



River Bend

NATURE CENTER

Winter 2024, Volume 46, Issue 1
JANUARY . FEBRUARY . MARCH

River Bend Nature Center inspires curiosity,
respect, and care for nature.

Upcoming Nature Programs



JANUARY

- Jan 6 - Bagels and Birds, Sweet Reads Book Club
- Jan 6 - Storytime with Harry Hopper
- Jan 8 - Little Sprouts Animals around the world
- Jan 8 - Homeschool: Kitchen Science
- Jan 17- Lunch & Learn: National Loon Center
- Jan 20 - Storytime with Orwin
- Jan 22 - Little Sprouts: Animal Tracks & Signs
- Jan 25 - Full Moon Luminary Snowshoe/Hike

FEBRUARY

- Feb 3 - Bagels and Birds, Sweet Reads Book Club
- Feb 3 - Drop-In Papermaking
- Feb 12 - Little Sprout: Icy Weather
- Feb 12 - Homeschool: Snowshoe/Kicksledding
- Feb 15 - Luminary Snowshoe Hike
- Feb 17 - Storytime with Sammy
- Feb 21 - Lunch & Learn: World of Woodpeckers
- Feb 26 - Little Sprouts: Rocks Rock!

SAVE THE DATE

JANUARY 12

Summer Camp Priority Registration for members opens!

JANUARY 25

Full Moon Luminary Snowshoe Hike

FEBRUARY 15

Full Moon Luminary Snowshoe Hike

MAY 4

Maple Syrup Fun Run & Pancake Breakfast

MARCH

- Mar 2 - Bagels and Birds, Sweet Reads Book Club
- Mar 11 - Little Sprouts: Maple Trees & Sap
- Mar 11 - Homeschool: Geology
- Mar 16 - Maple Syruping
- Mar 20 - Lunch & Learn: Coyote & Fox Project
- Mar 26 - Maple Syruping
- Mar 28 - Maple Syruping



Priority Registration for River Bend Members opens Friday, January 12th!

General public registration Feb 1st

Adventure is OUT THERE!

SUMMER CAMP

MEMORIES THAT WILL LAST A LIFETIME...

Full day camps for children grades K-9

register at www.rbnc.org/summer-camp

Special Discounts For Members

River Bend Nature Center

1000 Rustad Rd - PO Box 186
Faribault, MN 55021

Trail Hours: 6am - 10pm

Building Hours: Fridays 10am - 4pm
1st and 3rd Saturdays 10am - 2pm

Board of Directors

Dustin Dienst, *President*

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Karen Zeller, *Treasurer*

Tom DeMatteo, *Secretary*

Tom Spooner, *City Council Liaison*

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Brad Bourn

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Molly Dulka, Programs & Engagement

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Matt Johnson & Morgan Heier

Naturalists

Kate Ford, Leah Inman

Climate Impact Corps Members

Julia Gates, Dan Heinen, Caitlin Juvland,

Randall McMeekin, Dennis Wilcox



February 17, 2024

BEGINNER, INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED LEVEL

RACE STARTS 1:00 PM

Find more information & Register online by
Wednesday, February 14th

www.rbnc.org/snow-crush

Same day registration available 11:00-12:30 PM



River Bend
NATURE CENTER

Event hosted at River Bend Nature Center
1000 Rustad Road . Faribault, MN

SPONSORED BY



Sweet Reads Book Club



Free!

Jan - April

**1st Sat of the month
2pm-3pm**

**One Group Discussion
Refreshments provided**

**January Theme
Nature & Wellness**

Little Book of Forest Bathing Discovering the
Japanese Art of Self Care by Kevin Kotur

The Songs of Trees: Stories from Nature's
Great Connectors by David George

Visit www.rbnc.org/upcoming-programs
for more information

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Director's Desk

Brad Bourn, Executive Director

River Bend Nature Center Leads Faribault's National Selection as a Nature Everywhere Community In National Initiative to Increase Equitable Access to Nature

The Children & Nature Network (a national outdoor and nature advocacy group), the National League of Cities and KABOOM! have partnered to launch a new initiative designed to increase equitable access to nature everywhere children live, learn and play in 100 communities by 2025. Faribault was one of the first nineteen communities selected through a competitive application process to join an inaugural Nature Everywhere Communities cohort. Every Nature Everywhere Communities receive two years of strategic planning, technical support and start-up funding and the opportunity to receive up to \$100,000 in implementation funding at the end of the first two years.

