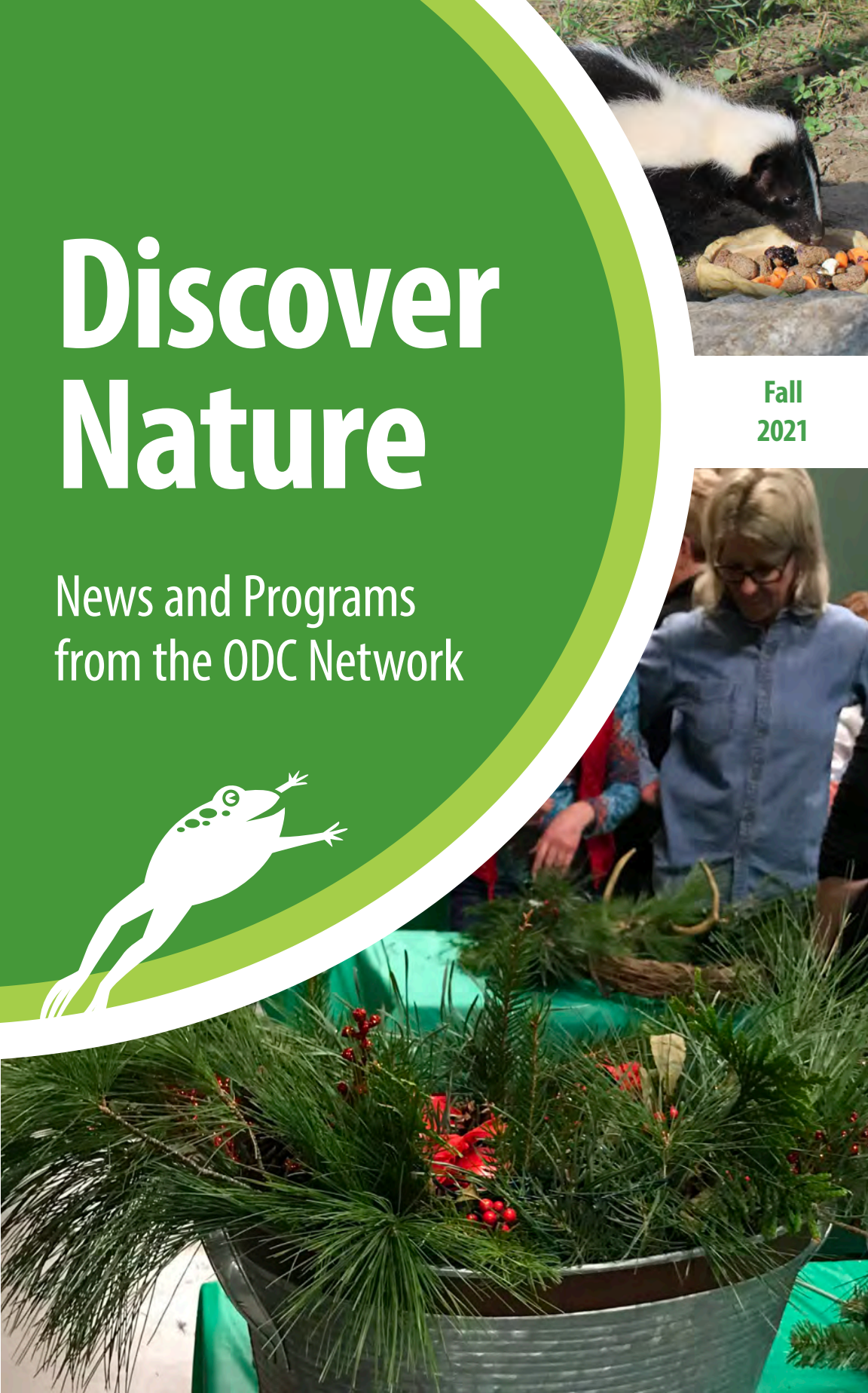


Discover Nature

News and Programs
from the ODC Network



Fall
2021



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



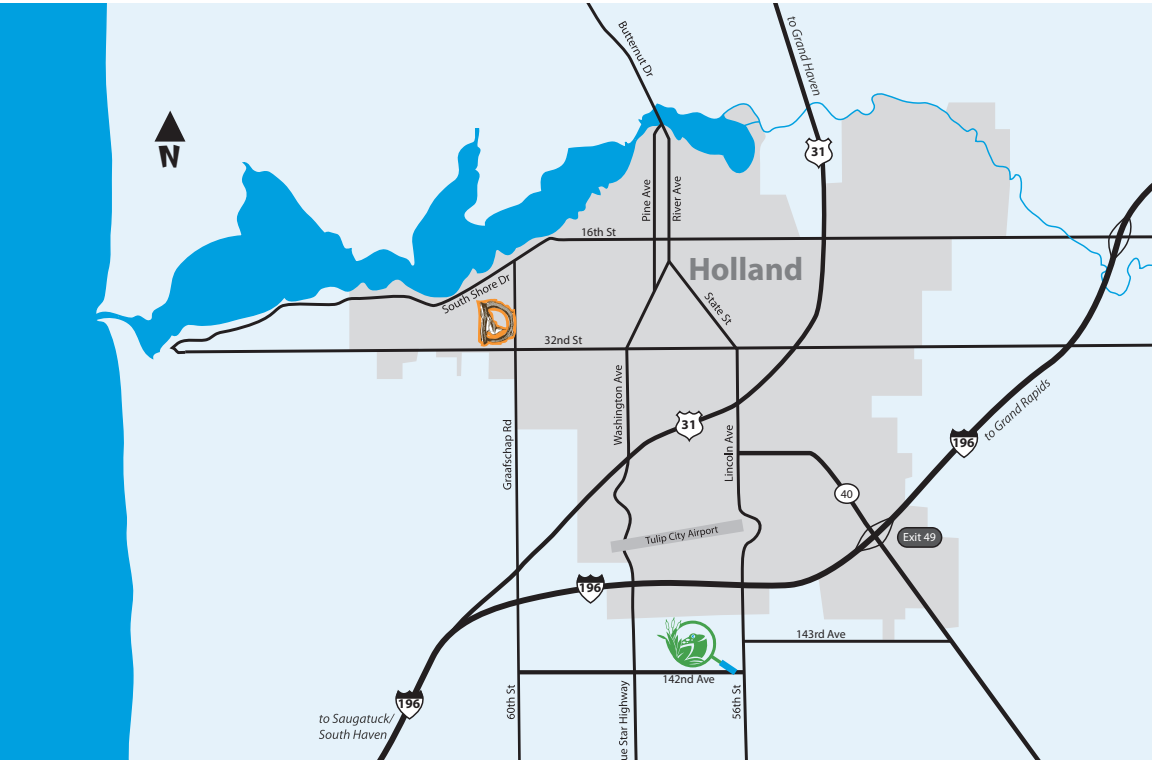
The Outdoor Discovery Center is 155 acres with about 3 miles of trails, located on the south side of Holland, just south of West Michigan Regional Airport. Admission is free! Trails open dawn to dusk—Visitors Center open 10 AM–3 PM, Tuesday–Saturday.

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!

Trails open dawn to dusk—Helen O. Brower Visitors Center open 10 AM–3 PM, Tuesday–Saturday.



Discover Nature • Descubrir la Naturaleza

Did you know that 6-8% of the population of Ottawa and Allegan counties speaks Spanish? In our effort to continue making the ODC a welcoming place we are debuting our new English/Spanish trail maps! Come visit us to check out our bilingual signs.

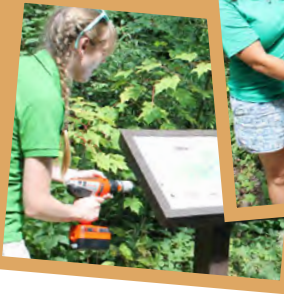
The bilingual trail map features legend descriptions which introduces new Spanish terminology of natural environments. For example, pond is *el estanque*, wetland is *la humedal*, wood is *el bosque*, and meadow is *la pradera*. It also gives Spanish readers the ability to identify where they are on the trail and other features on the property. Visitor guidelines regarding what is and isn't permitted on our nature preserve are also posted in both languages.

Visitors will notice trail names, buildings, and other English named areas are not in Spanish. The reason is because in the marketing world it isn't recommended to translate specific names of business locations, natural areas, buildings, etc. in order to keep a strong brand recognition.

We look forward to having our bilingual and native Spanish speakers experience the ODC in this new inclusive way. We are continuing to work on new Spanish language projects, including the signs for our mammal exhibit, and hope to share more about that in the near future. If you have any feedback or suggestions please email vanessa@outdoordiscovery.org.



New bilingual mammal signs and new trail maps being installed



Join us for a Program!

