

Carver Current

Volunteer Newsletter of Lowry Nature Center



Spring 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.

Nature Photography

By Joe Aliotto

One of my favorite hobbies is wildlife photography, an artform that I practice to connect with the natural world. I love it because not only do I gain knowledge and appreciation for nature but I'm then able to share those special moments with others. I was first introduced to photography in high-school where we had film cameras and a dark-room. But since those days photography technology has made huge leaps and bounds. There are now impressive digital and mirrorless cameras, photo enhancing filters and AI technologies that can create stunning images. But even with leaps in technology a solid foundation of basic photography is necessary to capture stunning images. Below is a list of some essential tips if you're just starting out or need a refresher.

1. **Research and Patience:** Before heading out, research the behavior and habitats of the animals you wish to photograph. Understanding their habits will increase your chances of capturing compelling shots. Patience is key in wildlife photography; be prepared to spend extended periods waiting for the perfect moment to unfold.

2. **Gear Selection*** Invest in quality gear suited for wildlife photography. A telephoto lens with a focal length of at least 300mm is essential for capturing distant subjects without disturbing them. Additionally, consider using a sturdy tripod or monopod to stabilize your shots, especially when using longer lenses.

3. **Understanding Light:** Mastering light is crucial in any form of photography. In wildlife photography, soft, natural light is often preferred, as it enhances colors and

textures while minimizing harsh shadows. Early morning and late afternoon are prime times for shooting when the light is warm and diffused.

4. **Composition and Framing:** Pay attention to composition and framing to create visually compelling images. Use the rule of thirds to place your subject off-center for a more dynamic composition. Consider the background and foreground elements to add depth and context to your shots.

5. **Focus and Depth of Field:** Use a fast shutter speed to freeze the motion of moving subjects, especially in fast-paced wildlife encounters. Opt for a wide aperture (lower f-stop number) to achieve a shallow depth of field, isolating your subject from the background and creating a beautiful bokeh effect.

6. **Respect Wildlife and Environment:** Always prioritize the well-being of wildlife and their habitats. Maintain a safe distance from animals to avoid causing stress or disturbance. Leave no trace by minimizing your impact on the environment and adhering to ethical photography practices.

7. **Experiment and Learn:** Don't be afraid to experiment with different techniques and perspectives. Embrace failures as learning opportunities and continuously strive to improve your skills. Seek inspiration from other wildlife photographers and study their work to gain insights into composition, lighting, and storytelling.

8. **Post-Processing:** Use post-processing software to enhance your images subtly. Adjust exposure, contrast, and color balance to bring out the best in your photos while maintaining their authenticity. Avoid over-editing, as it can detract from the natural beauty of your subjects.

By following these basic wildlife photography tips and techniques, you can elevate your skills and capture beautiful images. If you're interested in wildlife or nature photography, please sign-up for a weekend photography class, go on our spring volunteer photo hike, or join the Lowry Nature Center Photography Club on Facebook.

To see photos by Joe go to this link: <https://www.instagram.com/joealiotto/>

- **Sugar Bush Photo Hike | Saturday, March 9th | 12:30-2:30 pm**
- **Intro to Bird Photography | Saturday, April 6th | 9-11am**



The photo on the right is from Lowry's Valentine's Day Dinner Event's luminary trail. Thanks so much to volunteer Wayne Olson for helping with the event!

Maple Syrup Festival

Sat., March 23, 1-4pm

We need help with:

- Tree tapping
- Fire tending
- Greeting

Call 763-694-7650 or email Brett at brett.sieberer@threeriversparks.org, 763-694-7653.

