



Walking the Woods

Winter 2008

Calvin College Ecosystem Preserve

A Season of Change

My first experience with the Ecosystem Preserve was as a freshman at Calvin. When a friend, after finding out about my interest in ecology, took me through the preserve, all I could think about was the sound of traffic still heard at the back of the preserve. At that time, I had spent most of my life growing up in Northern Michigan where you certainly did not hear the roar of traffic as you walked through a preserve. Since then I have grown as an environmental educator and my view of the preserve has changed dramatically. The traffic is now a constant hum that reminds me how important the Ecosystem Preserve is to the animals and people that take refuge in it.

After working for several state parks, an aquarium in Georgia, and Michigan Audubon, I am excited to return to Calvin and the Preserve as the Program Manager. I certainly have some big shoes to fill. The former program manager, Cheryl Hoogewind, is an amazing educator and I am grateful to her for sharing her passion for creation with me during my college years as I led tours on the preserve. Bill Sweetman, interim Program Manager, and Andrea Voss, Program Assistant, have also transitioned to different roles since my arrival. Bill has returned to volun-

teer status after training me. He can now be found working on various woodworking projects on the Preserve, spending time with his family, and traveling across the country leading birding field trips. Also, after working for the preserve in a variety of roles for the past four years, Andrea has moved on to complete her student teaching this spring. She will be graduating in May with a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. A huge thank you to both Bill and Andrea for their guidance and support these last few months during this season of change.

Finally you may notice that this issue of *Walking the Woods* has a new look and content, thanks in part to Rita Schneider. Rita graduated this past December and her role as a program assistant has evolved into working part time for the preserve. We hope you enjoy this edition of *Walking the Woods* and invite you to come take a walk through the preserve and participate in our upcoming events. While you're here please take the time to stop by and say hello. I look forward to meeting you.

Jeanette M. Henderson, Program Manager

Upcoming Educational Programs

Mark your calendars now to attend the following programs:

- March 1 Amazing Avian Adaptations 10:00 to 11:00 am Curtis Dykstra
- April 5 Frogs & Toads of Michigan 11:00 am to 12:00 pm Lori Martin
- May 3 Native Plant Sale & Garden Tours 10:00 am to 12:00 pm Staff

For additional information and programs please visit www.calvin.edu/academic/bunker or call 616-526-7601.

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Proverbs 31:8 "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves..."

Hours

Bunker Interpretive Center

Monday—Friday 9 am to 5 pm

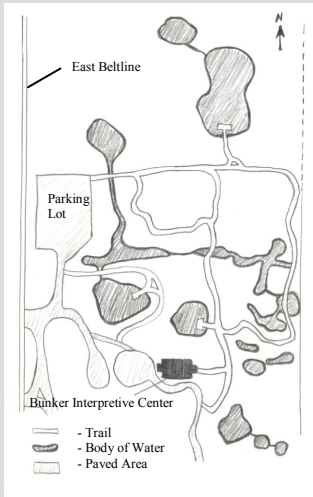
Saturday 10 am to 4 pm

Closed Sunday

Trails

Open Daily

Dawn -Dusk



Editor

Rita Schneider
Program Assistant

Design

Jeanette Henderson
Program Manager

Director

Randy Van Dragt

Calvin College
Ecosystem Preserve

1750 Beltline
Grand Rapids, MI 49546
(616) 526-7601

preserve@calvin.edu
www.calvin.edu/academic/bunker

Walking the Woods is published quarterly as an educational connection to Calvin staff and students, neighbors, volunteers, and friends who support the Calvin College Ecosystem Preserve with their involvement and care.

Critter Corner

Red-breasted Nuthatch

Scientific Name: *Sitta canadensis*

Description: 4.5 inches, black cap and eye line, white eyebrow, rust colored underparts (The White-breasted Nuthatch is slightly larger and lacks the black eye line and red breast).

Call: high-pitched, nasal call sounds like a toy tin horn

Diet: seeds from pines, spruces, firs, and other conifer trees, also insects and spiders in the spring and summer; stockpiles food in bark crevices or other dry places

At the feeder: thistle seed, sunflower seed, suet

Where to spot: tree trunks and branches, bird feeders



Red-breasted Nuthatch. © Susan Clark

Cool Facts: Nuthatches are the only tree trunk foraging birds that feed while moving down a tree, or glean insects while hanging upside-down from branches.

Small birds, like the Red-breasted Nuthatch, survive during the winter because of a process called heterothermy. They are able to lower their internal body temperature to reduce the amount of energy consumed, dropping into brief states of inactive torpor when it's very cold.

Unplugged: Connecting Children with Nature

The purpose of this new column is to provide you with some small ways you can get the children you know outdoors and enjoying God's creation.