In the following pages, you will find titles 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*

October 2021

Did you know?
Check for updates and more details online at outdoordiscovery.org!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Knee-high Naturalists Night Hike	2
3	4 WIN—Kayaking	5 Explore a Story Yard-friendly Yard Cleanup	6	7 Family Fall Scavenger Hunt	8 Knee-high Naturalists	9 Nature's Paintbrush VoLes
10	11 Homeschool—Plants on the Move	12 Archery Night	13 Nature for Tykes	14	15 Knee-high Naturalists	16
17	18	19	20	21 Indigenous Clay Session 1 of 2	22 Knee-high Naturalists	23 Treats & Trails VoLes
	25	26	27	28	29 Knee-high Naturalists	30
	1	2	3 Michigan's Indigenous Peoples	4 Indigenous Clay Session 2 of 2	5 Knee-high Naturalists	6 Migratory 5K Fun Run VoLes
7	8	9 Explore a Story Michigan's Amazing Creatures	10	11	12 Knee-high Naturalists	13
14	15 Homeschool—Nocturnal Creatures	16 Modern Survival—Clothing Repair	17 Nature for Tykes	18 WIN—Greenery Workshop	19 Knee-high Naturalists VoLes	20 Marvelous Mammals
21	22	23	24	25	26	27 Nature Holiday Craft
28	29	30 Giving Tuesday	1	2 Greenery Workshop	3 Knee-high Naturalists	4
5	6	7 Explore a Story Modern Survival—Eating Local in Every Season	8	9	10 Knee-high Naturalists	11 A Pioneer Christmas
12	13 Homeschool—Insulate, Hibernate, Migrate	14	15 Nature for Tykes	16	17 Knee-high Naturalists	18 Winter Wonderland
19	20 Michigan's Animals	21 Winter Solstice	22 Nature Puppet Show	23	24	25
26	27	28 Snowshoe Walk	29 Owl Pellet Dissection	30	31	

November

December

Knee-high Naturalists (DeGraaf)

Friday, October 1
Friday, October 15

Friday, October 29
Friday, November 12

Friday, December 10

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

Explore a Story (DeGraaf)

Tuesday, October 5

Tuesday, November 9

Tuesday, December 7

10–11 AM • *No registration necessary • Fee: \$6 per child, \$4 for members*

Find more program details and register at degraaf.org

Yard-friendly Yard Cleanup (DeGraaf)

With the growing season coming to an end, our native animals are preparing for winter. Come learn some simple yard management practices that protect our most important neighbors.

Tuesday, October 5 • 6–7 PM • *Registration required • Fee: \$6 per person, \$4 for members*



Survival Skills for the Modern World

Join us for one of these programs and learn a new skill!

Clothing Repair (DeGraaf)

Tuesday, Nov 16 • 6–7 PM • *Registration required • Fee: \$6 per person; \$4 for members*

Eating Local in Every Season (DeGraaf)

Tuesday, Dec 7 • 6–7 PM • *Registration required • Fee: \$6 per person; \$4 for members*

Sally Smoly Nature Playscape at Window on the Waterfront

From the main area of downtown Holland, the nearest playgrounds were formerly a 20-minute walk away. With help from GMB Architecture + Engineering and our operations team, the City of Holland presents a new nature playscape along Window on the Waterfront! This space will bring a convenient natural area to city residents, as well as provide learning and playing opportunities for our students at Seedlings Discovery Preschool that is located downtown.

In addition to large grassy areas for activities and events, this area now has ornamental grasses, shrubs and trees to provide visual interest, ecological benefits, and shade! There are also two built shade structures and a winding path to follow.

Different structures within the playscape were constructed from natural materials to meet the

varied developmental needs of both younger and older children. For young explorers, the log climber, stumps, and boulders provide areas for learning bodily awareness, as well as building confidence. The slide and rope swing are safe ways to explore with gravity and speed. For older adventurers, a climbing wall and net climbing structure will expand on existing coordination and bravery. For all ages, there are a variety of natural, loose materials accessible to explore up-close.

Next time you are downtown or near the waterfront, take a stroll to the playscape to find your favorite part!

Thank you to all of our donors! Because of your generosity we were able to secure the full \$50,000 matching grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation!



Knee-high Naturalists (ODC)

Friday, October 8
Friday, October 22

Friday, Nov 5
Friday, Nov 19

Friday, Dec 3
Friday, Dec 17

10 AM–12 PM • Registration required • Fee: \$10 per child, \$5 for members

Nature's Paintbrush—Capturing the Colors (ODC)

Join us for this water color program where you will learn to paint beautiful fall colors. This 2-hour watercolor workshop is for any nature-loving artist ages 12-adult. All materials will be provided and no prior experience required. This art lesson will be taught by artist and naturalist, Nancy Berg.