Bluebird Volunteers Needed

- Duration: 1 hour/week April 1- July 31
- Location: Carver Park Reserve
- Walk/drive/ride to monitor bluebird houses along park trails documenting eggs, young, etc. Training: Saturday, March 30, 10am - 11:00am at Lowry Nature Center. Contact Elise if you plan to attend: elise.bushard@threeriversparks.org

Lowry's Earth Day Celebration Event

Saturday, April 20, 10am - 2pm

- Greeter (2)
- Event Assistant (6)
- Bird Banders (regular crew)

This event will replace the Spring Eggstravaganza and focus more on the environment. Call 763-694-7650 or e-mail Elise a Elise.Bushard@threeriversparks.org This big spring event includes: fun and educational experiences for the whole family. See wild songbirds safely banded with numbered rings and learn what scientists learn from these birds. Visit the enchanted trail to explore five magical nature kingdoms in search of hidden creatures both realistic and mythical. Walk the challenge trail to find the hidden numbers to solve a riddle. Join a Lowry naturalist on a guided walk looking and listening for frogs, spring plants and returning birds. Spy on an osprey nest through a spotting scope. Watch a raptor presentation and plant a seed to take home. Visit booths and exhibits offer information about water quality, energy efficiency, native plantings and more.

Walking Stick Bugs

Lowry has some interesting new insects for the public to see and to use for programs in this Big Year of Bugs. See if you can spot them as they camouflage in their aquariums in the Tamarack Room.



News Around Lowry

Three Rivers will be hosting the national Special Park District Forum conference the week of June 10th and the attendees will be visiting Lowry on the first day of the conference. You may see some small projects happening around the center this spring such as re-staining the building and some new pavers in the backyard area.



Color Correction Glasses

Lowry has a pair of color correction glasses available to check out at the front desk for folks who are color blind and want to see nature in full color.

Summer Camp Volunteering

Summer Camp Assistant training will run from **3:30 pm to 6:45 pm on Wednesday, June 5th.**

At this training we'll go over the basics necessary for summer volunteers and have fun! It is scheduled to be after school so teen volunteers can attend.

Volunteers assist professional naturalists with the everyday operations of day camp. Most camps are four days long but there are exceptions so look carefully at dates. You do not need to commit to the whole summer. Some volunteers work just one camp. We do ask you to commit to all days of the camp you choose.

Camps range in topics from Fishing to Wizards and Laura Ingalls Wilder to Photography. There's something to interest all kids and all volunteers. Most camps run from 9:30-3:00. Camps for ages 4-6 end at noon.

NEW this year, we are teaching history-based camps at Lake Minnetonka Regional Park. If you volunteer for one of these camps, be sure to come to the correct location.

Use this sign-up to let us know what camps you are interested in volunteering for. For more information contact volunteer coordinators: Elise Bushard: Elise.Bushard@threeriversparks.org Kirk Mona: Kirk.Mona@threeriversparks.org. **This link is for current volunteers only** who have priority scheduling for volunteer sign-up. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090E4AA9AC2AAAF7-47922715-2024#/>

Volunteer Excursions & Events

We are planning ahead! Please save the date for these upcoming volunteer gatherings. All gatherings include time to eat. Bring your own bag lunch/dinner. All of these are at Lowry unless otherwise indicated.

- Spring Wildflower & Photo Walk - Thurs., May 9 - 6pm - 7:15pm
- Volunteer Potluck - Thurs., Sept. 26 - 6pm.
- Owl Banding in Carver Park - Thursday, Oct. 17, 8:30-10:30pm
Location will be announced in the fall but will be in Carver Park Reserve.

Deer Study at Carver Park Reserve

By Elise Bushard

Three Rivers Park District is cooperating with the University of Minnesota on a research project to monitor the virus, SARS-CoV-2 in white-tailed deer, their habitat use, and movement in and around Carver Park Reserve. White-tailed deer get the virus from humans and can then transmit it within the deer population. SARS-CoV-2 is the virus that can cause COVID in humans. Targeted monitoring will involve placing GPS tracking collars on deer and sampling the same deer for the virus multiple times where possible. How deer utilize the urban-suburban landscape is an understudied area of research that has important implications for the management of deer, including the reduction of negative human-deer interactions (e.g., car collisions, disease transmission). The Park District will use the information gathered by the study in its deer management program.



Forty deer were captured so biological samples could be taken and a GPS tracking collar placed on the deer. The collar will transmit the location of the deer every thirty minutes. This will allow the researchers to monitor the deer movements throughout the area. The deer were captured using a helicopter and net guns to capture them quickly and safely. A low flying helicopter was seen in and around Carver Park during the capture period. The captures were late January with recaptures occurring about 5 weeks later.

