

Summer 2024

The ParkNextDoor

magazine



Summer Is Meant For Wandering

Look inside for:

Nature Center Adventures, Celestial Summer Events, Photo Walk Fun, Road Trips, Blooming Sunflower Fields, and more!



Summer Greetings, Friends,

We pack so much of our adventure into the summer months here in the midwest. Come June, our wish list for the warm weather season is filled with ideas. With the advent of the staycation concept in recent years, more folks are looking to wander with adventures closer to home. We're lucky, Wisconsin is full of them. No matter what region of the state you live in, there is natural beauty to be found and enjoyed.

Of course, summer is a perfect season for wandering. For discovering. I love visiting nature centers, and we have no shortage of them in our state (though there is always room for more). We provide a list of several that offer all types of activities and adventures throughout the year, but especially during the summer months. From guided hikes to naturalist classes, to forest bathing workshops, there is something to fill that seasonal calendar with a bit of fun, peace, and beauty.

Day trips are a perfect fit for Wisconsinites. Heading to a region just a few hours from your own can make you feel like you're on a grander journey. I try to take a few of these each year, attempting to get a taste of a variety of natural spaces I've always wanted to see. I can say I've never been disappointed. And the trip back home is so much quicker. 😊

Summer wouldn't be complete without enjoying the homegrown fare we grow so well here. Fresh fruits and veggies found at roadside stands and farmers markets, or grown in your own backyard. Bouquets of sunflowers and cut flowers, whether picked up at a farmers market, or at one of the many sunflower and cut-flower farms in the state. Lavender farms are becoming more popular in the state, too. Treat yourself and have a wander at one of these farms. You'll be supporting local growers, and bringing a bit of nature indoors to enjoy, too.



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

Keep On Wandering!
~ Kimberly

Cover photo taken at
Rock River Heritage County Park
in Janesville, WI

What's Inside

Ahh, summer in Wisconsin! The perfect season for wandering. For exploring, adventuring, reveling, and relaxing, in the great outdoors. It goes by so fast, you'll want to make the most of it. Whether you prefer to wander through the woods, a flower garden, or along a sandy beach, Wisconsin has it all.

You can take in the natural world around you and learn a bit about it at the same time with a visit to a local nature center. Browse through **GO WILD** and **Explore a World of Natural Adventures at Your Local Nature Centers**.

Let your eyes wander towards the night skies to experience the **PHENOMENAL LIGHT** of the aurora borealis, meteor showers, and more. Want to take it further? We've got a list of **Wisconsin Observatories** that are open to the public for special sky viewing events throughout the year.

Come back down to earth with **EARTHBOUND**, an essay on the magic of fireflies, cicadas and crickets, that's abuzz with the sights and sounds of summer.

Get snap happy and head out for some **SUMMER PHOTO WALK FUN**, with a visual scavenger hunt for all ages. Go solo or with friends. It's great family fun, too!

Cool off and quench your thirst with a **SUMMER REFRESH** - take a quick trip to two local artesian wells and fill up your cup with clear, cool spring water.

Pack your bags and head north for some of the best of the state. **ROAD TRIPPIN'** takes you on the road to Door County, a Wisconsin treasure. **HEAD TO THE WOODS** introduces you to the lush trails at Schmeekle Reserve in Stevens Point. **ART & NATURE** gives you a glimpse into the artworks nestled among nature trails at Stevens Point Sculpture Park. **LAKES APLENTY** profiles an abundance of fun to be had at Hartman Creek State Park in Waupaca.

Looking to relax with a good book? We've got ideas for you to **ENJOY A BLOOMING GOOD SUMMER READ** with nine nature-themed titles.

What's summer without lots of color? **BLOOMS GALORE** provides a listing of sunflower fields throughout Wisconsin where you can wander, enjoy a photo op, and even take some home to add some cheer to your abode. **U-PICK FLOWER FARMS** are popping up across the state, and make for a fun excursion where you can pick your own bouquet. Fragrant blooms of lavender fields are growing, too, with **LAVENDER FARMS** in several parts of Wisconsin.