Saturday, October 9 • **10 AM–12 PM** • Registration required • Fee: \$25 per participant, \$20 for members

VoLes (Various Locations)

Our Volunteer League (nicknamed “VoLes”) is a service club for teens to experience what it takes to maintain a natural area and captive wildlife. This program is designed for 12–18 year olds who will work with staff on a variety of indoor and outdoor tasks at the ODC and DeGraaf. Past projects have included removing invasive species, cleaning up animal enclosures, and adding nature play features. It’s a great way to earn those community service volunteer hours!

Sat, Oct 9 • **10 AM–12 PM**

Sat, Nov 6 • **12–2 PM**

Sat, Oct 23 • **2–7 PM**

Fri, Nov 19 • **3:30–5 PM**

Registration required • Fee: FREE



Homeschool Class—Plants on the Move (ODC)

Monday, October 11 • **10 AM–12 PM** • Registration required • Fee: \$10 per child

Archery Night (ODC)

Tuesday, October 12 • **5:30–7 PM** • Registration required • 11 yrs + • Fee: \$12 per person, \$9 for members

Nature for Tykes (ODC)

Wednesday, October 13 • Theme: Senses

Wednesday, November 17 • Theme: Fall Leaves

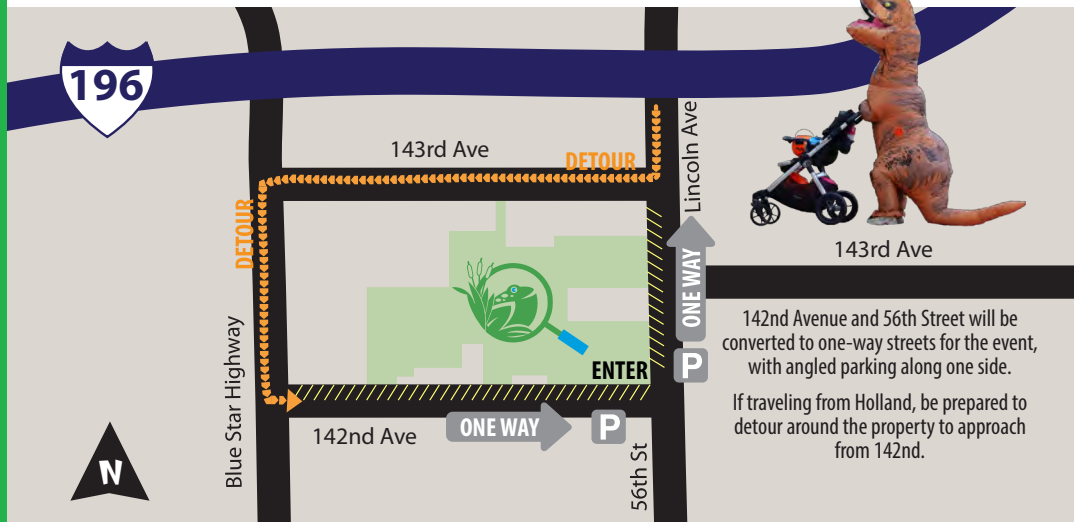
Wednesday, December 15 • Theme: Getting Ready for Winter

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

Treats & Trails (ODC)

Bring your entire family out for a safe and fun walk along the trails of the Outdoor Discovery Center. There will be wildlife encounters, games, and candy. Children are encouraged to wear their costumes. All the nature trails are wheelchair, stroller, and wagon-friendly. You must walk a total of 1.2 miles to see the entire event.

Saturday, October 23 • **2–7 PM** • No registration necessary; No new admissions after 6 PM • Fee: \$10 per family



Indigenous Clay Workshop with Jason Wesaw

Join local Potawatomi ceramicist, Jason Wesaw, for a two-day ceramics workshop that engages the traditional approach to pottery that was once used by indigenous people. All clay will be locally harvested and processed, and you will have the opportunity to work alongside Jason in handbuilding and pit-firing in order to take home your own creation inspired by his work.

Thursday, October 21 & November 4 • Class consists of
Two Full-day Sessions • Registration required at thecultureworks.org • 18+yrs



Michigan's Indigenous Peoples

In this partnership program with Lakeshore Little Read and CultureWorks, we will read the Little Read book *Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story* by Kevin Noble Maillard, tour our Anishinaabe Summer Village and explore artifacts and tools used by people who lived here long ago, and craft your own clay pot using traditional practices and locally sourced clay.