River Bend Nature Center led Faribault's application to become a Nature Everywhere community. Over the next two years, River Bend Nature Center, in partnership with the Faribault Parks and Recreation Department, Somali Community Resettlement Services, and the Minnesota State Academies for the Blind and Deaf, will be working together to remove barriers to nature across race and physical ability. The coalition applied to become a Nature Everywhere community to create an intentional, shared vision for increasing outdoor accessibility – and to develop an outdoor inclusion and access plan that can guide future investments and expand to include additional regional partners.

“The Faribault Region's application hit every mark when it comes to our Nature Everywhere goals,” says Sarah Milligan-Toffler, President and CEO of the Children & Nature Network. “Their approach partners a nature center, city government, the State Academy for the Deaf and Blind, and Somali Community Resettlement Services to focus specifically on increasing access to the outdoors through better ADA accessibility, expanded culturally specific programming, green job programs and expanding partnerships. We are thrilled to support and join in their efforts to increase equitable access to nature for community members who face the greatest barriers.”

Last month, Mayor Voracek along with staff from River Bend, Faribault Parks and Rec, Somali Community Resettlement Services, and the State Academies for the Deaf and Blind were invited to attend a kickoff planning conference in Austin, Texas hosted by the Children & Nature Network and the National League of Cities.

“We're beyond excited to have been selected as a Nature Everywhere Community”, says Mayor Kevin Voracek. “I'm so proud of all of our partners' commitment's to ensuring that Faribault's world-class outdoor and natural resources are accessible to all children and families from every walk of life and all corners of the globe.”



River Bend is very excited to be playing a leadership role in this community planning process that will shape the way so many organizations go about their work in providing access to nature for the entire region.

You'll learn more about Faribault's status as a national Nature Everywhere Community in the months ahead. In the meantime, you can learn more about the Children & Nature Network and their national initiative by visiting: <https://www.childrenandnature.org/>

Brad Bourn, Executive Director

River Bend Nature Center Adopts New Strategic Plan

Over the last year and a half, River Bend Nature Center conducted multiple community engagement sessions, surveys, and one-on-one conversations to hear what is most important to you about the Nature Center and our work to build more inclusive access to nature. The River Bend Board of Directors, with a steering committee of neighbors and stakeholder organizations took the information we received from more than 500 individuals who provided us input to develop the broad framework for River Bend's new 2024-2027 strategic plan.

While this plan guides our work for the next three years, I believe the work outlined in our new strategic plan can and will shape our priorities for the next generation and provides us with clear, community driven values and goals that advance our mission of *inspiring curiosity, respect, and care for nature*.

Our 2023-2027 strategic plan articulates our guiding values along with fourteen individual strategies that staff will be working on over the next three years that

advance the four broad goals of:

- 1: Protecting, preserving, and enhancing our natural resources
- 2: Increasing awareness and diversifying participation in nature and River Bend
- 3: Addressing vital facility and infrastructure needs
- 4: Growing resources to achieve our priorities

Our strategic plan will be published on our website early in 2024. In the meantime, the River Bend Board of Directors and staff would like to extend its gratitude to the more than 500 individuals and organizations who shared their priorities, hopes, and wishes for River Bend Nature Center along with a special thank you to the City of Faribault, Courtney Cavellier, Mark Schwartz, Anisa Hajimumin and Parenteau Graves Consulting for facilitating meetings, sitting on committees, and helping with community engagement. It's our hope that the entire community sees some part of their priorities reflected in our new strategic plan.

Go to www.rbnc.org/Strategic Plan to learn more.

Educational Programs

Molly Dulka, Associate Director of Programs and Engagement

Higher Education Partnerships

River Bend is proud to be partnering with St. Olaf and Carleton Colleges in Northfield for community engagement projects with various classes. This past fall, two groups of St. Olaf students took on important projects. The first group continued to support River Bend's goal of being more inclusive by taking a survey of the trail system with the substrate type, elevation change, uniformity of the surface and availability of benches. This is accompanied by an audio description of the trail. The information will be shared on River Bend's website, with the goal of informing people what types of trails they feel they can comfortably access.

