

Fall 2026

TheParkNextDoor

magazine



A Grateful Season

LOOK INSIDE FOR:

FALL LEAF IDEAS, FAMILY FRIENDLY AUTUMN WALKS, HALLOWEEN FUN IN THE STATE PARKS, NATURE JOURNALING, AUTUMN READS, NOVEMBER HIKE IDEAS, & MORE!



Greetings, Everyone ~

Well, sweater weather has arrived, but it's still pretty mild. There was a threat of frost a week ago, so I harvested as many blooms as I could from my garden. I gave away several bouquets, and then the frost took it easy on us. There's at least another week of milder weather coming, and more blooms happening. Call me grateful.

The autumn colors in the Milwaukee area are still changing. Other parts of the state have seen colors peak, but there is still plenty of leaf-peeping to enjoy. Take advantage of the mild weather, grab the kids, or a friend, and head out on one of *15 Family Friendly Autumn Walks*.

Halloween is still on the horizon. If you don't have plans already, check out some of the offerings in *Spooky Fun!* Many of our state parks have family friendly events. Downtown Milwaukee has festivities for the whole family going on until November 1.

Life can be stressful. This year certainly has been. As always, being in nature helps. But so can nature journaling. If you've never tried it, *Make It Personal* can get you started. It definitely has helped to keep me focused during chaotic times.

Our spotlight park this month is *Carver-Roehl Park in Rock County*. It's one of my favorites, lovely in all seasons.

I've been indulging in some fall romance reads this year. I've included a couple of them in our fall round-up of titles in *Cozy Up With A Good Autumn Read*. Of course, there are other genres as well.

I can never resist an autumn walk at *Forest Exploration Center*. I co-hosted a walk in early October. *Secrets Of The Autumn Woods* will tell you a bit about it. Golden colors should peak there soon. Don't miss it!

October and November are prime photo opportunities. Grab your phone and capture some special memories. *Capturing Autumn With Your Smartphone* has tips and locations to explore.

I'm looking forward to the quiet of November and exploring the muted colors along the trails. *In A November Mood* has several location suggestions for unwinding on a moody day.

If you still have energy to spare, we have a list of festivities, and feel-good ideas for *Things To Do In November*. And even more options in *Find More Fall*.

As we head towards the Thanksgiving holiday, I find myself feeling so grateful for loved ones I nearly lost this year. Grateful they are still here. Grateful for friends and family, and the beauty of nature right outside my door.

If you're new to [TheParkNextDoor Magazine](#), please know all back issues are linked on the website. They are free, and can be downloaded to your devices, if you wish. There are plenty of features in previous issues that are still relevant. Feel free to share as well.

If you're looking for a new park, nature preserve or trail to *#OptOutside*, check out the [website](#) for more than 300 options.

Here's wishing you the best of autumn. With gratitude,

Kimberly



A traveler, singer, novice photographer, humane gardener, and nature lover. Documenting and sharing the beauty that is Wisconsin since 2014.

Cover photo taken at Schoen-Laufen Park, Germantown, with thanks to my sister's hands. © theparknextdoor@outlook.com

What's Inside

Autumn has finally settled in. Here in the Milwaukee area there are still plenty of leaves on the trees. Even some green yet! But the **Leaves Are Falling**. If you aren't sure whether or not you should rake them or leave them, here's a bit of information to help guide you. It doesn't have to be an all or nothing endeavor.

Fall has been pretty mild so far. Take advantage of it, and get out with the family and enjoy **15 Family Friendly Autumn Walks**. Easy nature trails, and kids playgyms are a perfect combo.

Here comes Halloween! There are fun events in Wisconsin State Parks, and other local outdoor events as well. **Spooky Fun!** will clue you in.

If you've been considering nature journaling, we've got some tips to get you started. **Starting A Nature Journal - Make It Personal** will introduce you.

Located in Clinton, in Rock County, is our spotlight park: **Carver-Roehl County Park**. A gorgeous park to hike and wander in all seasons.

Embrace the autumn chill and unwind indoors where you can **Cozy Up With A Good Autumn Read**. We've got six titles to intrigue you.

Early in October, *Forest Exploration Center* offered a fall group hike. **Secrets Of The Autumn Woods** takes you along with the group, and encourages you to get out on the forest trail, too.

Don't have fancy camera gear? If you have a cellphone, you have a camera with you no matter where you go. **Capturing Autumn With Your Smartphone** has photo and location ideas that will have you capturing autumn inspired memories in no time.

Don't jump straight into the holiday season. **In A November Mood** has some autumn hikes that will help you ease into them by enjoying the quiet beauty of November.

If you're looking for something a little different, we've got a list of unique outdoor events, festivals, and feel-good activities to try in **Things To Do In November**.

Want more fall? Check out our list with links to online features and keep the season going. **Find More Fall** should help.



If you're new to the magazine, check out **All Back Issues Available** and keep exploring Wisconsin.

4 Leaves Are Falling
6 15 Family Friendly Autumn Walks
8 Spooky Fun!
10 Make It Personal
12 Spotlight On Carver-Roehl County Park
14 Cozy Up With A Good Autumn Read
16 Secrets Of The Autumn Woods
20 Capture Autumn With Your Smartphone

22 In A November Mood
24 Things To Do In November
26 Find More Fall
27 All Back Issues Available
28 #OptOutside
29 Art For Your Walls & Support The Park
Next Door & It's Purpose



Leaves Are Falling

The robust colors of autumn leaves blanketing our lawns begs the question: *To rake or not to rake?* Turns out, there are a multitude of benefits to leaving fallen leaves to do their thing.

Fallen leaves actually provide shelter, food, and nesting material for a large variety of wildlife in our yards. Everything from beetles to butterflies, caterpillars to chipmunks, fireflies to finches, rabbits to robins, and more, rely on the fallen leaves to help them survive the winter months.

