

# Trackings

Volunteer Newsletter of Eastman Nature Center



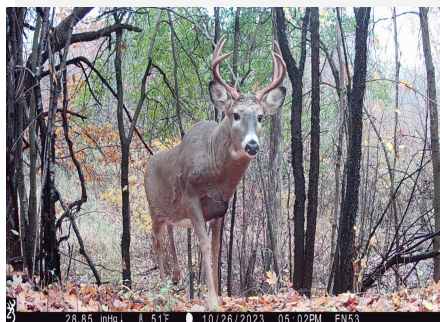
## WINTER 2023-2024

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*The mission of Three Rivers Park District is to promote environmental stewardship through recreation and education in a natural resources-based park system.*



**Wildlife In Motion**— The park district has always attracted photographers for seasonal wildflowers, sunsets, birding, etc. for both art and hobby. Now, the Natural Resource Management department (NRM) is using photos to collect scientific data. Eastman Nature Center (ENC) volunteer Dave Ches is a photographer who is now managing several motion sensor cameras for NRM and ENC; he has captured some amazing photos in 2023!



Motion sensor camera

Each month he moves the cameras to new locations around Eastman Nature Center. These Browning Dark Ops are high quality cameras that take pictures if something moves in front of the camera. It could be day, night, wildlife, kids at camp or a blade of grass blowing in the wind. Sometimes thousands of pictures must be reviewed but Dave enjoys the process, "I've always enjoyed photography but my enjoyment really ramped up during the pandemic". The camera project has been so successful that NRM has invested in adding additional camera.



Pop culture pumpkin

The project started a few years ago so that NRM could investigate what happened to the skunk population in our parks; it has dropped significantly. But NRM has learned that it allows them to track other species as well. There is now photo evidence of fisher activity in 3 district parks including Elm Creek. NRM could not confirm this until a photo documented it. In all, there are over 50 cameras staged throughout the park district to monitor wildlife activity.

Since Elm Creek is one of the largest metro area parks in the country, we have a unique opportunity to document wildlife activity in close proximity to dense people populations. This illustrates that humans and wildlife can live in close proximity successfully...even large wildlife like black bear. See page 4 for photos.



# Seasonal Reflection

Big Woods Halloween 2023 was a smash hit! With the help of over 30 volunteers this year we could not have done it without all of you! The great weather, 300 participants and some new creative twists made it another memory maker. From wildlife trail characters in furry costume to leading Halloween games and making potions with the sorcerers, it



Les gets a masters degree in popcorn



Laura shares life as a skunk



Pumpkin spa day

good time for families. Those who poured cider, greeted guests at the registrations table, wiped down tables, stacked haybales, called bingo numbers and staged green screen photos also made this annual event memorable.

When asked, Naturalist Vicky Wachtler said, "The event has been happening as long as I can remember being here at ENC!" And folks, that is over 30 years! If anyone knows the first year ENC had a Halloween event, they will receive a Halloween treat!



Did you know that Eastman hosts a **Volunteer Field Trip** in the fall? Join us for an informal, fun and exciting development opportunities with staff and other volunteers. This year we spent the day near Hudson, WI with a stop at the new Carpenter Nature Center Wisconsin campus. It opened it's new visitor center in the last year. They have a remnant prairie and 300 additional acres. We also went to Willow River State Park to see it in all its fall glory! Please join us in the spring for the annual volunteer recognition. It is coordinated by Vicky Wachtler on the Eastman team and is typically in April. Stay tuned!

**NEW Master Naturalist** on the loose! Congratulations to these individuals who completed the Big Woods, Big Rivers biome this fall. Many took advantage of the new Volunteer Project Opportunities list on the MN Master Naturalist website to connect with new sponsors beyond Three Rivers. A round of applause to Cheryl L, Cheryl J., Larry 1, Larry 2, Vivian, Ashley, Laura, Sara, Courtney, Rory, Dani! Not pictured but also graduated were Michelle and Jannette. Welcome them when you see them at the nature center! This fall Eastman collaborated with Mississippi Gateway to host the class.



# Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities

## Chickadee Landing Training

**Sundays Jan, Feb, March; training date TBD**

Contact: Anne.Jaeger@ThreeRiversParks.org

Learn the tips and tricks to facilitating informal visits to our chickadee landing. Still not sure what this is about... email me!

## Mulled Wine Hike

**Friday January 26th 6-9:30PM**

Contact: Brandon.Baker@ThreeRiversParks.org

Help explore history on snowshoe hike that ends with mulled wine. Need two volunteers to assist with snowshoes/hike and 2-3 volunteers to assist with cooking wine and spices based on immigrant recipes .

## Snowshoe Rentals

**Weekends/Holidays when snow is available thru March**

Contact: Anne.Jaeger@ThreeRiversParks.org

Support front desk by welcoming, sizing, caring for snowshoe gear. Suggest hiking routes. Lots of kneeling and strap tightening. A 2 hour training offered.

## Fire Tenders

**Sundays in January and February, 12:30-4:30PM**

Contact: Vicky.wachtler@threeriversparks.org

Build and maintain outdoor fire; be available to greet/visit with park guests. Also, be on the call list for other programs needing fire tenders during the week or Saturdays.

## Maple Syrup Training and Support

**Saturday March 2nd 1-4PM**

Contact: Elaine.Tucker@ThreeRiversParks.org

Are you ready for a sweet treat? We need lots of help throughout the maple syrup season to tap trees, collect data and sap as well as finish the final product for use. This training is for all new syrup volunteers, those wanting to learn a new part of the system or to get a refresher course. Please RSVP if you are returning again in 2024 **OR** you are new to syruping at ENC.

## We Need Stuff...

**Deliver anytime between now and Feb 28th**

**Drop off at Front Desk**

We are looking for the following items at the ENC:

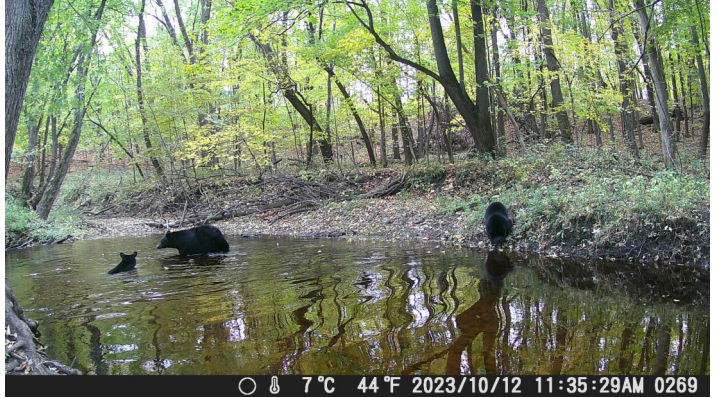
- Old newspapers (no glossy color sheets)
- Nature books for our Little Free Library
- Gently used XL winter gear for Gear Library





# Phenology in Focus

It's been an active year for our motion sensor camera.... Check out the secret life of Eastman Nature Center



## Art & Culture

Ken Burns is an American filmmaker known for his style of using archival footage and photographs in his documentaries. He has produced documentaries like *The National Parks*, *Lewis and Clark*, *Jazz* and two dozen more. While some of his films are one episode, many are a series. *The Dust Bowl* is four episodes, *Jazz* is 10 episodes and *The National Parks* is 6 episodes.

His latest film is titled *The American Buffalo* released this year. It is a two-part series that amplifies the intersection of the American buffalo ecology and its relationship with Indigenous people. The film dives deep into the systemic removal of the buffalo as a means of erasing an entire race and culture. You can watch it FREE on PBS.org



*I am passionately  
interested in un-  
derstanding how  
my country works.*

~ Ken Burns