The second group compiled data and information on every type of bird that's been reported to be seen at River Bend. This data will be used in a new bird kiosk that will help connect visitors to the natural world by helping them learn about what birds they saw or might see on a hike at River Bend. Carleton College students have been and continue to work diligently on compiling the history of the land that River Bend is on, and creating user-friendly ways of sharing it with the public. We are excited to see all of these projects become pieces of our visitor experience in 2024! To see these projects, go to the Visit and History of the Land pages on our website, www.rbnc.org

Conservation Corner

Dennis Wilcox, Climate Impact Corps: Community Stewardship Facilitator

Food Waste Reduction Challenge in Rice County for 2024

Created in June 2013 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Food Waste Challenge joined efforts by food producer groups, processors, manufacturers, retailers, communities, and other government agencies across the nation to reduce, reuse, and recycle food waste.

In 2023, ten years later, it can be safely estimated that thousands of these organizations and entities, and thousands more individuals, are all involved in these efforts across the country. This includes right here in Rice County which is gearing up for its 2024 locally named Food Waste Reduction Challenge starting in January of this year, a Rice County government project. Included is participation of the River Bend Nature Center.

Why is this giant nationwide effort important, you might ask? The statistics across the country seem to mostly agree. According to one source, RTS (<https://www.rts.com/about/>), a company which creates and customizes waste collection, recycling, and sustainability plans in the U.S. and Canada, food waste is the largest component going into our landfills. Let's break this down.

It is estimated that 60 million tons (120 billion pounds) of food is discarded in the United States EVERY year and goes into our landfills nationwide! This is about 40 per cent of our nation's food supply. That's about 325 pounds of food per person each year. Food waste takes up about 22 per cent of landfill space and this includes Rice County's landfill.

Unused food in landfills create a specific environment hazard. As it slowly breaks down it begins to create a very potent greenhouse gas called methane which greatly contributes to global warming. According to the EPA, methane is the second most abundant greenhouse gas after carbon dioxide (CO₂), accounting for about 16 percent of global emissions. Methane is more than 28

times as potent as carbon dioxide in trapping heat in the atmosphere!

The Food Waste Reduction Challenge is designed to combat this and, in fact, can help your pocketbook too! "I challenge every Rice County citizen to consider trying to reduce their food waste," says Delia Denis, Minnesota GreenCorps member on assignment with Rice County Environmental Services. "You'd be surprised at how much you might be throwing away every week and the difference that this challenge will make! On average, a family of four throws away around 2,000 dollars' worth of food every year. I'm hoping to reduce that number to as little as 50 dollars during this month compared to the 167 dollars it is on average. I made this as fun as possible and very accessible! Even if you have never heard of food waste, there is still information for you!"

The Food Waste Reduction Challenge will begin on January 21. Challenge participants will be asked to first measure their baseline waste. For the next four weeks, they can then test out different food-saving strategies and resources on the website to find out what works best for them. And, all the while, they can keep an eye out for extra events and prizes by visiting the website!

To participate in the challenge attendance at one of the two following informational meetings on January 13 is required. One will be at 10 A.M. at the Buckham Memorial Library in Faribault, the second at 1 P.M. at the Northfield public library. The Northfield meeting will have an online option and it will also be recorded.

This challenge is a great way to get started being mindful of the simple changes that can help save the planet and save money or to update you on finding new ways to do this too. It really does not have to be that hard! For more information on the Food Waste Reduction Challenge, please check out the Challenge's website: <https://www.ricecountymn.gov/690/Food-Waste-Reduction-Challenge>

Naturalist Notebook

Matt Johnson, Environmental Stewardship Coordinator

How Tracks Can Tell a Story

There are few more beautiful sights than a fresh blanket of white snow on a winter landscape. As with anything though, time has a way of changing things. This untouched canvas, will begin to tell a complex story of all the animals that call an area home. Animal tracks can teach us so much, if we only stop and notice them.

Animal tracks come in all shapes and sizes. From the tiniest mouse, to the largest deer, all animals leave a trace one way or another. Familiarizing yourself with these tracks, will open up a whole new world waiting to be explored. Many great resources exist to learn from, whether it be a book, online, or through a class. Once you know what you're looking at, everything else will make more sense.