Beyond that, as the leaves breakdown, they add nutrients to the lawn and the soil in your garden. They can also help protect the roots of perennial plants and shrubs that might be vulnerable to freezing temperatures.



Common animals like chipmunks and squirrels use leaves to line their nests and burrows to keep them warm and shelter them from freezing temperatures. Ground foraging birds sift through the leaves for food like insects and insect larvae. Birds use leaves in their nests and shelters as well. Bumblebees and fireflies shelter beneath the leaves through winter. Want fireflies to glow up your yard next summer? Leave the leaves.



Squirrels not only eat the acorns and pine cones that fall from trees, but use the fallen leaves to build and line their nests (called dreys).

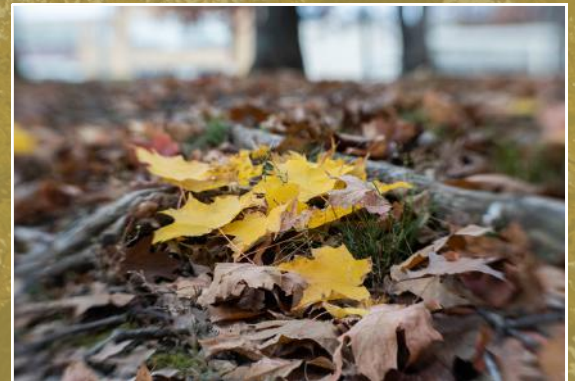
Many municipalities do compost leaves, or use third-party contractors to compost the leaves collected. But if leaves are bagged, they end up in a landfill where all the benefits not only go to waste, but they actually create greater harm. Since they cannot breakdown organically, they breakdown in a way that releases methane gas into the atmosphere.



Just as leaving native plant seed heads in the garden provides food for songbirds, insects, and other wildlife through fall and winter months, the stems and stalks of the plants provide shelter and nesting space for a variety of pollinators through the cold season. Feel a need to tidy up? Remove the messiest bits and leave the rest until spring. Rake in some of the leaves to surround the plant beds and define the border as well.



There is something satisfying about standing among the fallen leaves. Something nostalgic. The smell, the sounds of them crunching underfoot, the cool autumn air. We can still enjoy that feeling. Our yards, our gardens and wildlife, can enjoy it, too. For them the leaves are survival. In the long run, they are part of our survival, too.



In our yard we rake the leaves along the curb strip for municipal composting, rake a large amount into our garden beds, we mow and mulch some in place, and we compost some in a designated leaf compost pile in a corner of our backyard. I'll even spread some over our raised bed planters to break down into the soil, and blend it in come spring.

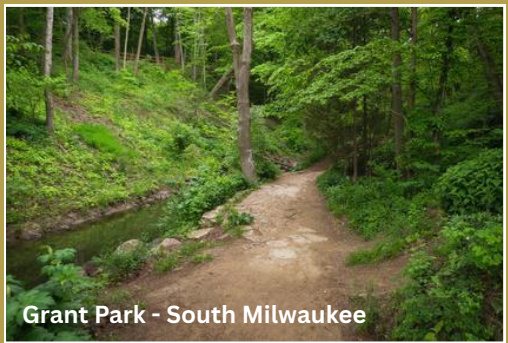
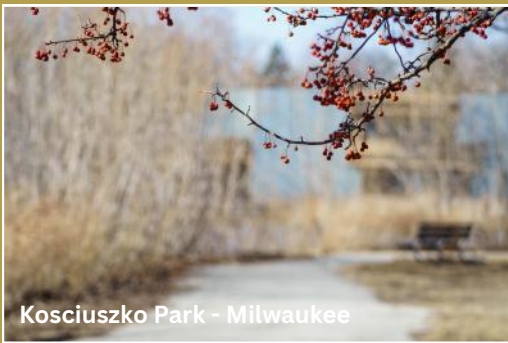
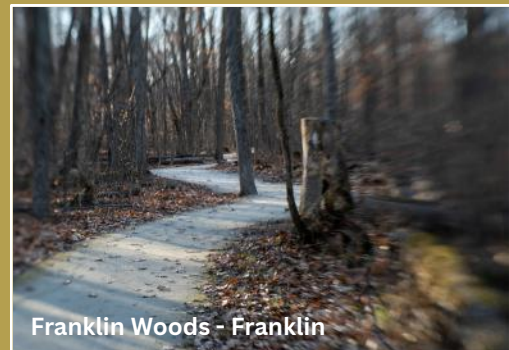
Depending on the volume of leaves in your yard, one or all of these options can work. If you don't get a lot of leaves, consider mulching them as you mow, or moving them to a flower bed. The benefits are worth it. As the seasons move on, they will break down and build better soil. All the better for spring gardening.

For more information, visit the Homegrown National Park [website](#).

15 Family Friendly Autumn Walks



Head out on a fall nature walk with the whole family. Wander among the leaves over simple trails, and burn off some of that kid-sized energy at the park playground, too. Here we present a selection of 15 local parks with autumn vibes to spare.





SPOOKY FUN! In Wisconsin State Parks

Enjoy the spooky season by spending some time in nature. There are a roster of events planned at parks throughout the state.



Celebrate Halloween in Wisconsin State Parks

Horicon Marsh
Palmatory Picnic Center -
South Parking Lot

Family Friendly Event

Hike-or-Treat

Friday, October 30
5pm - 8pm

Event address is
1296 Palmatory St., Horicon

Kettle Moraine State
Forest - Northern Unit

Family Friendly Event

Nature Adventures -
Spooktacular

Saturday, October 31
11am - 1pm

State Park Sticker Required

Newport State Park

Family Friendly Event

Halloween Nature Hike



Thursday, October 29
10am - 11:30am

Meet at Lot 2

State Park Sticker Required

Lakeshore State Park

Family Friendly Event

Spiders & Other
Creepy Crawlers



Saturday, October 31
10am - 11am

State Park Sticker Required

Crex Meadows
Wildlife Area

Family Friendly Event

Howl-O-Ween Event

Friday, October 30
5pm - 8pm

State Park Sticker Required

Devil's Lake State Park

Family Friendly Event

Halloween Nature
Trivia Walk

Saturday, October 31
10:30am - 2:30pm

State Park Sticker Required



Halloween Village **Downtown MKE**

Family Friendly Event

Baird Community Commons
400 W. Wisconsin Ave.

