

The ODC Network is a collection of business divisions with the mission to advance outdoor education and conservation in West Michigan.



### FREE ADMISSION—Two Locations!

#### 4214 56th Street • Holland, MI • 49423

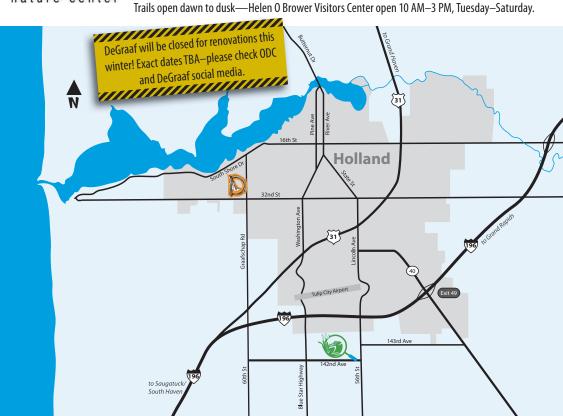


The Outdoor Discovery Center is 155 acres with about 3 miles of trails, located on the south side of Holland, just south of West Michigan Regional Airport. Admission is free! Trails open dawn to dusk—Visitors Center open 10 AM-3 PM, Monday-Saturday.

### 600 Graafschap Road • Holland, MI • 49423



DeGraaf Nature Center is 18 acres of forest and wetlands located within the City of Holland, just south of Lake Macatawa. Admission is free!



### **Construction Continues**

### **Herb Eldean Education Center**

The building to replace Founders Hall is well on its way to being a great asset at the Outdoor Discovery Center. The building, which will be dedicated to honor Herb Eldean, will include a multi purpose space where school and community programs and rentals will be hosted, program preparation room, wildlife exhibit including custom cages for native wildlife, three-season room with rollup doors, and a deck perched over the Dylan Compagner Fishing Pond. We are looking forward to its completion in Spring 2024!





### **DeGraaf Nature Center**

While one side of the building was renovated in 2021, most of DeGraaf Nature Center hasn't been changed since it was constructed in 1982. The construction is primarily focused on updating the existing features of the building, such as flooring, lighting, and the bathrooms. Other renovations include reconfiguring the entryway, updating the exhibit space, and creating a large space for community meetings and programs. DeGraaf Nature Center is projected to reopen in early 2024!

### Join us for a Program!

In the following pages, you will find titles or descriptions of our community programs available in the upcoming months. Look for more on our website or Facebook!

### **Program Locations**

Programs may be held at the Outdoor Discovery Center, at DeGraaf Nature Center, or at various other parks and natural areas in our community. Attend programs closest to you—or discover new places in our community. All locations are listed next to the program title—when necessary, the address and details can be found in *italics* beneath the program description.