Wednesday, November 3 • 5:30–6:30 PM • Registration required • Fee: \$8

Migratory 5K Fun Run (ODC)

Participate in a unique run through our trail system. Depending on registration numbers, we will hold staggered start times to help alleviate the number of people in one area at a specific time. It will end with water, coffee, and hot chocolate. There will also be an opportunity for a picture with one of our live birds of prey.

Saturday, November 6 • 10 AM–12 PM • Registration required

• Fee: \$25 per participant, \$15 for 12 yrs and younger

Find more program details and register at outdoordiscovery.org

Michigan's Amazing Creatures (ODC)

Big kids like animals, too! This drop-off style program for 9-15 year-olds focuses on Michigan wildlife using live animals and artifacts during a fun and interactive experience. Attendees will be able to handle some of our animals and learn about their amazing natural history. Come out for a wild time!

Tuesday, November 9 • 3:30–4:30 PM • Registration required • Fee: \$6 per child, \$4 for members

Homeschool Class—Nocturnal Creatures (ODC)

Monday, November 15 • 10 AM–12 PM • Registration required • Fee: \$10 per child

Marvelous Mammals (ODC)

So many different animals belong to the mammal group—even humans! Visit us for this program and learn what makes mammals special and meet our new resident mammals.

Saturday, November 20 • 10–11 AM • Registration required • Fee: \$6 per person, \$4 for members

Homeschool Class—Insulate, Hibernate, or Migrate (ODC)

How do animals survive our winters? Some options are to insulate, hibernate, migrate, or congregate. Learn about these options and why certain animals choose what works best for them. This drop-off program is geared 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, December 13 • 10 AM–12 PM • Registration required • Fee: \$10 per child

Michigan's Animals (ODC)

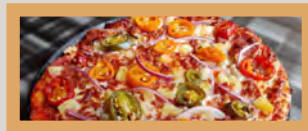
Michigan is home to some amazing animals. Visit the ODC and meet some reptiles, mammals, and birds that call Michigan home. We will see animals up close and go for a hike through their natural habitats. Dress for the weather.

Monday, December 20 • 11 AM–12 PM • Registration required • Fee: \$6 per person, \$4 for members

Community Pizza at Hop's in October

We have the privilege of being the recipient of the Community Pizza fundraiser from Hops at 84 East for the month of October! Hops will donate \$5 from each Community Pizza purchased to the Seedlings Discovery Preschool. Stop by 84 E 8th Street in Holland to enjoy the delicious community pizza, or order takeout and enjoy it at home or at the NEW Sally Smoly Nature Playscape at Window on the Waterfront!


Seedlings
 Discovery Preschool



Night Hike (Huyser Farm)

Take a walk through the woods at night. Use your senses along the walk to find out how much you can feel, touch, hear, and see at night. Learn how nocturnal animals use their other senses to survive in the evening.

Friday, October 1 • 7:30–8:30 PM • Registration required • Fee: FREE - sponsored by Laketown Township
 Program Location: Huyser Farm Park, 4184 64th Street, Holland

Women in Nature—Kayaking (New Richmond Bridge)

This program will take place on the Rabbit River. We will be launching from New Richmond Bridge Park (north side) and paddling up river and then turning around and heading back to the park. This river has little current and is ideal for an inexperienced or casual paddler. During the program, women will get the opportunity to enjoy a casual paddle with a naturalist while learning about river wildlife and our efforts to improve local watersheds.

Monday, October 4 • 5:30–7 PM • Registration required • Fee: \$12 per person
 Program Location: New Richmond Bridge Park (north side) 5750 Old Allegan Rd. Hamilton

Fall Family Scavenger Hunt (Keppel Forest)

Get the family and explore outside on a fall scavenger hunt. Join one of our naturalists and hike the trails of Keppel Forest in search of colors, bugs, birds, plants and more. You're sure to find some fun as you search and learn about how plants and animals are getting ready for winter. All materials are provided.

Thursday, October 7 • 6–7 PM • Registration required • Fee: FREE - sponsored by Park Township
 Program Location: Keppel Forest, Lakewood Blvd & 168th, Holland

Another New Amenity Added at ODC

This summer we opened a new amenity for visitors to the Outdoor Discovery Center. When people come out to explore and play they will now be able to also get a treat from our Peachwave mobile kitchen!

Our menu includes some of the great things you would expect at traditional Peachwave locations, including low-fat dairy,

non-dairy, and gluten-free options, but also some custom offerings thought up by our summer staff. Next time you stop by the Outdoor Discovery Center, ask for a Snowy Owl Smoothie, Red Fox Float or Golden Eagle Dessert!



Holidays with the ODC Network

Create family memories and traditions with us during these winter programs!