Open Daily thru Nov. 1
Free To All

Featuring Halloween
Displays, Festive Light
Displays and more.

Lakeshore State Park

Family Friendly Event

Fall Candlelight Walk



Saturday, November 7
5pm-7pm

State Park Sticker Required

Kettle Moraine State Forest - Southern Unit

Family Friendly Event

Night Hike

Sunday, November 8
6pm - 8pm

State Park Sticker Required

Newport State Park

Family Friendly Event

Wings Of The Night: Celebrating Bat Week



Friday, October 30
10am - 11am

State Park Sticker Required

Check Out These Other Seasonal Events

Candlelight Halloween Hike



Tickets: \$10

Family Friendly Event

Friday, October 30
6:30pm - 9pm

Pringle Nature Center
9800 160th Ave.,
Bristol

Pre-registration Required

Haunted Mini Golf

at Henry Maier Festival Park

October 22-25 & 29-31



9-hole Haunted Mini Golf for Adults & Kids (PG-13)

Tickets: \$20/adult, \$15/kid - Reservations Recommended

Boo! At The Barn

Presented by: *Buechler Farms*

October 31, 2026
7pm - 10:30pm

Adults
Only

\$10 at the door

Doors Open 6:30pm

Buechler Farms
587 S. Royal Ave., Belgium

Heated Barn
Live Music
Cash Bar / Snacks
Costume Contest



Starting A Nature Journal

Make It Personal



I love a new notebook. There's just something so inviting about a book of blank paper waiting to be filled with thoughts and lists and dreams. With observations and stories, sketches and scraps, memories and hopes, goals and gratitude, passions and parables. It is yours to do with what you wish.

That said, it can be a bit intimidating to get started. Focusing on a particular subject can help. Documenting time spent in nature is a great place to start a journaling practice. If you love spending time outdoors, it's a perfect fit. If you're trying to connect with the natural world more, it can be a worthwhile way to do so.

There are no hard and fast rules for nature journaling. There's no wrong way. Just a way that works for you. I like to keep a small journal in the car in case I see something interesting in my day to day travels. A quick stop at a favorite park for a few minutes of peace and fresh air might include bird sightings, flowers blooming, or trigger a memory worth jotting down.

Always on the lookout for a new place to hike or bike? A list of potential nature walks will be appreciated, especially when you're undecided. The tried and true favorites are always good, but discovering a new woodland or fishing spot keeps things interesting.



Find a journal size and style that works for you. A pocket-sized version is easy to take with you. Use it as is, or customize a blank style with your own cover. Scrapbooking paper is a fun way to add your own personal touch.

You can even order a personalized notebook from a photo print supplier using your own photos. (These make great gifts, too.)

Lined paper or blank? I'm not good at drawing, so I lean towards lined notebooks. But if adding sketches to your entries, fully blank pages might be best. Make sure the paper is heavy enough for sketching/drawing on.

Taking a special trip or heading out on a new adventure? A small journal specifically for that experience can be helpful. You can make notes about what you plan to do or see. Make a list of what you should pack, etc. Then use it during your travels to document your journey, and have a travel diary to refer to when you return home, and memories to reflect on for years to come. Most of us already photo journal with our smartphones. Using a physical journal to jot down written observations and details rounds out the experience. You can even add printed photos to your written journal.





The act of nature journaling reduces stress and anxiety. Taking even just a few minutes out in a calm, natural environment, can help us to slow down. Breathe a little easier. Take a little time and listen to what's going on around you. Close your eyes. What do you hear? Open your eyes, observe the scene. What is the season? What's in bloom? What's chirping? What's fading? Is there a breeze? What colors do you see?

Reducing stress and boosting our mood when things get too hectic is good for our overall health. And it can make the rest of your day go a little smoother as well.

One of the unique things a physical notebook does, is to direct our attention away from our ever-present phones. Away from the doom-scrolling and distractions. And the act connects us to our natural environment in a way that heightens our senses.

That said, if you're out and about without a physical notebook, take advantage of the notes app on your phone. You can always transfer the notes to your journal later.

If you're new to journaling, know it takes time to develop the habit. Fit it in where it works best for you. While on the trail and observing. At a specific time of day where you can relax and reflect. It's an activity meant to be enjoyed, not to add stress.

Warm Day, early spring

Wednesday, March 25, 2026 6:31 PM

Chipmunk visiting
Shy squirrels looking for peanuts
Robins in the birdbath
Cardinal in the birdbath
Lots of Juncos stocking up for migration
Spotted first fox sparrow scratching through leaves for bugs
Bun bun!
Robin up in tree preening after it's bath

Crows are busy gathering sticks from our trees. They'll be back with their babies come June. They leave them under the big spruce trees by the birdbath while they scavenge food for them. They are safe there.



Be as artful as you want to be. Customize your plain notebook, purchase a design that speaks to you at your local book store, art store, or thrift store. There are lots of online sources as well. Whatever catches your eye and fits your budget. It shouldn't have to be expensive.

You'll need a pencil or pen. Whatever you prefer to write with. Beyond that, you might want to use colored pencils for sketching and drawing. It's up to you.

Stickers and photos, momentos, pressed leaves or flowers, are all fun elements to add if you so choose.