Keep the summer vibes going and **KEEP ON WANDERING**, with a listing of *Special Online Features* with even more nature adventures close to home.

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An American Toad, spotted while on a guided hike at Forest Exploration Center.



Go Wild

Summer is a great time to join a guided hike or educational nature tour at local nature centers and preserves. You can enjoy guided bird watching hikes, or learn about native trees and plants. There's an opportunity to get closer to nature, maybe even hold a toad in your hand, or see other wild animals safely up-close. For children and adults, from simple nature hikes, to story walks, forest bathing workshops, raising monarch butterflies, moonlight kayak and canoe adventures, and so much more. Whatever your interest, chances are there's a program to match it offered at one of the many great nature centers in Wisconsin.

Following is a list of 21 nature centers that just might offer the perfect summertime adventure for you, your family, and friends. Visit their profiles for a preview into their organizations, and check out their websites or Facebook pages for more details on summer program offerings.



Crossroads at Big Creek
Sturgeon Bay

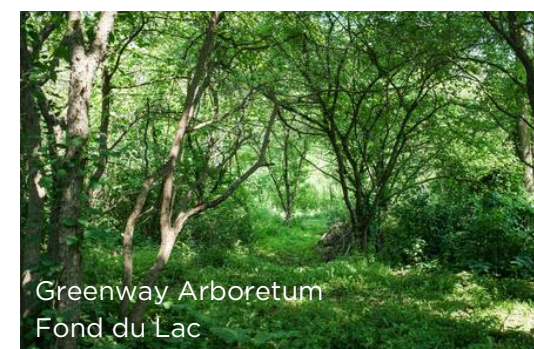


Forest Exploration Center
Wauwatosa



Gottfried Prairie & Arboretum
Fond du Lac

Explore A World of Natural Adventures At Your Local Nature Centers



Greenway Arboretum
Fond du Lac



Hawthorn Glen
Milwaukee



Hawthorn Hollow Nature Sanctuary
& Arboretum - Kenosha



Horicon Marsh State Wildlife Area
Horicon



Kishwaukee Nature Conservancy
Williams Bay



Lac Lawrann Conservancy
West Bend



Ledge View Nature Center
Chilton



Maywood Environmental Park
Sheboygan



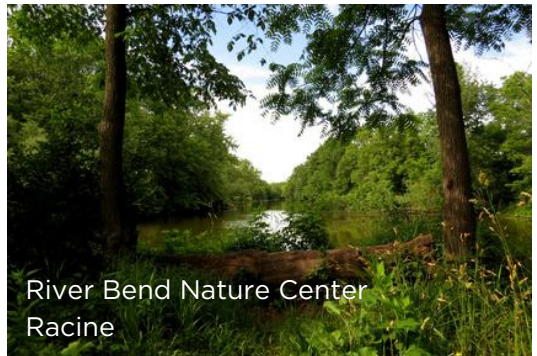
Mequon Nature Preserve
Mequon



Retzer Nature Center
Waukesha



The Ridges Sanctuary
Sturgeon Bay



River Bend Nature Center
Racine



Riveredge Nature Center
Saukville



Schlitz Audubon Nature Center
Milwaukee



Seno Woodland Center
Burlington



The Urban Ecology Center
Milwaukee



Wehr Nature Center
Franklin



Woodland Dunes Nature Center & Preserve - Two Rivers

Phenomenal Light

Photo of the Aurora Borealis taken on May 10, 2024, from my backyard in West Allis, with a smartphone

The Northern Lights Came To Town

The wild and incredible natural world surrounds me every day. And yet, there are even more phenomenal moments and events that hold me in awe. So far this year we have seen the northern lights over Wisconsin, and further southern states, too! I witnessed them from my city of West Allis backyard! Was it as spectacular as it might be somewhere in Sweden or Alaska? No, but color me happy, I saw this incredible sight from my very own patio.

