



Walking the Woods

Winter 2009

Calvin College Ecosystem Preserve

Trail Cameras Discover New Species on the Preserve

For the first time in several years, we have placed trail cameras out in the restricted area of the preserve. Our goal is to discover which species call the preserve home, how they are moving through the different habitats, what areas of the preserve they are using, and how they are using the preserve. The cameras are set along known wildlife trails in hopes of getting pictures of a wide variety of species.

It has been really fun so far and the pictures that we have been capturing on the cameras has been really cool. Most notably, we have several pictures of coyotes which have never been previously documented in the preserve. While it is hard to tell from the pictures whether or not it is the same individual coyote in each one, we are all excited about finding a new species on our preserve.



Coyote walking through the preserve

Other pictures indicate that white-tailed deer, fox squirrels, raccoons, opossums, rabbits, and fox regularly use these wildlife trails. Using these trail cameras to learn about the biotic community on our preserve has been very interesting, and I can't wait to see what we learn throughout the rest of the year.

~ Dan Engel, Restoration Intern

Upcoming Educational Programs & Events

Mark your calendars now to attend the following programs & events:

- Feb. 7 Coping with the Cold: Animals Survival Strategies 11 am to 12
- Feb 9 to 27 Winter Educational Programs for Schools
- March 7 Living with Massasauga Rattlesnakes Workshop 10 am to 12
- April 4 Camouflage: Animal Hide & Seek 9:30 to 10:30 am
- April 20 to May 20 Spring Educational Programs for Schools
- May 2 Native Plant Sale & Garden Tours 10 am to 12 pm
- June 15 to July 31 Wetlands & Woodlands Summer Camps

For additional information and registration please visit www.calvin.edu/academic/eco-preserve/ or call 616-526-7601.

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

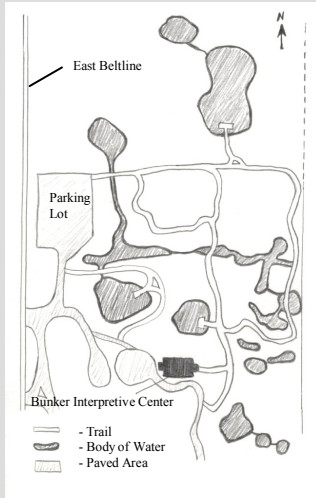
Hours

Bunker Interpretive Center

Monday—Friday 9 am to 5 pm
Saturday 10 am to 4 pm
(school year only)
Closed Sunday

Trails

Open Daily
Dawn –Dusk



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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

Coyote

Canis latrans

Coyotes are a new species to the Preserve, first caught on camera this past fall. (see the article on front page for more details). At this point we are not sure if the coyote is a resident or just passing through. Many people are quite surprised to hear that coyotes live in urban areas, this is a result of their natural habitat being developed. For some, their presence can spark fear. However, common sense practices such as never feeding these animals and keeping pets inside at night can help reduce negative interaction with the animals. For more information on reducing human and coyote interactions visit the Michigan DNR webpage and click on the wildlife section.

Size

Head & body: 32-37 inches long
Tail: 11-16 inches long
Weight: 20 to 50 lbs

Color

Gray or reddish gray with rust colored legs, feet, and ears. Throat and belly white. When running their black tipped tails are held down between hind legs.

Diet

Generalists. They will eat almost anything animal or vegetable. Mostly small rodents and rabbits.

Habitat

Open woodlands, prairies, brushy areas

Interesting Facts

- Nocturnal, but seen at all times

Unplugged: Connecting Children with Nature

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

Discovering the Magic of Snowflakes

As an adult, snow lost its magic a long time ago when I began each day having to scrape it off my car and commuting through it to work. Something that used to hold so much magic for me as a child is now an ordeal, a drudgery. I am sure my sentiments are felt by many adults. Thus, I invite you to recapture some of the magic of snow with your children during the next snow storm by capturing and examining snowflakes up close.

Do you think two snowflakes are ever alike? Wilson "Snowflake" Bentley wanted to find out the answer to this question when he was growing up in the late 1800s and early 1900s. He taught himself how to photograph snowflakes using a camera attached to a microscope. After taking thousands of photographs, he never saw two snowflakes that were identical. To discover this yourself all you need is some black paper and a simple hand lens or magnifying glass. Take the equipment outside and let it get cold. While waiting, make a snow man and snow angels together. Then catch some snowflakes on the paper and take a look at them with hands lens. The snowflakes should not melt right away because the paper is cold. Count the number of sides the snowflake has and observe the shapes. Depending on the temperature you will see different forms of snowflakes. Most snowflakes are six sided but some are three sided. After your winter fun outside, warm up with some hot chocolate or tea and make some 3-d six sided snowflakes together (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5V5uRKL_eI). I also encourage you to check out some of the resources below to discover the magic of snowflakes.