The act of nature journaling is a great way to learn more about the world around you, the wilderness and wildlife in it, and to learn a bit more about yourself, as well. It can inspire. It can take you out of yourself. It can help to heal the soul, and connect you to others who enjoy nature, too. Once you fill that first notebook, you're gonna want more.



Carver-Roehl Park is 53 acres of scenic lush green in Rock County. The sometimes steep hiking trail is about 1.5 miles along the Spring Brook Creek. It's gorgeous! A portion of the park is also a designated Wisconsin State Natural Area. Restroom facilities, a pavilion, picnic tables and grills are also available in the north picnic area.

In fall 2017 we made the trek to Carver-Roehl for a hike in fall color. Carver-Roehl did not disappoint. The following winter we made another visit. Even more beauty!





The hiking trail is open to cross-country skiing in winter. Note, trails are not groomed. It is recommended not to go off trail due to the steep topography of the area. Click [here](#) for a link to the park map.

Special interactive seasonal scavenger-hunts are held along the trails during the year. Example: find all the hearts on display for Valentine's day. A great way to entertain the kids along the trail.



Parking is available along the looped interior road, during summer months. In winter, parking is permitted only at the driveway entrance gate, with walk-in access.

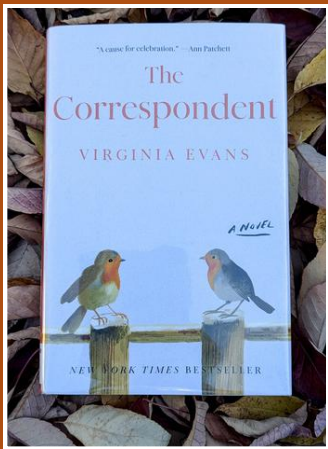
Location: 4907 Carvers Rock Road, Clinton, WI (Rock County)
Hours: Daily, Dawn to Dusk

For more information, [click here](#) and [here](#).





Autumn is a season for reflection, for gratitude, for care and kindness. And an opportunity to escape into a good book. Whether it's a title that has been on your to be read pile for a while, or something new, there's no guilt in curling up with the written word. Pour a cup of your favorite fall beverage, and settle in. Here, a mix of fall romance, reflections of a life, the love of birds of the Pacific Northwest, and essays of wonder and a life lived, though not long enough.



The Correspondent

Author: Virginia Evans

Published 2025 by Crown Publishing

There are plenty of stories and memoirs that are told through correspondence between the main characters. The Correspondent takes that a step further.

Meet Sybil. A retired lawyer in her early 70's, who takes letter writing seriously. Her story is told in correspondence to a wide array of recipients. Her brother, a young pen pal, old friends, strangers, writers she enjoys reading. And it is through this correspondence we grow to know her, including one letter she keeps writing, but hasn't been able to bring herself to send.

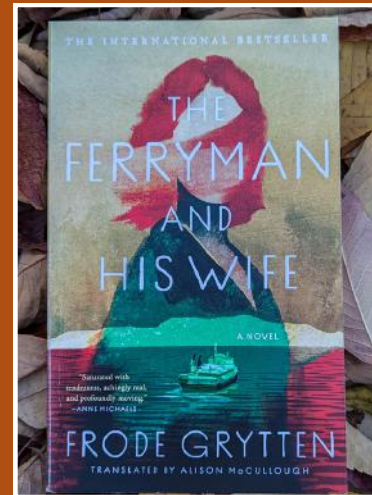
The Ferryman And His Wife

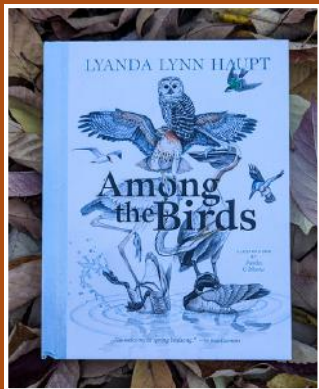
Author: Frode Grytten

Published 2025 by Algonquin Books

Nils Vik is a Norwegian ferryman of a certain age. A widower. One November morning he wakes with the knowledge that this will be his last day on earth. No big drama, no fatal disease. Just a knowing. And so he goes on with his morning - get dressed, coffee, breakfast, and heads to his ferry to start his day on the fjord.

Does our life flash before our eyes as we die? Nils Vik is about to encounter a lifetime of ferry trips, loves, friendships, and experiences that have brought him to this day. To a reunion he has long been waiting for.





Among The Birds

Author: Lyanda Lynn Haupt
Published 2026 by Skipstone

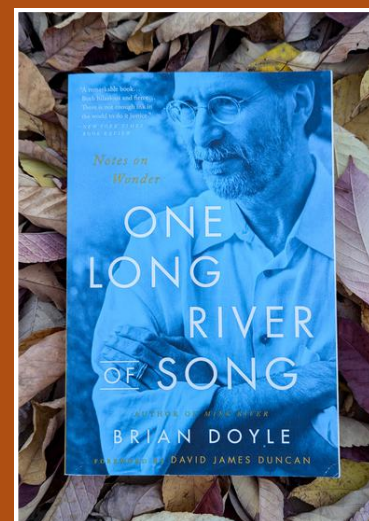
Lyanda Lynn Haupt is one of my favorite nature writers. I appreciate the way she blends her personal experiences with birds and other wildlife into a story. *Among The Birds* focuses on birds of the Pacific Northwest. Along with gorgeous illustrations by Justin Gibbens, Haupt writes of her observations and interactions with over 70 birds from the region. Her affection for these creatures is filled with humor, wonder and care.