Outdoor Discovery Center 4214 56th Street Holland, MI 49423 outdoordiscovery.org



DeGraaf Nature Center 600 Graafschap Road Holland, MI 49423 **degraaf.org** 



Other Locations Addresses listed beneath program description

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 Winter Crafts	3 Explore A Story	4 Snowshoe Hike	5 Knee-high	6
		ODC & DeGraaf Visitors Center	Holiday Winter Walk	Investigating Owl Pellets		Naturalists	
		Closed		o m r elicts			
	7	8 Homeschool –	9	10	11	12 Knee-high	13 Family
January 2024		Winter Ecology				Naturalists	Ice Fishing
	14	15	16	17 Nature for	18 Owl Prowl	19 Knee-high	20
()		10	10	Tykes: Tracks & Scat	10	Naturalists	20
2							
ğ	21	22	23	24	25	26 Knee-high	27 Snowshoe Hike
זו	21	22	25	24	25	Naturalists	21
D							
10	28	29	30	31	1	2 Knee-high	3 Birds of Prey
	20	29	30	31	•	Naturalists	Photoshoot
						Women In Nature: Clay Workshop	
	4	5 Homeschool –	6 Explore A Story	7	8 Snowshoe Hike	g Knee-high	10
	7	Nocturnal Creatures	( Explorer star)	/	O shousheethine	Naturalists	10
						Superb Owl Prowl	
	11	12	47	14 Nature for	4E	16 Knee-high	17 Great Backyard
7	11	12	13	Tykes: Snow	15	Naturalists	Bird Count
Z,							
2	40	40	20	24	22	23 Knee-high	24
or	18	19	20	21	22	Naturalists	24
February							
44	25	26	27	28	29	1 Knee-high	2
	25	20	27	20	29	Naturalists	2
	3	4 Homeschool –	5	6 Nature for	7	8 Knee-high	9
	5	Maple Sugarbush	5	Tykes: Birds of Prey	/	Naturalists	9
	10	11	12 Explore A Story	13	14	15 Knee-high	16 Maple Sugar
ے	10	11		15	14	Naturalists	Time
March							
	47	40	40	20	24	22 Knee-high	23 Maple Sugar
$\leq$	17	18	19	20	21	Naturalists	Time
3	Find the right program for you at a glance with suggested age ranges at the top of each description. These are flexible with ability and attention span.						
			26	27	20	29 Knee-high	70
			26	27	28	Naturalists	30

Register at outdoordiscovery.org

### Winter Crafts (ODC) Ages 6-99

Join us in making fun winter themed crafts. If there is snow on there ground, dress for the weather. Nature is the best inspiration for beautiful crafts!

Tuesday, January 2 • 11 AM-12 PM

Registration required • Fee: \$6 per child, \$4 for members



### **Holiday Winter Walk (ODC)**

Ages 0-99

Enjoy an evening stroll on our lantern lit trails during the Holiday season. Bring your friends and family out for this self-guided walk on our Sensory Trail to enjoy the evening sky. Warm beverages will be available in the pavilion for your group. Flashlights are welcome. Please dress for the weather.

Tuesday, January 2 • 5:30-7:30 PM

Registration required • Fee: FREE



### Explore A Story (ODC)

Ages 1-7

We'll be introducing kids to the outdoors through books and outdoor adventures. We'll read stories, take hikes, meet animals, and have lots of fun. Dress for the weather, this program is outdoors.

Wednesday, January 3

Tuesday, February 6

Tuesday, March 12

**10–11 AM** • Registration required • Fee: \$6 per child, \$4 for members

Find more program details and register at **outdoordiscovery.org** 

### Investigating Owl Pellets (ODC)

Ages 8-16

Have you ever wondered what an owl eats? Find out first hand as you become a real forensic scientist and extract bones from an owl pellet to discover the prey consumed. Examine all sorts of bones up close and try to reassemble a skeleton!

Wednesday, January 3 • 2-3 PM

Registration required • Fee: \$6 per pellet, \$4 to members



### Snowshoe Hike (ODC) Ages 8-99

Hike the trails of the ODC Nature Preserve using Ojibwa-style snowshoes as long as there is at least 4 inches of snow. Bring a sled to pull little ones. If there is not enough snow we will still lead a winter walk.

Thursday, January 4 • 11 AM-12 PM

Registration appreciated • Fee: \$6 per person, \$4 for members

# Summer Camp Registration Opens February 1 at 9 AM

If you're looking for a fun, adventurous, outdoor summer camp option for your 4-16 year old, look no further! We have 8 weeks of more than 20 half-day camps for various age ranges this summer.



# Ready to Register Checklist

Camps fill very quickly, so complete these before Feb 1:

- View camp offerings on our website in January
- Choose the camps you like and check that the age, date, and location fit your schedule
- Make sure you have access to your Doubleknot account
- Double-check that your membership is up to date

Questions? Contact camps@outdoordiscovery.org

#### Ages 6-10 Drop-off Homeschool Class (ODC)

This drop-off program is for home schoolers ages 6 - 10. Please bring a water bottle and a snack. Dress for the weather as the majority of the program will be held outdoors.