Raptor wings/catching mouse

But tracks don't just tell us what animal has been there, they can also give us insight into what that animal was thinking. A great example of this is track spacing. Most animals tend to have a standard walking

distance between their tracks, often dictated by their size. However, this distance can change depending on what the animal is doing. If an imminent threat is detected, many animals will quickly take off adhering to their fight-or-flight response. While on the run, tracks left behind will have more space in between them and look messier in appearance. If you come across this while out and about, it's very likely that you stumbled upon the scene of a predator-prey interaction.

Animal tracks can also give us insight into repeated behaviors and patterns. Arguably the most easily seen



Deer beds, tracks

example of this is in animal trails. Most of us have come across a deer trail at some point if we spend enough time hiking around. These trails are easy to notice given the size of the animals making them. However, other animals follow similar paths in their day to day life. In the snow, we are able to notice even the smallest of tracks. These trails will often lead to some sort of food or water source, critical to survival during cold weather months. Finding food in the winter can be a challenge, so many animals must go through the snow to find their food. Using their keen senses to uncover food buried underneath, foxes and coyotes both spend much of their time hunting for small animals, while squirrels will try and uncover nuts hidden during warmer days. Finding holes in the snow is a sure sign that an animal was looking for its next meal.

As we embrace winter and everything that comes with it, make an effort to notice the story being told in the snow. Tracks are all around us in nature. Following a trail of prints will give you a whole new perspective into the happenings of the natural world.



Beaver Tracks - tail & feet

Business Members

Star Members

Faribault Rotary Youth Services, Inc.



Wellness Members



Founder Members

Faribault Flyers Bike & Ski Club



Patron Members

Faribault Area Retired Educators . Mercury Minnesota
Schroder Concessions . Sertoma Club of Faribault



Advocate Members

Anderka Construction . Community Co-op . Donahue's Greenhouse . Erickson's Furniture . Faribault Animal Center
Faribault Rental Equipment, Inc. . Faribault Transportation Co. . Faribo Sno-Go Club . Frandsen Bank & Trust .
Glenn's Service & Towing . HomeTown Credit Union . Mill Town Cycles . Quality Appliance . Tom's Lock & Key

Thank you business members for your support!

Enroll in River Bend's Business Wellness Membership

River Bend Nature Center's wellness program can be an essential part of helping your employees live a healthy life. When you join our wellness program today, your employees will receive membership perks and more! Contact Brad Bourn (bourn@rbnc.org) or Katy Anderegg (anderegg@rbnc.org) to discuss perks and enrollment.

	Bluebird	Heron	Owl
Small Employer (0-10 employees)	\$500	\$1000	\$2000
Medium Employer (11-49 employees)	\$1500	\$2500	\$3500
Large Employer (50-99 employees)	\$3000	\$4000	\$5000
Regional Employer (100+ employees or franchises, etc.)	Contact us to discuss pricing and benefits	Contact us to discuss pricing and benefits	Contact us to discuss pricing and benefits



River Bend
NATURE CENTER

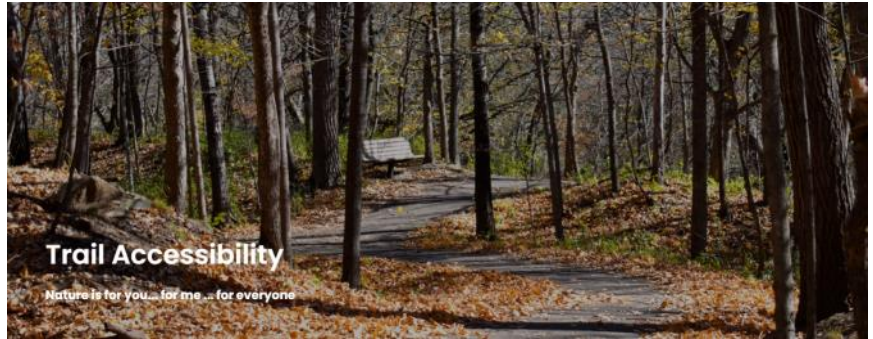
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Interested in knowing more about River Bend's trails? Visit our website www.rbnc.org/accessibility

For information on the History of the Land, go to www.rbnc.org/history-of-the-land



Registration is now Open!



MAPLE SYRUP FUN RUN *Pancake Breakfast*

May 4, 2024 . Faribault, Minnesota
One Mile, 5K, 10K, 25K, 50K

Chip timing by Anderson Race Management!
Early Bird Registration Ends March 31st!

www.rbnc.org/fun-run