One Long River Of Song: Notes On Wonder

Author: Brian Doyle

Published 2020 by Back Bay Books

I love a book of essays. Short, thoughtful, heartfelt, honest. Brian Doyle is a master of the essay. Before his untimely death at age 60, he published fiction, poetry, and nonfiction, including several collections of essays. Some of his best friends gathered his essays and poems into this collection. From the very first one, *Joyas Voladoras*, I was enamored. It didn't hurt that it was about hummingbirds. I love hummingbirds. There is so much beauty in this compilation. The wonder of being, the mystery of life and death, joy and tragedy, are all here in these essays. I think they will resonate with me for a long time to come.



Falling Like Leaves

Author: Misty Wilson

Published 2025 by Simon And Schuster

This young adult autumn romance tells the story of an ambitious New York City high school senior who must adapt to life in a small Connecticut town. Being a cozy town in a New England state, fall is big business, and just about everyone in town gets involved. But, Ellis, our NYC teen, would rather be back in Manhattan than leaf-peeping with the locals.

But, as the calendar ticks on, and the leaves continue to fall, she starts to enjoy herself. And, maybe, just maybe, she might also be falling for one of the popular locals.

If It Makes You Happy

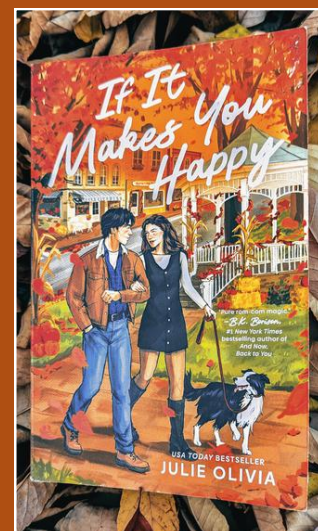
Author: Julie Olivia

Published 2025 by Berkley

If you're a fan of 90's rom-com films, you'll wax nostalgic for *If It Makes You Happy*, an adult friends-to-lovers type story. Set in the fall of 1997, pre-cellphones and social media, it tells the story of Michelle, an advertising executive (of course), who short-term takes over running her mother's Vermont bed and breakfast.

This small, cozy New England town is heading into its busiest season, but running a B&B isn't as easy as Michelle thinks it should be. Fortunately, Cliff, the local baker, and handsome divorced neighbor, is willing to help her figure it out.

A little spicy, with humor and 30-something angst, it's a fun seasonal read.





Secrets Of The Autumn Woods

A Guided October Walk Through The Forest Exploration Center

On Sunday, October 4, a brisk sunny morning, we gathered at the Forest Exploration Center to take a hike through the woods in search of secrets. Secrets of the autumn woods. Secrets found among the fallen leaves, decaying trees, and dappled daylight.

With the guidance of naturalist Danielle Pahlisch, along with myself and FEC Director of Communications, Emily Glaser, we took to the trail. Fall is prime time for fungi. Along the path we discovered different kinds of moss, and a wide variety of fungi growing up through the dirt, at the base of trees and upon fallen logs.

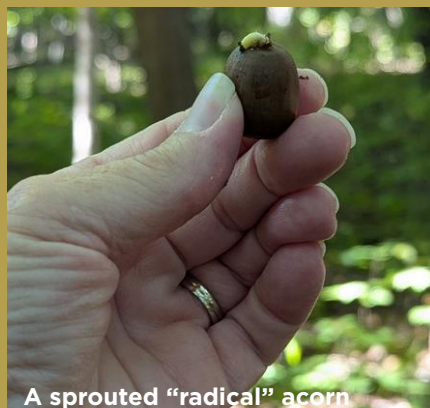


Introductions prior to the walk.



Danielle highlights some of the educational kiosks along the trail.

Acorns covered the trail, and Danielle pointed out the different types - red oak and white oak, for example. Did you know that an acorn that has sprouted is called a “radical”? Between every 4 to 10 years, an oak may have a “mast year”. This results in an increased yield of acorns from five to ten times the normal annual yield. More food for squirrels and chipmunks, and even more for planting and growing new trees.



A sprouted “radical” acorn

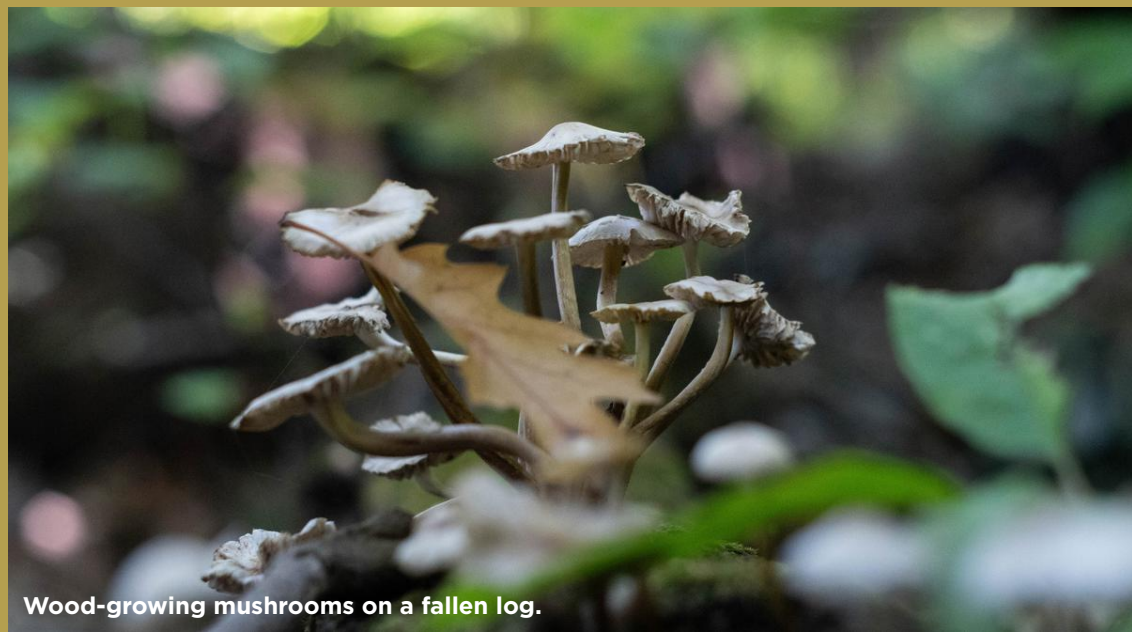


Bracket Fungi on a tree stump.