The Great Backyard Bird Count- After spending three years working for the Michigan Audubon, I thought I would highlight one of my favorite activities to get children and adults excited about the birds in their backyard. The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is an annual four day event where participants from across the country count the birds at their feeder and in their yards. Participants then submit their counts online at www.birdsource.org/gbbc/. In real time participants can see what is being reported in their area and across the country by other participants. This data provides scientists with a greater understanding about what is happening in bird populations.

This year's GBBC is scheduled for Feb 15-18, 2008. During this time, I encourage you and your child(ren) to spend 15 to 30 minutes a day walking around your yard, local park, or the preserve counting the birds you see. Then spend some time submitting your data online and checking out the kid's page with an online field guide, quizzes, and puzzles. This simple activity develops observation, counting, and identification skills. I also find that children love the idea that they are "scientists". ~ Jeanette

For more information about the GBBC and to get started visit www.birdsource.org/gbbc/.

Becoming Green: Small Ways You Can Make a Difference

Winter's Challenge: Recycling

Do you recycle from your home?

It's an easy way to **save money** on trash, **help the economy** by providing jobs in the recycling industry, and **protect the environment** by creating less demand for new materials and space in landfills!

Residents of Grand Rapids just need to call (616) 456-3232 or go to <http://www.ci.grand-rapids.mi.us/> and type "recycling division" in the search box to find out more information on receiving their two *free* bins for curbside recycling service.

Everyone else can either contract with their private waste hauler or bring recyclables to two drop-off sites at no cost.

Rockford Recycling Center
2908 Ten Mile Rd, Rockford
Mon-Sat: 7:30am to 5pm

Kentwood Recycling Center
5068 Breton Road
Mon-Fri: 7:30am to 4pm

For more information on recycling in Kent County check out: http://www.accesskent.com/YourGovernment/PublicWorks/recycle_options.htm



Bridge to North Trail © Rita Schneider



Dark-eyed Junco in the snow. © Rita Schneider

Volunteer Opportunities

Program Leaders Needed

For those who enjoy working with children and sharing their love of the outdoors, program leaders are needed to lead elementary school groups through the preserve presenting environmental education program specifically designed for the preserve. Leaders need to be knowledgeable about Michigan flora and fauna and/or be willing to learn and able to communicate their knowledge in a professional and educational way. Prior experience teaching children preferred. Programs take place in April and May 2008 during school days from 9 am to 2:30 pm. Time commitments vary. Training provided in March. For more information please contact Jeanette Henderson, Program Manager, at 616-526-7601 or jmh46@calvin.edu.

Winter Recipe

Make your own suet to attract birds to your backyard. Common birds seen at the Preserve suet feeder include chickadees, nuthatches, and downy woodpeckers.

Bird Pudding

- 1 C crunchy peanut butter
 - 2 C quick cooking oats
 - 1 C flour
 - 1 C lard
 - 1/3 C sugar
 - Optional - dried fruits (such as raisins), peanuts, chopped pecans, sunflower seeds, etc
- Melt peanut butter and lard together.
 - Add remaining ingredients.
 - Pour into square freezer containers that are 1.5 inches thick. You can use old suet containers that have been washed, margarine containers, baker's tin foil bake cups, heavy duty aluminum foil formed to make a holding cell, small bread loaf pans lined with plastic wrap or foil, any size baking/pie pans.
 - Cool completely and cut into squares.
 - Place in suet feeders or hang in nylon mesh onion bags to feed to birds.
 - Store any extra in a cool place.

Recipe from www.backyardwildlifehabitat.info

For more good suggestions and suet recipe ideas go to <http://www.birdnature.com/suet.html>

Register Now for Wetlands & Woodlands Summer Camp 2008

A fun hands-on learning adventure for children ages 4 to 8 that encourages campers to develop a greater understanding of and appreciation for God's amazing creation.

Look what's new in 2008!

- Register for camp sessions online now at www.calvin.edu/academic/bunker/
- This year's two themes are Aquatic Adventures - Dive into Michigan's Wetlands and Michigan's Winged Wonders - Butterflies, Birds, Bats, and More.
- All camps will feature a family night. This year, each camper and their family are invited to attend a special evening program on Thursday night. Family night is designed to help the whole family develop a connection to the natural world through fun, hands-on activities related to the theme of the week.

Dates	Times	Age Group	Themes	Cost
June 16-20	9 am to 12 pm	4 & 5 year olds	Aquatic Adventures	\$85
June 23-27	9 am to 12 pm	6 - 8 year olds	Aquatic Adventures	\$85
July 7-11	9 am to 12 pm	4 & 5 year olds	Winged Wonders	\$85
July 14-18	9 am to 12 pm	6 - 8 year olds	Winged Wonders	\$85

For more information and to register please visit www.calvin.edu/academic/bunker/ or call 616-526-7601.



Grand Rapids MI 49546-5949

1750 East Bellline Ave SE

Calvin College Ecosystem Preserve and Bunker Interpretive Center

MINDS IN THE MAKING

CALVIN

