



River Bend
NATURE CENTER

PO Box 186
1000 Rustad Rd
Faribault, MN
55021
507.332.7151
www.rbnc.org

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River Bend
NATURE CENTER

Winter 2019, Volume 41, Issue 1

Helping people discover, enjoy, understand, and preserve the incredible natural world that surrounds us.

Director's Desk: Gratitude

By Breanna Wheeler, Executive Director

Thanksgiving season tends to be a time of gratitude, but it is timeless. No matter what part of the year, gratitude is something I strive to practice every day. It is not hard to do when I get to be part of such a wonderful organization and community at River Bend Nature Center. A few of the most common things for which I am grateful include:

People. If you are reading this, you are likely one of the committed people who are or have been a member, donor or volunteer at River Bend. You have positively impacted this place and made education, conservation and recreation at River Bend a reality for the last four decades! Whether you've been part of this since the beginning or are just learning about River Bend and how you can be involved, you are important and I am grateful for you. I meet more and more people that are connected through River Bend: talented, creative role models, lifelong learners and experiencers, thinkers, doers, givers, teachers, comedians, artists, fitness buffs, and philanthropists. You inspire me. Thank you for what you do (or have done) to make RBNC what it is and help create and sustain it for the future.

Place. Even after almost three years, as I drive down Rustad Road and absorb the changing seasons, I still find the awe and wonder of being in this place at this time. As a local radio host recently said to me, "you've got a dream job," and he's right, I do. It's a winning combination of people and nature. My favorite part is when I see people enjoying time connecting with nature, with loved ones and with themselves. It makes the challenges all worth it to me.

Things. Time spent outdoors and the beginning of a new year is a time of reflection. It helps me make sense of the past, appreciate the present moment, and chart a course for the future. The quiet stillness of a winter day almost stops time. Getting away from screens and going outside and being in the moment with family and friends is precious. I am looking forward to following tracks in the snow and the lazy feeling of watching the snow fall with a warm beverage in hand and the warmth and smells of a crackling fire after a day of playing outside.

Good Stuff Ahead. Check out the maple syruping programs this spring either as a volunteer or to learn more about the process. And, as you make your New Year's resolutions, be sure to register for the Maple Syrup Fun Run. There are distances for everyone, from one mile to 50K. Did I mention that my first 5k was the Maple Syrup Run probably ten years ago? What's best is that afterwards, you can enjoy a pancake breakfast with real River Bend maple syrup!

Thanks again for being a part of River Bend Nature Center. I hope to see you out on the trails, or stop in for a visit at the Interpretive Center this winter.

Program Highlights

- January**
- 5 Bagels & Birds
 - 5 Learn to Ski All Ages
 - 8 Life-Long Learning: Learn to Ski Adults Only
 - 16 Lunch & Learn :
Dragonflies and Birds of Costa Rica by Dan Tallman
 - 19 Phenology Wheels
 - 21 Adventure Day:
Blow of some S.T.E.A.M.
 - 21 Learn to Ski All Ages
 - 26 Learn to Ski All Ages

- February**
- 2 Bagels & Birds
 - 9 Upcycling: Papermaking Valentines
 - 15 Family Snowshoe Walk
 - 15 Adult Moonlight Snowshoe
 - 16 Phenology Wheels
 - 18 Adventure Day:
Track the Pack
 - 20 Lunch & Learn :
Maple Syruping with Diana and Dave Hering
 - 23 Winter Tracking Workshop (Ages 15+)
 - 25 Life-Long Learning: Snowshoe and Animal Signs Walk
 - 28 Mike Lynch Star Party-- Faribault Parks and Rec

- March**
- 2 Bagels & Birds
 - 4 Adventure Day:
March Mammal Madness
 - 9 Maple Syruping
 - 12 Maple Syruping
 - 16 Phenology Wheels
 - 17 Maple Syruping
 - 18 Homeschool Science Day
 - 20 Lunch & Learn: Ways of the Wapakute: Band of Dakota by Roy Anderson and Jeff Jarvis
 - 21 Maple Syruping
 - 22 Maple Syruping
 - 23 Maple Syruping

RIVER BEND NATURE CENTER
SUMMER CAMP 2019
WHOLE AND HALF DAY CAMPS FOR CHILDREN
GRADES PRE-K TO 8TH GRADE

Registration begins January 21st!