Monday, January 8 • Theme: Winter Ecology

Monday, February 5 • Theme: Nocturnal Creatures

Monday, March 4 • Theme: Spring In The Maple Sugarbush

**10 AM–12 PM** • Registration required • Fee: \$10 per child

### Knee-high Naturalists (ODC)

Ages 3-6 Drop-off

Knee-high Naturalists introduces the wonders of the natural world to young children. Crafts, activities, books, snacks, live animals, and outside exploration will be incorporated into their nature-based learning experience.

Parents can drop off their 4-6 year old or stay with the class. Parents or quardians are asked to attend with their 3 year old to help with bathroom use and transitioning into a group learning environment.

Friday, January 12 Friday, January 26 Friday, February 9 Friday, February 23 Friday, March 8 Friday, March 22

**10–11:30 AM** • *Registration required* • *Fee:* \$10 per child, \$5 for members

### Family Ice Fishing (ODC)

Ages 0-99

Come wet a line in an ODC pond during this catch-and-release ice fishing day. All materials are provided including fishing poles, tackle, and bait. This is an open format program where visitors can fish as long as they would like. Dress to be outside for at least one hour. Participants will be able to use our equipment up until 12 PM.

Saturday, January 13 • 10 AM-12 PM

No registration necessary • Fee: \$6 per fishing pole, \$4 for members • Ice condition dependent



### Rental Opportunities Available Through the ODC Network **Spaces**

Plan now to use one of the ODC Network's rentable facilities in 2024!

### Spaces available for parties or corporate events include:

Outdoor Discovery Center

**Dragonflies Discovery Preschool** • Dragonflies Learning Lab

- Discovery Pavilion
- New Education Center
- Peachwave Froyo Trailer
- (also available off-site at other venues)

Learn more about rentals at outdoordiscovery.org/about/rentals

### Winter Recreation Gear

Ojibwa-style snowshoes are available to walk the trails at the Outdoor Discovery Center from 10 AM-2:30 PM Tuesday-Saturday if there is more than 4" of snow on the ground.

> Snowshoes can be rented for \$5 per pair per adult. All kids 8-13 years are FREE with a paying adult (snowshoes are not designed for those 7 years and under). Sleds may be rented for \$5 to tow small children.

> Some type of collateral must be left at the Visitor's Center (license, car keys, etc.) to be collected upon their return.





### Look for the 2024 Park Passport this March

The ODC Network's annual Nature-rich Community Park Passport is an outdoor, self-guided program that will guide you to local parks and natural areas where you can find forests, beaches, dunes, lakes, trails and more! This booklet is designed to help you experience the benefits of our nature-rich community. Use your curiosity to explore these wonderful West Michigan parks.





I did have to drag my kids to some of these places and they did make fun of me sometimes, BUT I hope they will remember it later as a fun thing we did this unique year of 2020.

-Jessica, Hazel, Charlotte & Zeke, Previous Park Passport Participants

Completing your passport is easy!

- 1. Visit some participating parks
- 2. Walk the trails and make sure to read any signs
- 3. Record your answer to the "Challenge Question"
- 4. Present your passport and tear-out form at the ODC to receive a prize

To learn more or print your copy at home, visit outdoordiscovery.org/park-passport

### Nature for Tykes (ODC) Ages 3-7

Bring out your little tykes to learn more about nature. In each program, you and your little tyke will have the opportunity to explore together. This winter we will be learning about tracks and scat, snow, and birds of prey! Please dress for the weather.

Wednesday, January 17 • Theme: Tracks and Scat Wednesday, February 14 • Theme: Snow

Wednesday, March 6 • Theme: Birds of Prey 10–11 AM • Registration required • Fee: \$6 per child, \$4 for members



### Birds of Prey Photo Shoot (ODC DeWitt Birds of Prey Center)

For this photography program we will take four of our birds of prey out of their enclosures and perch them on natural branches, trees, and stumps. Then photographers can go wild as they take up close pictures of these amazing creatures. All of the birds will remain leashed throughout the program. This is a great chance to get those close-up shots of owls that seem impossible to get in nature. Registration limited.