- Learn more about "Snowflake Bentley" and see some of his amazing photographs at <http://snowflakebentley.com/>
- Check out the following books at the library or stop by the BIC to read them: [Snowflake Bentley](#) by Jacqueline Briggs Martin and [The Snowflake: Winter's Secret Beauty](#) by Kenneth Libbrecht.
- Check out www.snowcrystals.com for a guide to basic snowflake shapes, photos, and other fun snowflake activities.

~ Jeanette M Henderson

Becoming Green: Small Ways You Can Make a Difference

Conserving Heat during the Winter

Winter months in Michigan seem to be never ending but there are many simple ways to conserve heat and lower your energy bills. The best way to lower your energy bills is to just use less energy, but for those of us who think we might really be cold blooded, here are some tips to convert your drafty house to cozier place.

- Seal off spaces you don't use and turn off vents in those rooms. The less space you need to heat, the more it will concentrate where you live most.
- Cover windows with plastic. This is surprisingly invisible and one of the most efficient ways to keep cold air from leaking inside. Available at most hardware stores.
- Place a towel under a drafty door.
- Watch the thermostat! Heating the house is the largest contributor to high energy bills so instead of bumping the temperature up a few degrees, slip on a sweater

and some socks.

- Reduce the thermostat at night. Many people sleep better in a slightly colder room so save some money while you sleep and throw on a few more covers.
- The sun is closest to the earth in the winter months so take advantage of that energy! Open drapes and shades of south facing windows and passively heat the house during the day. This will also reduce the amount of electricity needed for lights.
- When the sun is not out, invest in some heavy drapes or shades to create an extra wall to stop the cold air.
- A nice warm drink will do wonders to a cold body!

Pick a Hot Chocolate!

- Coffee lovers: put some hot chocolate in a cup of coffee in stead of a cup of water.
- Kids: Make hot chocolate and add a little peanut butter for a hot, Reese's peanut butter cup.
- Christmas: Add some crushed candy canes to the top of your cocoa for a minty Christmas drink.

Cohen, Zolton. "How to Conserve Energy at Home." 16 May 2006. HowStuffWorks.com. <<http://home.howstuffworks.com/how-to-conserve-energy-at-home.htm>> 02 December 2008.



Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers are needed to...

- Create interpretive displays
- Assist with summer camps
- Plant native species
- Maintain trails
- Assist with invasive species control
- Lead interpretive programs
- Monitor species
- Assist with special events such as the Native Plant Sale
- Help coordinate volunteers

For more information on how your gifts and talents may contribute to the mission of the preserve, please contact Jeanette Henderson, Program Manager, at 616-526-7601 or via email at preserve@calvin.edu.

Meet a Preserve Worker

Dan Engel
Restoration Intern

Dan is a senior biology major at Calvin who enjoys hiking, camping, fishing, and hunting.

He is currently the restoration intern on the Ecosystem Preserve, mainly working with native plants, removing invasive species and monitoring animal movement with trail cameras (see front page article).

The successional fields in the research section of the preserve are his favorite place to work and explore. In the winter at last year, a fox was strolling along the Prince Retention Pond during a heavy snowfall and came within yards of Dan. He values these small glimpses of nature that are typically hidden to our everyday lives.



Wetlands & Woodlands Summer Camp 2009

A fun hands-on learning adventure for children ages 4 to 12 that encourages campers to develop a greater understanding of and appreciation for God's amazing creation.

Look what's new in 2009!

- You asked for it and we made it happen. This summer we will be offering the Jr. Naturalists camp for 9 to 12 year olds. Each day, camp participants will learn about a different field of science such as entomology, botany, mammalogy etc. Campers will conduct experiments, participate in preserve research, and meet scientists who work in the fields. Space is limited so register early.
- Family night was a success last year so once again campers and their families are invited to attend a special evening program on Thursday nights for Session 1 through 4. 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.
- In order to avoid tiring out our young campers, the 4 & 5 year old camps will run from Monday to Thursday and will end with Family night on Thursday evening.
- Again we will be using online registration only and this year you have the option to use your credit card.

	Dates	Times	Age Group	Themes	Cost
Session 1	June 15-18	9 am to 12 pm	4 & 5 year olds	Creepy Crawlies	\$80
Session 2	June 22-26	9 am to 12 pm	6 - 8 year olds	Creepy Crawlies	\$85
Session 3	July 6-9	9 am to 12 pm	4 & 5 year olds	Blooms & Bugs	\$80
Session 4	July 13-17	9 am to 12 pm	6 - 8 year olds	Blooms & Bugs	\$85
Session 5	July 27- 31	9 am to 3 pm	9 -12 year olds	Jr. Naturalists Camp	\$125

For more information and to register online please visit www.calvin.edu/academic/eco-preserve/programs/camp.html.



Please help us save some trees. We are starting to email the newsletter via pdf. If you would like to receive it by email before everyone else receives it in the mail email us at preserve@calvin.edu with your name and email address.

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