As we continued on, hikers stopped to get a closer look, taking photos of the acorns and the varieties of fungi.



Bracket (Shelf) fungi grows on trees.



Wood-growing mushrooms on a fallen log.

Curiosity is encouraged along the trails. What do you see that captures your attention? An interesting burr on a tree? A strange looking mushroom? Birds flitting from tree to tree? There are educational signs along the trails that cover everything from fungus, invasive trees and plants, birds native to the woods, native flowers and plants, native trees, and careers in forestry just to name a few. Many thanks to everyone who joined us, and brought their curiosity and love of nature along.



Tall trees tell stories.



Uncovering secrets of the forest.



Checking out trail signage.



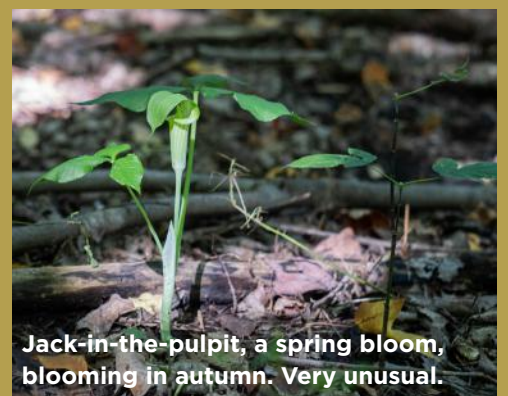
In search of unique mushroom photos.



The trail invites...



The 2026 "All That Trees Provide" trail art exhibit will be on display through fall.



Jack-in-the-pulpit, a spring bloom, blooming in autumn. Very unusual.



Admiring a handsome stick.



Dappled sunlight on the trail.



Bonestem fungus.



Part of the trail art exhibit.



As chlorophyll breaks down in the leaves, the pigments change, turning from green to orange, gold, and red.



Acorns and moss along the forest floor.



Discussing invasives like buckthorn.

Coming Up November 1
**Buckthorn Removal
& Lessons in Forestry**
Sunday, November 1,
10:00 a.m. to noon

Forest Exploration Center
1800 Forest Exploration Drive
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, 53226

It's fall: Time to cut back, remove, and treat buckthorn along the FEC trails and entrances. But this is no ordinary stewardship day! *Stewards will learn about the crucial role of forestry in Wisconsin's history, what it's like to work as a forester or a naturalist, and how you can use some of these invasives management tactics in your own backyard.*

Find Out More Here



Capturing Autumn *With Your Smartphone*



Autumn is golden at Lizard Mound State Park.

Take a walk with your smartphone and capture the beauty of fall with the camera you always have with you. Document what autumn means to you and yours.

Zoom in, get down low, snap some of the proverbial seasonal shots: a single leaf in hand, shoes on a trail, a bouquet of different colored fallen leaves. Then step back and take in the whole landscape. Picture perfect!

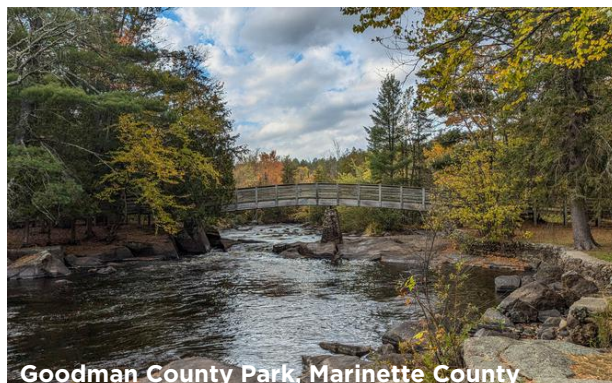
Note: All of these photos were taken with a smartphone camera, right here in Wisconsin.



Seasonal art on a rock at Jacobus Park, Wauwatosa.



A tranquil view at Ridge Run Park, West Bend.



Goodman County Park, Marinette County





Greenfield Park, West Allis



Mary Knoll Park, Brookfield.



Along the lagoon at Greenfield Park.

In A November Mood

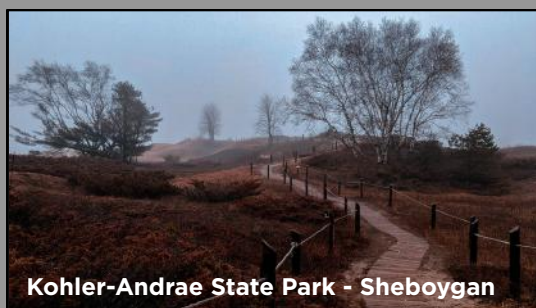
Autumn comes and goes so quickly. Before rushing straight into the holiday season, let yourself ease up and enjoy some quiet moments in nature. There's a muted moodiness to November. The peak colors are fading, but beauty along the trails remains. Look for pops of color in berries hanging on branches, textures in the seed heads of faded blooms, and a hint of fog rising and hovering over the landscape. Here's a quick selection of walks to consider.