Saturday, February 3 • 10-11:30 AM

Registration required • Fee: \$30 per person, \$20 for members

Location: DeWitt Birds of Prey Center, 4274 56th Street Holland, MI 49423



Ages 10-99

### Great Backyard Bird Count (ODC) Ages 6-99

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world. A naturalist will be in the visitor center monitoring the feeders for the duration of this drop-in style

program. They will help ID common birds at the feeders and talk about the importance of this annual count.

Saturday, February 17 • 11 AM–2 PM

No registration necessary • Fee: FREE



# Take a moment to remember your fondest memory in nature

Were you... knee-deep in a wetland catching frogs and tadpoles?

hidden in a meadow of wildflowers making wishes on a dandelion?



Every day there are children and families exploring our free nature preserve, playing on our nature play parks, and learning through our hands-on programs. Adults also enjoy moments in the outdoors through taking a hike or run on our trails, chaperoning a field trip, or participating in a volunteer build. These moments fuel a passion for nature and become lifelong memories.



# Turn moments into memories for future generations

ODC Network's mission is to advance outdoor education and conservation in West Michigan. The work we do allows for moments to be turned into memories for more than 100,000 children and adults each year!



Our wish is that everyone has a chance to learn and grow in nature throughout their lives.



# Give today!

Mail in or drop off a check to our Administration Office: 4214 56th Street, Holland, MI 49423

Online donations can be made at outdoordiscovery.org/give

Did you know... ODC is able to receive Gifts of Stock, IRA Distributions, and Estate Gifts? Contact the Development Team to learn more about how you can turn moments into memories for future generations!

ashley@outdoordiscovery.org 616-834-1270



### Knee-high Naturalists (Dragonflies Learning Lab)

Ages 3-6 Drop-off

Introduce the natural world to young children through activities, books, snacks, live animals, and outside exploration.

Friday, January 5 Friday, January 19 Friday, February 2 Friday, February 16 Friday, March 1 Friday, March 15 Friday, March 29

**10–11:30 AM** • Registration required • Fee: \$10 per child, \$5 for members Program Location: Dragonflies Discovery Preschool - 30 152nd, Holland, MI 49424

### Owl Prowl (Stu Visser) Ages 6-99

Join us as we hike the trails of Stu Visser Park calling for resident owls. Our naturalist will give a brief intro on the natural history of Michigan's owls and then we will head out and see if we can hear any owls living nearby.

### Thursday, January 18 • 6-7 PM

Registration required • Fee: FREE - sponsored by Park Township

Program Location: Stu Visser Trails - 929 Ottawa Beach Rd, Holland, MI 49424



### Snowshoe Hike (Bysterveld Park) Ages 0-99

Explore the trails of Bysterveld County Park in search of interesting animals and plants while walking in wooden, Ojibwa-style snowshoes. The snowshoes are ideal for people aged 8 years and up. Participants are welcome to wear their own snowshoes and bring a sled for little ones to be pulled while hiking. If there is not at least 4 inches of snow we will still lead a winter walk.



 $\textit{Registration required} \bullet \textit{Fee: FREE-sponsored by Allegan County Parks, Recreation \& Tourism$ 

Program Location: Bysterveld Park - 4171 14th Street, Wayland, MI 49348





### **River Junction Preserve Open**

The River Junction Preserve opened in October, providing a new place for people in Allegan County to stretch their legs and explore uncommon and hard to access habitats. The property, located ten minutes south of the main ODC campus along the Rabbit and Kalamazoo Rivers, has around 2.5 miles of trails that primarily wander the uplands with views of the river floodplain below. It is a great spot for hiking or birding, with the only sounds coming from the birds, wind, and occasional distant train.

ODC Staff are excited to have another property to utilize for programming and school groups, including our students in ODC Preschools. The property will close seasonally during winter but will provide wildflower walks in the spring, paddling respites in the summer, and beautiful color in the fall. Look for it in the 2024 Park Passport!