Members receive discounts on registration!

rbnc.org 507-332-7151 1000 Rustad Road Faribault, MN 55021

Maple Syrup Fun Run & Pancake Brunch
Saturday, May 4th, 2019

River Bend Nature Center

1000 Rustad Rd—PO Box 186
Faribault, MN 55021

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- Molly Olson, *Naturalist/Program Coordinator*
- Kelly Peterson, *Naturalist/Program Coordinator*
- Allison Shaw, *Naturalist/Program Coordinator*
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New Operations Director to Begin January 14



Please join us in welcoming Sherri Becker to the River Bend staff team! Sherri was born and raised in South Dakota and moved to Minnesota in 2013. She graduated from South Dakota State University with a Bachelor's in Interdisciplinary Studies emphasizing in Business and Criminal Justice, and has 20 years of experience working in state government. Sherri says, "I'm looking forward to my new position with RBNC, learning all the aspects of the position and how I can contribute and collaborate with the organization and the community. I live in rural Rice County with my husband and our two little dogs. I enjoy exploring the outdoors, fishing, photography, painting, travel, and time with family and friends." Stop by and say hi to Sherri!

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Thank You and best wishes to Cindy Clayton, as she pursues her passion of health and fitness full-time. She was a great asset to the team and worked with us the past year and half. She will be missed. Thank you Cindy!



Thank You Bats, Bones, & Bonfires Volunteers!

We really appreciate all of the volunteers that help and support us in various ways. Together, we are able to grow and improve River Bend Nature Center.



Building Host – With your help, River Bend is welcoming to all its visitors. As a building host, you would greet visitors in the Interpretive Center, answer questions, help with clerical work and take phone calls in shifts during the week between 8-4:30 PM and on Saturdays from 9-4.

Volunteer Naturalists- With your help, children in Faribault and many in surrounding communities receive outdoor experiential learning which creates environmental literate citizens. Learn about environmental concepts, and how to relay that information to others in order to create future leaders. All training is provided.

Check out the upcoming volunteer opportunities at www.rbnc.org/volunteer
Contact Molly Olson at programs@rbnc.org for more information.



2018 Homeschool Science Days

For the 2018-2019 school year, River Bend Nature Center invites homeschool families and co-ops the opportunity to experience all of the seasons at the nature center. Each seasonal homeschool science day, two age-specific educational programs are offered in the morning and two age-specific recreational programs are offered in the afternoon. Sign up for one or sign up for them both! We invite you to bring a lunch and enjoy it in the Interpretive Center between programs. Students may be dropped off for both programs, including lunch.

Winter Adaptations (ages 3-7)

Discover how animals have been handling the winter at River Bend by migrating, hibernating, or adapting to the cold. March 18 from 10:30-12:00, \$8/student

Maple Syruping (ages 8-14)

Explore the whole process of making maple syrup, from its history in Minnesota to tapping a tree to evaporating maple sap, and even taste testing the finished product! March 18 from 10:30-12:00, \$8/student

Snowshoeing & Kicksledding (ages 3-7) & (ages 8-14) (two separate groups)

Learn about the history and technique of these fun forms of winter transportation. Explore River Bend's winter landscape on a snowshoe hike, and maybe even participate in a kicksled race! Alternate activities will be provided in the case of no snow.
March 18 from 12:30-2:00, \$8/student



News & Notes

Bats, Bones, & Bonfires

It was a beautiful day for River Bend's Annual Bats, Bones, & Bonfires Halloween event. Participants had many activities to choose from, including hay rides, making s'mores, walking the trick-or-treat bat trail, making a craft, bouncing in a bouncy house, and enjoying time outside with friends and family!



The 37th Annual Ramble was a Success!

Thank you to everyone who donated, attended, and supported River Bend during our 37th Annual Ramble. Your involvement continues the River Bend legacy of helping people to experience firsthand the benefits and joys of time spent outdoors. We are grateful for your generosity!

Toni Easterson Art Exhibit

Local native animals are the subjects of an exhibit of fabric art by Northfield artist Toni Easterson. The fourteen portraits reveal her close connections to the animals she sees from her window. She used fabric pieces given to her by friends and transformed them into remarkable creatures. The exhibit was funded by a grant from Southeastern Minnesota Arts Council (SEMAC). The art was on display in the interpretive center through December.