Thursday, November 18 | Women in Nature Greenery Workshop | @ ODC

• 6-7:30 PM • Registration required. Make your own wall decoration or table arrangement and leave the mess behind. We'll provide fresh greens and other natural materials; bring your own gardening gloves, ribbons, or accessories, if you wish to use them. • Fee: \$20



Saturday, November 27 | Nature Holiday Craft |

@ DeGraaf • 10-11 AM • Registration required. Join us and make a nature-based craft made from found materials. We will go for a walk and find what we need for our craft and come back together to assemble it. Nature is the best inspiration for beautiful crafts! • Fee: \$6 per person, \$4 for members

Tuesday, November 30 | Giving Tuesday Holiday Decoration | @ ODC • 3-4:30 PM • No registration necessary. Help us decorate the Visitor's Center for the holiday season. Fee: FREE

Thursday, December 2 | Greenery Workshop | @ ODC • 6-7:30 PM • Registration required • Fee: \$20

Saturday, December 11 | A Pioneer Christmas | @ DeGraaf • 10-11 AM • Registration required. Learn how the pioneers fed, clothed, and sheltered themselves with a visit to our Pioneer Cabin. Learn about pioneer chores such as carding wool, sawing wood, grinding corn, and cooking over the fire. We will also discuss some of the ways early settlers prepared for the holidays. • Fee: \$6 per child, \$4 to members

Saturday, December 18 | Winter Wonderland Hike | @ ODC • 10-11 AM • Registration required. Take a walk with us as we explore the wonders of winter. We will take a walk along our trails and discuss what plants and animals do for the winter and how they survive these cold months. • Fee: \$6 per child, \$4 for members

Tuesday, December 21 | Winter Solstice Celebration | @ ODC • 1-2 PM • Registration required. The winter solstice has been a special day in some cultures for 1000's of years. We will dig into the significance of the solstice while having some fun celebrating the start of winter with crafts, games, and a snack over a warm fire. • Fee: \$6 per child, \$4 for members



Wednesday, December 22 | Nature Puppet Show | @ ODC • 10-11 AM • Registration required • Fee: \$6 per child, \$4 for members

Tuesday, December 28 | Snowshoe Walk | @ ODC • 2-3 PM • Registration required. Hike the wintery trails of the ODC Nature Preserve in search of winter wildlife. The group will use the Center's Ojibwa-style snowshoes as long as there is at least 4 inches of snow. The snowshoes are intended for people ages 8 years old and up. Feel free to bring a sled to pull the little ones. • Fee: \$6 per person, \$4 for members

Wednesday, December 29 | Owl Pellet Dissection | @ ODC • 11 AM-12 PM • Registration required. 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! • Fee: \$6 per pellet, \$4 for members

Saturday, January 1 | Christmas Bird Count | @ Various Locations • 8 AM-4 PM • Registration required: email Jamie Krupka at jamie@outdoordiscovery.org. The Christmas Bird Count is in its 121st year as the longest running citizen science project on the planet. Help staff of the ODC Network tally all the birds in the Holland count circle. No experience is required other than a willingness to be outside! • Fee: FREE



New Nature-based Preschool

The ODC Network is currently raising funds to expand nature-based early childhood education into north Holland with a new campus located at the former Park Township Airport site. ODC Network will be opening its third nature-based preschool, Dragonflies Discovery Preschool for the Fall 2022 school year. The new preschool will have four classrooms, each with 18 students, serving approximately 194 young learners and their families with both full-day and half-day options. Each classroom at Dragonflies will welcome a blend of tuition-paying families and families receiving scholarships or financial assistance through Michigan's Great Start to Readiness Program (GSRP). A fifth classroom will be built to support a wrap-around childcare option as well. In addition to the classrooms another building will be built as an education and training center in order to provide parenting classes, training for partner schools, and other community programs.



To date more than 2.75 of the four million needed has been raised. While construction is underway at Dragonflies Discovery Preschool, ODC Network has partnered with Beechwood Church to provide a temporary, one-year, preschool classroom at the church's site. Eighteen students will attend a full day preschool program at the temporary Dragonflies site at Beechwood Church starting in October. Demand for nature-based learning is high with waitlists at Little Hawks Discovery Preschool reaching over 200 in years past. The goal in opening a temporary preschool site at Beechwood church is to provide nature-based learning to more students in the north Holland area as soon as possible. Parents, including Spanish-speaking or bilingual, interested in enrolling their child in Dragonflies Discovery Preschool this fall should contact Anna Perales at annap@outdoordiscovery.org.