### Women In Nature: Clay Workshop (Holland Area Arts Council)

Ceramicists at HAAC will instruct how to make a custom piece (no experience with clay needed)! This program is great for beginners as well as seasoned ceramicists.

Light refreshments provided. Facility is fully handicapped accessible.

#### Friday, February 2 • 6-8 PM

Registration Required: visit hollandarts.org/all-ceramics-classes • Fee: \$85 per person Program location: Holland Area Arts Council - 150 E 8th St, Holland, MI 49423



### Snowshoe Hike (Dragonflies Discovery Preschool) Ages 0-99

We are partnering with Park Township to offer a snowshoe hike. Hikers will explore the natural areas surrounding Cooper-Van Wieren Park in search of interesting animals and plants while walking in wooden, Ojibwa-style snowshoes.

### Thursday, February 8 • 5:30 – 6:30 PM

Registration required • Fee: FREE - sponsored by Park Township

Program Location: Dragonflies Discovery Preschool - 30 152nd Ave, Holland, MI 49424

### Superb Owl Prowl (Wolters Woods) Ages 6-99

Hike the trails of Laketown Township's Wolters Woods in search of resident and migratory owls. The group will try to call in owls as they hike. Flashlights are welcome.

#### Friday, February 9 • 6:30-7:30 PM

Registration required • Fee: FREE - sponsored by Laketown Township Program Location: Wolters Woods Park - 6281 147th Ave, Holland, MI 49423



## **Maple Sugar Time at Van Raalte Farm**

Saturday, March 16 & 23, 11 AM-3 PM

This family-friendly event takes place at the City of Holland's Van Raalte Farm where the sap will be flowing and the sugar house steaming! Join us as we tap trees, gather sap, and watch the evaporator boil the liquid down into real maple syrup. There will be lots of activities for the kids and maple snacks available for purchase.

No registration necessary • Fee: \$10 per vehicle

Program Location: Van Raalte Farm Park - 1076 E 16th St, Holland, MI 49423









### **New Poppen Woods Trailhead**

A new trailhead kiosk was installed at Poppen Woods through the support from the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council through its Community Enhancement Program.







You can make a difference in the Watershed! Help us fund ongoing work here and other restorations on local waterways.









Downtown Holland
130 Central Ave, Holland, MI 49423

Outdoor Discovery Center 5678 143rd Ave, Holland, MI 49423

North Holland Campus 30 N 152nd Avenue, Holland, MI 49424

# Registration for 2024–25 School Year Opens January 18

#### Registration for our preschools will open online on Thursday, January 18 at 8:00 pm

Visit our website to learn more about class sessions offered at each location, tuition cost, scholarships and GSRP options, and to add your name to our contact list to receive registration information and announcements via email.

Half-day and full-day sessions are offered for 3and 4-year-olds at our three locations. Children must be 3 years old on or before September 1, 2024 to enroll in 3-year-old classes, and 4 years old on or before September 1st to enroll in 4-year-old classes.



Scan the QR code for our information page on our website!

Questions? Please contact the VP of Early Childhood Administration
Jayne Schutter

jayne@outdoordiscovery.org

To learn more visit outdoordscovery.org/preschool

# **Dragonflies Discovery Preschool** students explored the forest through the changing seasons

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Many classes spent entire class sessions in the forest climbing trees, eating their snack, rolling over logs, and discovering the awe of the natural world. One class even naps in the forest for rest time!

Many of the students' discoveries have directly guided the curriculum - one class is studying fungus while another is curious about white-tailed deer.

Student engagement with the natural world drives curiosity and interest in learning.

That's the magic of nature-based education.







# See What Our Preschoolers Were Discovering Last Fall!

**Little Hawks Discovery Preschool** students and teachers took full advantage of the forest, trails, creatures and all that the property of the ODC has to offer during the fall season



Some classes spend a full class period in the beyond (natural area beyond the fence) each week! Above you can see them using loose parts to build a seesaw and then enjoying snack on the trail.