If you have yet to witness the aurora borealis yourself, take heart. This is predicted to be a banner year for geomagnetic storms, and peak activity is expected through October of 2024. Given the right conditions, these storms produce the incredible visuals of the northern lights. You can even sign up to receive "aurora alerts" by email or text, so you'll have the best chance at seeing them.



Another photo of the Aurora taken on May 10.



Meteor Showers Light Up The Night

Other celestial happenings taking place over the summer include the *Delta Aquarids* meteor showers, which hit their peak around July 28-29. *Perseid* meteor showers peak around August 12-13.

A telescope would certainly be handy for viewing, but a pair of binoculars can aptly do the job. The strongest ones can be seen with the naked eye, but I've had good luck with an inexpensive pair of binoculars in summers past.

Local astronomy observatories may be holding special viewing events. Check out their websites to see what's coming up.



Supermoon photographed in July, 2023

By The Light Of The Moon

If the moon intrigues you, some notable upcoming full moons will be the “Buck Moon”, on July 21. A “Blue Moon” (second full moon during the same calendar month), also called the “Sturgeon Moon”, is expected August 19. There will be a “Supermoon”, also known as the “Corn Moon” on September 18, along with a partial Lunar Eclipse on the very same night.

Wisconsin Observatories



Yerkes Observatory - Williams Bay

Yerkes Observatory
373 W. Geneva Street
Williams Bay

**Charles & Kathryn Heide
School Yard Observatory**
880 Green Bay Road
Kenosha

Modine-Benstead Observatory
County Hwy A and 63rd Drive
Yorkville

Milwaukee Astronomical Society
18850 W. Observatory Road
New Berlin

Harken Astronomical Observatory
Pewaukee Library
210 Main Street
Pewaukee

Jim and Gwen Plunkett Observatory
Harrington Beach State Park
Belgium

Barlow Planetarium
UW-Oshkosh Fox Cities
1478 Midway Road
Menasha

Hobbs Observatory
Beaver Creek Reserve
Chippewa Valley
Fall Creek

Washburn Observatory
UW-Madison
1401 Observatory Drive
Madison

Leif Everson Observatory
Crossroads at Big Creek
814 Cove Road
Sturgeon Bay



Leif Everson Observatory - Sturgeon Bay



Earthbound

My attempt to photograph fireflies in my backyard a couple summers ago.

Bring On The Fireflies

Back down here on earth, beyond the glow of a summer sunset, with the onset of dusk, comes another bit of magic - the firefly. Quietly glowing, fireflies like warm, humid weather, tall grasses, and need darkness in which to find each other. They are actually beetles, not flies, and there are over 2,000 species of firefly worldwide.

They begin their lives in the ground at the base of our lawns and gardens. Pesticides kill them, so avoiding pesticides is crucial for their survival. To benefit the fireflies, it's also a good idea to keep your grass on the longer side, and leave some taller grass or grasses along the perimeter of your yard. Tall plants, bushes and shrubs are beneficial too, as well as some kind of water source, such as a bird bath. Artificial light can interfere with their light signals, so keep bright outdoor lights to a minimum during firefly season.

The glow emitted by fireflies is from a chemical reaction within their bodies called bioluminescence. During mating season the males will flash their light as a signal to the females. Females will signal back, and they will continue to signal to each other until they find each other and mate. The female then lays eggs in the ground, which will eventually become larvae, and then grow to adult fireflies that will repeat the process again in following summers, and continue the show for years to come. Look for fireflies as the warm weather settles in, about mid-June through to August.