Registration for the 2022-23 School Year Opens in January

Half-day and full-day sessions are offered for different age groups:

3-year-olds

4-year-olds

3's and 4's together

Children must be 3 years old on or before September 1st to enroll.



Meet Our Newest Mammals

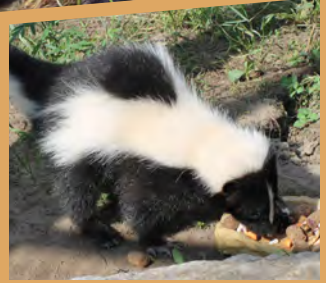
We are excited to have a new Animal Exhibit along a trail just behind our Visitor's Center, which now includes a striped skunk and a porcupine!

Striped Skunk

You may be able to see the black-and-white warning colors on this new member of the ODC Mammal Exhibit as you approach. A striped skunk has moved into one of the remaining octagonal cages, and is the third addition to our growing assortment of native Michigan wildlife!

We wanted to help dispel the misunderstandings associated with this species, so, following Michigan law, we purchased this animal from a licensed breeder. Our skunk was "descented," meaning his scent glands were removed. This allows us to use him more safely in educational programs.

Striped skunks are found throughout North America, and can adapt to a variety of natural and human-influenced habitats. They are omnivores, eating primarily insects in spring/summer and meat in fall/winter. Their conservation status is of Least Concerned.



North American Porcupine

The fourth animal to join our Mammal Exhibit is the North American Porcupine! With her we have finished filling our new housing space, which was built at the beginning of the summer.

We received our porcupine from another education facility on the eastern side of the state. This porcupine has previously been involved in education and outreach, and we are excited for her to join our many classes and programs.

Weighing up to 20 pounds, the North American Porcupine is the second largest rodent found on the continent, after the North American Beaver. It is a misunderstanding that porcupines can shoot their quills, thirty thousand of which cover their entire body; in actuality, these quills only burrow into an animal's flesh if that animal gets too close. Though porcupines spend most of their time on ground, they are known as good tree climbers and swimmers. Baby porcupines are called porcupettes!



These mammals will be on display in their homes and join our naturalists in a variety of programs.

During your next visit, check for new animals along this trail, as well as other additions to the Eldean Play Area!



Welcome Macatawa Watershed Project

After many years of collaboration, one of our closest partners is officially becoming part of the ODC team. The Macatawa Watershed Project, which has been housed at the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council since 2000, will be moving to the ODC Network as of October 1st. Joining us as the Watershed Manager is Kelly Goward, who has worked at the MACC as the Watershed and Environmental Program Manager since 2012.

The Watershed Project began as a way for local communities to partner on improving Lake Macatawa and the

Macatawa Watershed following findings by the state and EPA that the lake had extremely high levels of suspended sediment and phosphorus. The MACC has employed a number of folks since then who have worked towards improving the lake by working on issues such as stormwater, agriculture, land use, monitoring, and education. The ODC and the Macatawa River Greenway have partnered closely with the MACC over the years, working to put on events such as the Macatawa Water Festival and annual River Cleanups, educating students and community leaders on water-related topics, and collaborating on research efforts with partners such as Hope College and Grand Valley State University.

Kelly and the MACC have worked closely with the ODC on Project Clarity, our initiative to create a significant improvement in water quality around the watershed. MACC staff have served on advisory boards and provided input on plans as well as helping to share and disseminate our progress to our government partners. This partnership has resulted in the myriad of successful projects that have gone into our watershed over the past eight years, including restored wetlands, stabilized streams, soil-saving agricultural projects, and greener stormwater infrastructure. This merger will streamline many projects and partnerships, making greater gains for the watershed possible from increased efficiency.

We are excited to have Kelly on board with her host of experiences at the MACC and local conservation districts prior to that. She will continue managing the MACC's current grant-funded programs and work closely with local municipalities on stormwater permitting and compliance, ensuring that we can update and improve existing and future infrastructure. Her skills as a grant writer, project coordinator, and educator will be great assets to our team and create additional connections to regional water experts.