Other classes jumped in puddles, went on a successful frog hunt and hiked while singing, "The leaves are falling down! The leaves are falling down! Red, yellow, orange and brown, the leaves are falling down!"

Nature is a wonderful teacher and play is nature's way of teaching little learners how to work together, solve problems, control impulses, negotiate differences, and get along with one another!







# **Seedlings Discovery Preschool** is committed to finding creative ways to engage with nature in downtown Holland





This Fall, they partnered with the city of Holland to plant tulip bulbs in nearby beds.



With this, our students learned how to contribute within a community, practiced gross and fine motor development, literacy skills, and more. Additionally, working together to build the garden is togetherness time.

Connections were built between classmates, teachers, and members of the community. That connection helps foster social-emotional development, a key focus for teachers at the beginning of each year.









When cold weather is here, visitors ask "Can I still see the animals? Are they still out?" For the most part - YES! The animals of the ODC are native to Michigan and therefore are well adapted to our seasons, so bundle yourself up and take a hike to see our animals this winter!



### Some of our animals love the cold weather!

Red Fox has a thick, fur coat. Many snowy mornings, she can be found curled up on her outside log covered in a thin layer of snow instead of in her indoor space. She loves to jump and dig tunnels through her snow piles!

Snowy owls have feather covered feet and thick feathers throughout their entire body. Even in the coldest weather he will avoid his protected area, preferring to sit outside in the snow.

In fact, most of our birds will be out! In the wild, the species of birds of prey that migrate for the winter do so because of lower food availability here. Since we provide our birds with a daily meal they do not have this problem!

# Others would typically use methods like hibernation or migration to survive, and therefore will be harder to see.

Wild skunks *torpor*, meaning that they sleep for a period of time, but will wake up to eat. The best time to see our skunk is in the morning when we are feeding him. He'll typically come out, eat his food and then head back to his hut to sleep. He too has a very nice thick fur coat (and some extra fat) to help him keep warm!

Turkey vultures *migrate* due to temperature, so we have provided them with a very nice warming space within their enclosure that they can go in yet still be visible to the public.





Arctic Polar Bear Expedition November 2024



Women ature

Women In Nature: Finger Lakes of New York October 2024 It's not too early to start planning for 2025! Join us on a safari in Tanzania or on a Women in Nature adventure in Kentucky!



Tanzania May 2025



To learn more, visit outdoordiscovery.org/explore

### Ed Network... Growing Again!

Last summer our Education Network team had a chance to work with over 1200 students providing summer nature based literacy programs throughout West ODC Education Michigan. Without even catching our breath we moved right into helping our 30+ Network school partners develop meaningful learning beyond the classroom. We are so grateful to be changing where and when learning happens and building these relationships with our school partners, educators, and families. However, it was clear that it is time to grow our team again!

We are excited to introduce to you who we are fondly calling "The Emilys" to our team. This fall Emily Slagter and Emily Myaard joined us to help grow and build our mission impact in West Michigan.



Emily Myaard joined the Education Network after a decade of teaching in a traditional classroom. She earned her degree in Secondary Ed from Hope College and taught social studies and psychology. Her recognition of the tremendous impact that learning in nature has on students and teachers lead her to the ODC. She understands the challenges and value in blending traditional curriculum with meaningful outdoor experiences. Outside of work, she spends time on the lake or in the woods with her husband and two young children.



**Emily Slagter** received her degree in Early Childhood Ed and Youth Ministry from Calvin University. She taught 1st Grade at Holland Christian's Forest School for several years after graduating. She loves that she has the opportunity to work with so many teachers and students now helping them explore conservation and education outside of a traditional classroom. When she isn't working, she spends time traveling, hiking and exploring with her husband and two dogs. She is also an active player and coach of soccer and basketball.

If you or someone you know is curious about walking alongside teachers and students as they find their path of nature based education, let us know. We love having conversations about our work. Oh...and it is okay if they are not named Emily! We are open to all:)

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