Lowry Nature Center will be provided information on the deer movements to share with park visitors later in the spring.

Maple Syruping 2024

By Kirk Mona

This newsletter is usually where we recruit volunteers to our maple syrup Sap Squad. Most years, the trees are just beginning to wake up and push sap at the beginning of March as the temperatures start to come above freezing for the first time. Obviously, the seasons had other plans this year. We started to experience the beginning of spring-like maple syrup weather at the end of January. Staff was too busy with school and public winter programs to get out and tap trees. There is also a risk to tapping too early. We didn't know if cold would quickly return a week later and stop all production.

By the time we had time to get out and start tapping, we heard that Gale Woods Farm had already processed over 200 gallons of sap. On a warm February day, staff went out and tapped 40 of the approximately 80 trees we tap here at Lowry. We fully intended to keep tapping more trees with school groups through March. As we write this, we have tapped 56 trees, collected a little over 500 gallons of sap and made about 15 gallons of syrup.

A big thanks you to volunteers Larry Kurzeka, Wayne Olson, Todd Bollig, Larry Pokorny, and the Chapple Family for helping to collect so early.

We've got a big question mark in the future. We normally expect to be boiling sap in March and have even gone as late as mid-April. But, the forecast calls for 70 degrees on Saturday which may cause the buds to pop open which will fully halt production. Back in 2012, we hit 79 degrees on St. Patrick's Day (March 17th) and it was warm enough to open all the buds and end the syrup season. Will that happen again this year? In 2012 we only made ½ gallon of bad tasting syrup. Luckily, no matter what happens this coming weekend, we're at least ahead of 2012.

As you're reading this in the future, you know more than we do!

Polar Party Event

Thank you to volunteers Becca Campbell, Tom Lemay and Wayne Olson for helping out at the Un-Polar Party this year. We had to shift at the last minute when the lake became un-safe due to warm weather but the public had a great time with our alternative activities. Approximately 200 people were able to enjoy a beautiful day at Lowry making s'mores, trying out our new GPS course, hunting for the Yeti and learning about the history of Ice Harvesting.

Free Winter Play Day

Thank you to volunteers Rodger Lubke, Dana Mangels, Anna Olson, Kathryn Carlson, and Kristina and Sydney Grossinger for helping at Winter Play Day on Saturday, February 24th! This year's unusual conditions required staff to adjust our offerings for the public, but we had fun searching for birds on an outdoor scavenger hunt, talking with a naturalist at the nature table, making s'mores, and sitting by a warm fire (indoors OR outdoors) on a sunny day. This group volunteered QUICKLY when we put out the call and all did a wonderful job supporting the event.



Edited by Elise Bushard

Spring Phenology

MARCH

- The longer, warmer days in March bring the first migratory birds back to Minnesota. Wood Ducks and Canada Geese are some of the first to arrive. Some Bald Eagles will also arrive, but others never left for the winter. Those that stay either find open water to fish, or feast on roadkill.
- Sap usually begins to flow in the Sugar Maple trees and is collected to make maple syrup. It is the buds of the Silver Maple that swell and begin to open first. The sap of the Silver Maple can also be used to make maple syrup, but it contains a lower percentage of sugar and more water, so you will need more of it to make your syrup.

APRIL

- The average ice out dates for most area lakes are at the beginning of April, but for larger lakes like Lake Minnetonka, April 13 is the average.
- Birds like Common Loons must wait until the ice is off area lakes because they need water to take off and land. Like a float plane, they cannot land dry land or ice. Their legs are so far back on their body, they tip over if they try to stand up.

MAY

- Spring woodland flowers such as Hepatica and Bloodroot can be spotted blooming in the woods of Carver Park either in late April or early May.
- Slightly later in May, the violets, Purple Phlox and Spring Beauty can be found. They are tiny but often very colorful. They are easy to miss since their bloom time is short. They have to grow up, bloom and get pollinated before they run out of sunlight as the leaves of the trees begin to block the sunlight above them.