Seminary Woods - St. Francis



Potawatomi State Park - Sturgeon Bay



Kohler-Andrae State Park - Sheboygan



Garman Nature Preserve - Waterloo



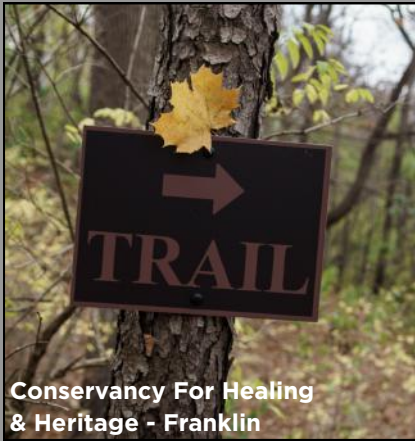
Jacobus Park - Wauwatosa



McCarty Park - West Allis



Pavcek Preserve - Hartford



Conservancy For Healing
& Heritage - Franklin



Grootemaat Nature Preserve - Greenfield



Scuppernong Springs Nature Trail - Eagle



Forest Home Cemetery
- Milwaukee



Sheboygan
Indian Mound Park
- Sheboygan

Things To Do In November



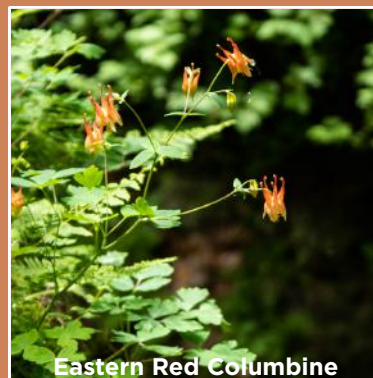
FALL BACK

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME ENDS
Sunday, November 1 - 2am

Winter Sow Some Wildflower Seeds

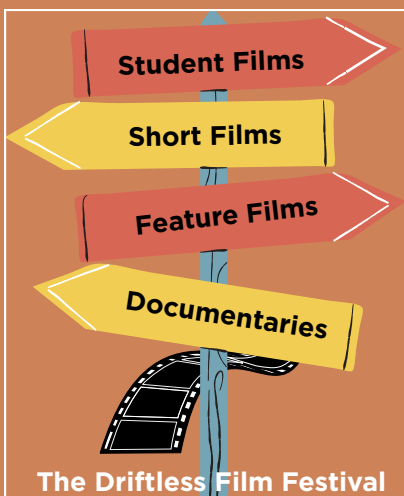


The clock may be falling back an hour, but don't lose sight of spring. It may seem a lifetime away at this point, but it will come. You can look forward to spring wildflowers blooming by sowing some seeds in the garden in November. Native plants such as Eastern Red Columbine, Echinacea (purple coneflower), Black-eyed Susan, Lupine, California Poppy, Blazing Star, Blanket Flower, and Butterfly Weed, all benefit from winter sowing. Pick a sunny spot, loosen the soil a bit, sow some seeds and tamp them in. Come spring you'll have new blooms rising.



Eastern Red Columbine

Go Driftless



Head west and take in some of the season's remaining fall color. The Driftless Area of Wisconsin is gorgeous in autumn. Embrace your artful interests, too.

The Driftless Film Festival takes place in Mineral Point from November 4-8. An entire roster of unique films will be available for screening. Check out their website for more details, and to order tickets.

A unique art garden in Wisconsin! Nick Engelbert's Grandview is located among rolling hills just outside of Hollandale. A whimsical array of embellished concrete sculptures will capture your imagination.



Nick Engelbert's
Grandview - Hollandale

WOODLAND DUNES NATURE CENTER & PRESERVE

FALL STAR PARTY - Saturday, November 7, 7pm-8pm

View night sky constellations with astronomers Al and Ben, along with the moon and other celestial objects through the big telescope in the Sky Shed. Weather and sky conditions permitting. Program takes place outside the Nature Center.

Registration required by the Thursday before each session. Sponsored by The Winston Group. To register, email jessicaj@woodlanddunes.org or call 920-793-4007.

Location: 3000 Hawthorne Avenue, Two Rivers



RIVEREDGE NATURE CENTER - OPEN HOUSE

Free Trail Access!! **November 14, Dawn to Dusk**

Free Trails Day is an open community day where we waive the Riveredge trail fees entirely. Come hike for free with 10 miles of trails to choose from! Feel free to stop in at the Visitor Center to learn about Riveredge and the different sights you can see, or head out on your own! Just don't forget to grab a trail map from the trailhead kiosk or download a [digital Riveredge map here](#). Trails are open dawn to dusk every day.

Want to learn more about Riveredge history, membership benefits, and some of our favorite spots? [Join the free Welcome Hike at 11:00 am](#).

All ages welcome. Free for everyone! No registration required.



GIVE THE GIFT OF LIFE - DONATE BLOOD

Donating blood saves lives year-round. But there are often crucial shortages during the holiday and winter season. It may seem intimidating, but your local blood donation centers are pros at this. You'll do some good, and you'll leave knowing you've given the gift of life to someone in need.

Got a little free time? Contact your local blood donation center to schedule an appointment, or join a blood drive in your area. Contact [Versiti](#) or [American Red Cross](#) for more details.

Wild Ones - Milwaukee Southwest - Wehr

Chapter Meeting - November 14

1pm - 3pm at Wehr Nature Center Free Event

Want to learn more about the benefits of native plants, trees, and oak ecosystems? Join in the Wild Ones November Chapter meeting for a presentation by Emily Helm, Conservation Biologist for the Waukesha County Parks system.

Wehr Nature Center, 9701 W College Ave, Franklin, WI, 53132



Beaks & Talons Program at Elm Grove Public Library

Saturday, November 14, 2026 | 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

13600 Juneau Boulevard, Elm Grove

The Elm Grove Beautification Committee presents the 2026 Birding Festival! As part of this celebration, join us at the [Elm Grove Public Library](#) for an engaging program about raptors. A hawk, falcon, and owl from [Schlitz Audubon's Raptor Program](#) highlight the tools raptors use to be successful predators of the sky. Participants are encouraged to compare and contrast species to discover the unique adaptations of each family.

