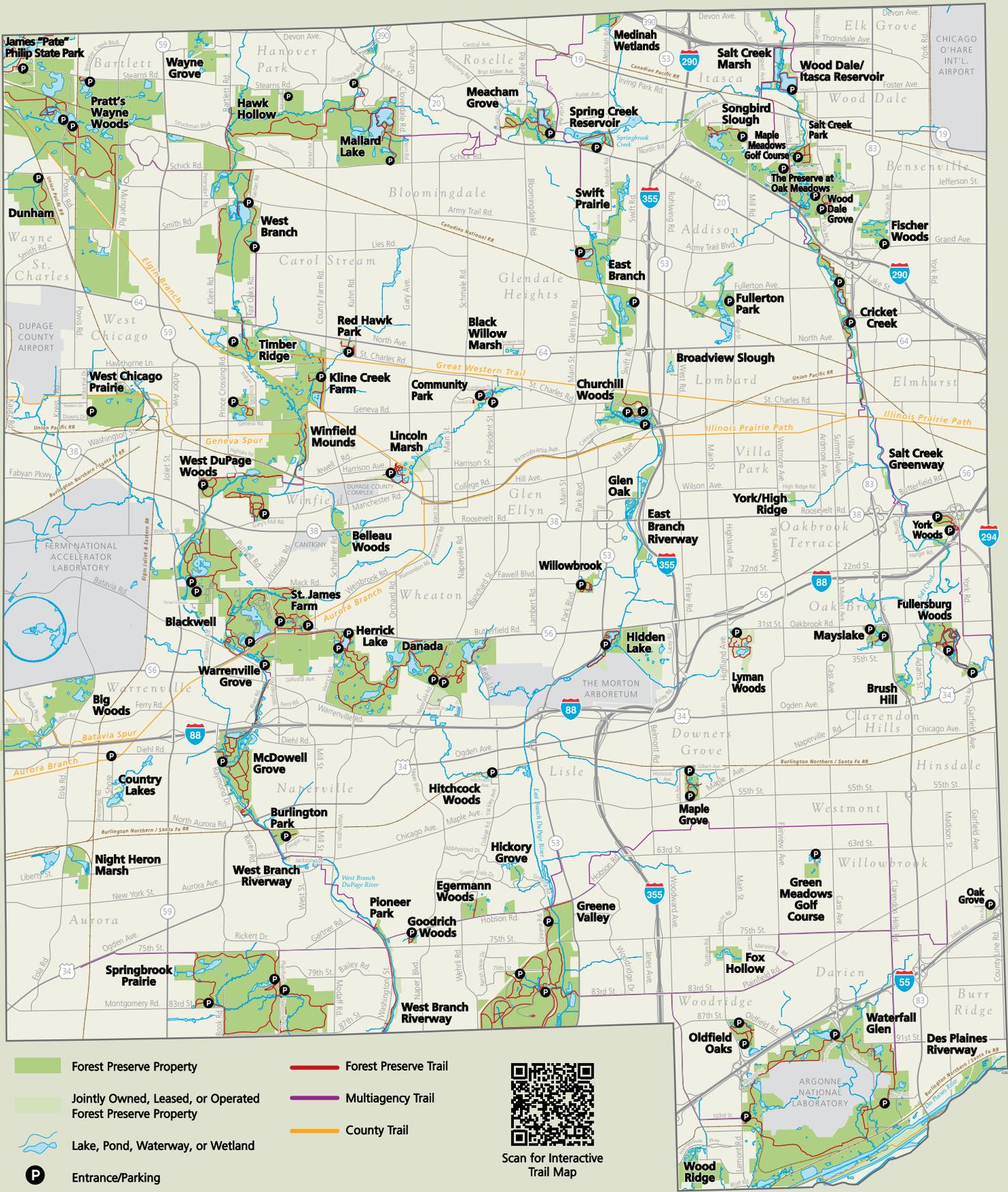
GREEN MEADOWS GOLF COURSE

18W201 W. 63rd St.
Westmont • 630-810-5330

ACCESSIBILITY

If you have accessibility needs or concerns, please contact our ADA programs and activities coordinator at 630-871-7537 or TTY 800-526-0857 at least 48 hours before your visit or at least two weeks before any program that requires registration.





- Forest Preserve Property
- Jointly Owned, Leased, or Operated Forest Preserve Property
- Lake, Pond, Waterway, or Wetland
- Entrance/Parking
- Forest Preserve Trail
- Multiagency Trail
- County Trail



Scan for Interactive Trail Map



**Forest Preserve District
of DuPage County**

35580 Naperville Road
Wheaton, IL 60189

dupageforest.org



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A Quarterly Publication of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

Spring 2026

Native Plant Sale

**Friday • May 15
10 a.m. – 7 p.m.**

**Saturday • May 16
9 a.m. – 2 p.m.**

**New Location for 2026
DuPage Event Center and Fairgrounds
2015 Manchester Road • Wheaton**

Shop in person for native flowers, grasses, shrubs, and trees.
For a list of plants, visit dupageforest.org/native-plant-sale.
Questions? Call 630-933-7248.