Thank you Give to the Max/Year End Donors

Thank you to everyone who participated in Give to the Max day, made a year-end donation, gave matching funds and renewed their membership. We are so grateful for your generosity!

January is Learn to Ski Month!

Join us this January at River Bend for Ski lessons. We have many dates and times to choose from, and registration includes ski rental for the day! See the insert for details. Pre-registration highly recommended to reserve ski sizes.

Faribault Community School

River Bend is proud to announce its partnership with Faribault Community School and offers an afterschool program on Mondays at both Jefferson Elementary and Faribault Middle School. For more information, check out their website at https://www.faribault.k12.mn.us/community_ed/faribault_community_school

Registration is Open for the Maple Syrup Fun Run on May 4th 2019!

The Maple Syrup Fun Run registration is now open at rbnc.org/fun-run. Enjoy the scenic views as you run/walk the trails around River Bend. Afterwards, join us for a delicious brunch served at the River Bend Nature Center Interpretive Center. Each runner receives complimentary admission to the pancake breakfast and a Fun Run T-shirt. For more information visit our website at rbnc.org/fun-run

Become a Member Today!

Members and donors are important to River Bend Nature Center because River Bend is not a city park and does not receive any regular government funding through taxes. We have **sustainable memberships** available that can be auto pay as a ACH from your bank account each month. Monthly giving can be easier on your budget, and it helps River Bend operations year-round. Please become a member or encourage someone you know to join today at www.rbnc.org

Naturalist Notebook

By: Daniel Jones, Volunteer Naturalist

Maple syrup is one of the oldest agricultural products in North America. For generations before the first European colonists arrived, indigenous native people produced maple sugar in "sugar bush" camps established in older maple stands. Colonists then learned how to make maple syrup from the native people, continuing the annual tradition of syruping. At River Bend Nature Center, maple syrup is produced every spring, culminating in RBNC's Annual Maple Syrup Fun Run. So...where does the syrup come from? If you cut down a maple tree, does syrup just flow out?

Not quite. Trees contain sap, which is mostly water, but also about 2% sugar (sucrose), plus some minerals and other compounds. Syrup is made by evaporating sap to concentrate the sugars. To understand where sap comes from, and how it is collected, we need to understand how trees are "built" and how water moves within a tree over the year. Think of a tree as a tall bundle of tiny pipes. These pipes are made up of cells called xylem ("ZAHY-lem"), that look like small pieces of tubes. Stacked end to end vertically up the tree, they form a series of water-conducting pipes inside of the tree. A new layer of xylem cells is laid down each year, wrapped around the previous years' xylem; this is why a tree gets wider each year.

Water generally moves up the tree and out through the leaves during the summer, then starts heading back down into the roots in the fall. Over the winter, minerals, sugars and other hydrocarbons dissolved in the water become more concentrated. This draws any available water in the soil into the roots, creating upward pressure that pushes the sap up into the xylem. As winter begins to turn to spring, temperatures begin to fluctuate between freezing night times and warmer days. On cold nights, water freezes along the inside of the xylem, trapping gases within the cells. When the daytime sun warms the tree, the water melts and the gases expand, creating pressure on the sap. When a maple tree is tapped for syruping, the tap, or "spile", creates an opening for the pressurized sap to flow out, where it is collected in bags. The cycle of night freezing and warmer days is the vital engine that drives the sap out of the tree. If days are too cold, or nights stay above freezing, no internal pressure is created, and no sap is produced.



Once the sap is collected, it is boiled down...way down. It takes about 40 gallons of sap to produce one gallon of syrup. That's about 10 of the blue bags you see at RBNC for each gallon of syrup produced. The heating also creates the flavor of the syrup. Maple sap fresh from the tree doesn't taste like much; heating causes the sugars and amino acids in the sap to react and form other compounds that create the unique, familiar flavor.

Sugar, black and red maples are the most commonly tapped trees for syrup. Birch, walnut and sycamore saps can also make syrup, but it takes much more sap due to the lower sugar content of the sap in these trees. Oaks, ashes, elms, willows and cottonwoods (all present at RBNC) do not produce sap for syrup.

RBNC maple syruping starts in March. During March and April, you can see the RBNC evaporator boiling down the sap most days. The Maple Syrup Fun Run is Saturday May 4th, and includes 5K to 50K trail runs and the Fun Run One Mile Walk.