Live birds provide a memorable beak-to-nose experience, and artifacts allow for additional hands-on interpretation and exploration.

This all-ages program is **FREE**, no registration required.

FIND MORE FALL

Keep the autumn explorations going with more local adventures from our online special features.



FABULOUS IN FALL

No matter where you roam throughout Wisconsin in fall, autumn color delights. Break out your cool weather sweaters, stop for some fresh apple cider donuts, a cozy warm beverage, and get out to your local parks and preserves and take in the sights and smells of autumn in Wisconsin. Here are 50 great Wisconsin spots that are *Fabulous In Fall*.

BEAUTY ON THE ESCARPMENT

The Niagara Escarpment, is a wide swath of ancient and natural rock formations that run northeast 230 miles through Wisconsin, beginning in the Southern Kettle Moraine Forest, and up through Door County. It then travels on through Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and extends east, through part of Canada, and all the way to Niagara Falls (yes, that Niagara Falls).

EXPLORING DOOR COUNTY

One of the most popular tourist destinations in Wisconsin is Door County. My first trip to The Door was on a rainy early November weekend in 2022. Though it rained most of the time I was there, I was able to get out and enjoy some of the area's spectacular beauty. I returned again in early June, 2023, to enjoy more of it heading into summer. Both seasons are worthy of the trip. Here you'll find a quick guide to exploring the Door.

HIKING SAFELY DURING HUNTING SEASON - 2026

Wisconsin has such a wide array of wonderful natural spaces, there is plenty for hunters and non-hunters alike. If your usual hiking spot is hosting hunters during the fall, take the opportunity to try somewhere new. And don't forget to check the [Wisconsin Fall Color Report](#) to see where the colors are peaking in your area. Here you'll find a list of over 100 spots to get out in nature safely during hunting season.

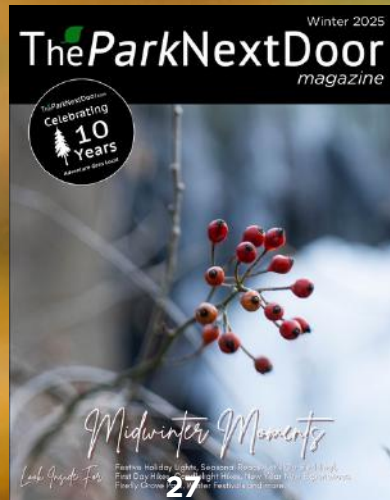
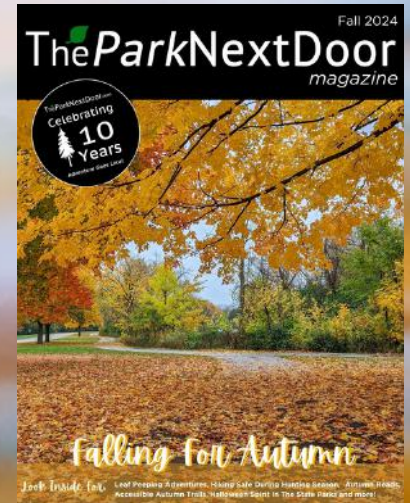
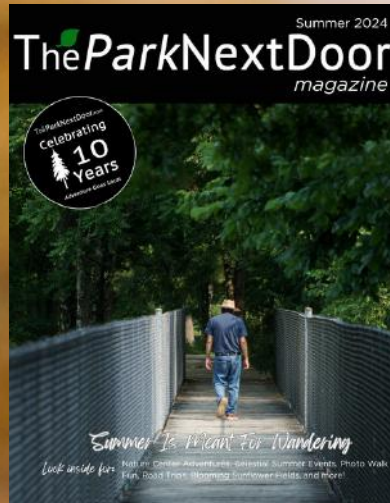


Exploring the local parks, state parks, nature areas,
and other bits of wilderness in Wisconsin.

All Back Issues Available Online

TheParkNextDoor

magazine



#OptOutside

Instead of hitting the mall on Black Friday, 2026, take the opportunity to get out on the trails for a bit of fresh air, some peace and quiet, and enjoy the late autumn beauty. Visit [TheParkNextDoor](#) to find a hike near you.



ART FOR YOUR WALLS FROM THE PARK NEXT DOOR

If you're a Wisconsin nature fan, you can decorate your walls, phone case, home decor, or stationery with images from the parks, nature preserves, and trails of Wisconsin featured on The Park Next Door.

Fine Art America is the world's largest art marketplace and print-on-demand technology company.

They have been helping artists sell wall art, home decor, apparel, and other products since 2006, and are home to hundreds of thousands of artists, photographers, graphic designers, illustrators, and iconic brands.



Want to support local artists in your area? They have a search feature to do just that! You can visit my online shop to see the current offering of images and custom products.

You can find my shop at: <https://1-kimberly-mackowski.pixels.com/>

Simple Ways To Support The Park Next Door And It's Purpose

Sign up for the website newsletter. I generally send out one email per month. Occasionally, if there is something special to share, I may send another, or send it a little earlier than usual if content warrants it. I know how overwhelming a full inbox can be. [Sign up here](#).

Feel free to **forward/share** the monthly emails with like-minded friends and nature enthusiasts. And remember, if you do subscribe, to open the emails. If they don't show as open, eventually the service suspends the email address.

Share your discoveries. If you've visited a local park or preserve that isn't yet on the website, let me know. I'd love the opportunity to check it out, and share it, too.

Share a favorite feature, blog, or location listing. If a specific feature page, blog, or location tickles your fancy, please share it with friends, or on your social media feed. Every little bit of exposure helps.

Follow The Park Next Door on Instagram for updates on everyday explorations and happenings. [@theparknextdoor](#)



Thank You for your support,
and for your love of our parks and preserves.



A bit of festive fall decoration along the trail at Schoen Laufen Park in Germantown. Decoration compliments of a local wreath crafter.