Above: Kelly and ODC Naturalist, Andrea Woody, identify insects caught in a stream to assess the health of the watershed

Below: Kelly shows off a foam deer head pulled out of the Macatawa during a river clean-up in 2017





Summer Programming for Over 2,000 Kids

Summer of 2021 did not disappoint for the Education Network team. Together with our partner schools we were able to help provide nature-based summer camps to over 2000 kids in Ottawa and Allegan Counties. These camps gave kids an opportunity to explore nature while growing their skills in language arts, math and STEM curriculum. We know the pandemic has taken its toll, both on learning and the love of learning for our kids. These camps gave kids a chance to safely interact, explore, play, and learn with their teachers



and our team from the ODC Network. The beauty of these programs is that it lays the foundation for continued growth within the school year as well. We know as schools reach out to us for summer programming that those interests continue to grow throughout the school year following. We love this outreach as a way to grow our impact in the community. If you are or know a teacher who would like to learn more about meaningful learning beyond the desk, please contact Bob Wandel for a chance to learn more! bob@outdoordiscovery.org



Volunteer Groups Contribute

Corporate volunteer groups are crucial to helping our teams get projects done throughout our properties. This year we brought in five different groups to get projects completed.



DISHER Design has participated in volunteer projects since 2017. This year they built a viewing platform along the river at Rabbit River Preserve in Hamilton.



Lakewood Construction is a new group with us this year and they didn't ease into a project. They came in to assist with the new Animal Exhibit at the Outdoor Discovery Center. Their architects assisted in the planning and preparation for the animal enclosures and their team helped remodel the barn to add the enclosures.

Innotec has done a volunteer project with us since 2016. This year they helped take out a dock along our Sensory Trail and replace it with a new one all while making it ADA accessible.



E3 Compliance is also a new group this year, they wanted to help with an area along the Macatawa River Greenway, so they assisted with building the sign frame, landscaping, and creating a picnic area at the new Geerlings Farm Park.

Koops Automated Systems has also worked with us since 2016. This year they built a large play boat with slide, sandbox, and viewing platforms on the trails of Outdoor Discovery Center, just west of Little Hawks Discovery Preschool.

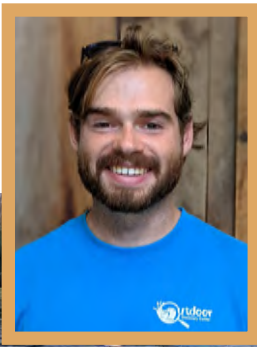


Thank you to all of our wonderful volunteer groups! We are looking forward to even more exciting projects in 2022. If you're interested in scheduling a volunteer opportunity for your team, please contact Ashley VanZee, ashley@outdoordiscovery.org or 616-368-9289.



My Seasonal Experience

A perspective on an ODC internship and seasonal employment from Mr. Zach! Zach recently graduated from Hope College with a Biology degree.



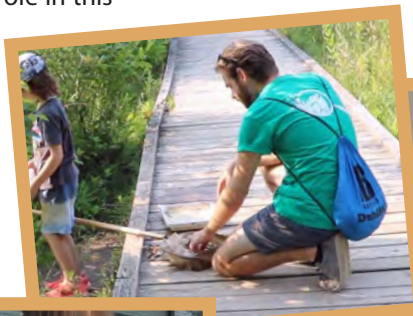
My summer experience began with the small, sleeping form of our new red fox. She hadn't yet grown into her gangly legs, and her fur hadn't yet deepened to its distinctive red. Crouching next to her, watching her scrawny body breathe up and down, I couldn't imagine ever having to say goodbye.

I fell in love with this job because of animal care. Some days I would feed vegetables and insects to our array of reptiles and amphibians, hearing the occasional croak of a green frog. Other days I would spend hours at the Birds of Prey Center, cleaning each enclosure and then distributing bucketfuls of mice, chicks, rats, fish, and occasional roadkill to our raptors. And on other days I'd be taking care of our newly arrived mammals, helping experiment with new diets and new forms of enrichment for our Red Fox, Virginia Opossum, Striped Skunk, and North American Porcupine. It was very exciting to have my own personal role in this big step forward for the ODC.

Summer camps provided their own fears, and always their own joys. During one camp, we led kids on a kayak trip down the Macatawa

River. In another, we helped kids make an educational episode of their own nature TV series. In another, we taught kids how to create debris shelters impervious to rain. Soon, my insecurities dissipated, and I even began to enjoy the small part I could play in kids' lives. One pivotal moment for me was an educational program where, instead of assisting the head naturalist, I was able to stand in front of a group of kids myself, Eastern Box Turtle in hand, and talk my heart out about reptiles.

My experience at the ODC has changed me forever. I can't thank this place enough for the education it has given me, and the path it has opened up for me in the future. Though I'll soon have to say goodbye to our Red Fox, and all the animals here I've come to love, I'll do it knowing that they, and many of the staff at the ODC, have changed me into a budding naturalist who has a future caring for the things he loves.





4214 56th Street • Holland, MI • 49423

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