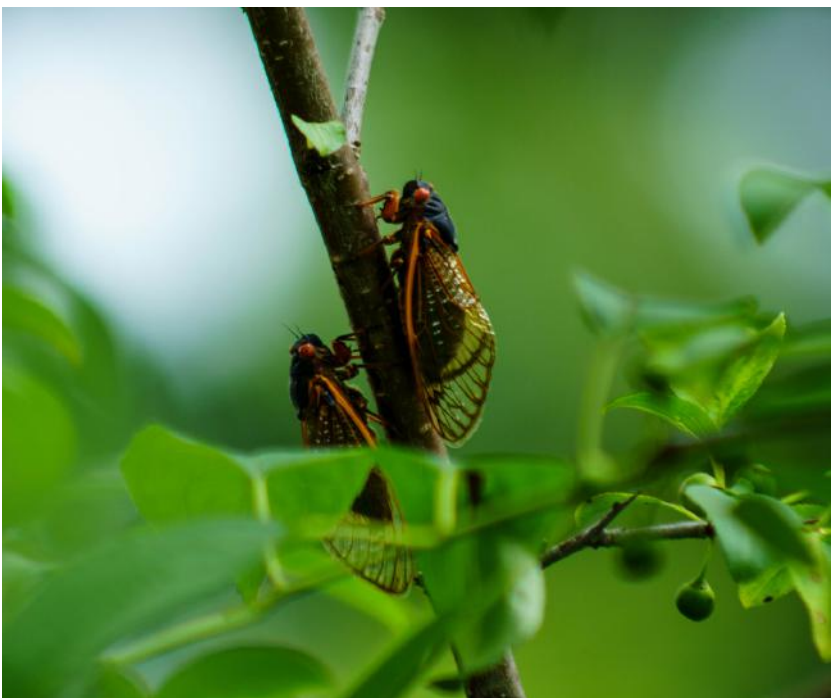
What's That Buzz?

Earthbound phenomenon is everywhere this summer. Most recently 17-year Brood XIII cicadas emerged in parts of southern Wisconsin, to complete their life cycle.

The larvae live underground, among tree roots, for 17 years. Then, in early summer, when ground temperatures reach at least 60 degrees, mature nymphs emerge to metamorphosize into full adults, shedding their exoskeleton.

Then they begin the process of finding a mate, and laying eggs, creating the next generation. When their mission is complete, the adults die off. It's all so fascinating, and a bit sad, if you ask me.

We took a drive to Lake Geneva to see the cicadas that emerged at Big Foot Beach State Park.



8 Brood XIII cicadas seen at Big Foot Beach State Park in Lake Geneva



I look forward to the sound of annual cicadas singing each summer. Their buzz, to me, arrives in tandem with steaming hot and humid days. If the sound of songbirds signifies spring and the beginning of summer, the call of cicadas and crickets represent the heat and humid days of mid-to-late summer.

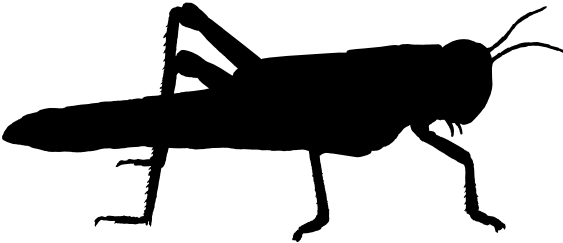
But the volume and constant buzz of the emergent Brood XIII is a wonder in itself. Driving to Lake Geneva, passing a woodland area, we put down the car windows, and heard a wild cacophony of buzzing as we drove by. To exclaim “Wow!” does not do it justice. Would I want to hear this buzzing 24/7, all year long, no thank you. But for a short time, it’s a welcome miracle of nature.

I watched as a docile cicada climbed an old oak tree, and then stopped to send out its mating call. Such a small creature, and such a big sound. I held one in my hand, admired its beauty, and lifted it to a tall blade of grass to wander on its way.

This particular brood will be around for a short time yet. But, if you don’t get to see or hear them, don’t lose heart. Annual cicadas will be here soon. And the next generation of Brood XIII will return again in 17 years.



Song Of The Tried And True



If I’m going to wax nostalgic about summer icons, the simple cricket tops the list. They really do provide the sound of a summer evening. The song of crickets should begin to fill the warm night air soon. Here in the city we seem to start hearing them towards the end of June, early July. But in other, more natural areas, I’ve heard their chirps already.

Our balmy evenings will soon be accompanied by the melodic, staccato chirps of crickets. A perfect summer lullaby.

SUMMER PHOTO WALK FUN



If you've never gone on a photo walk scavenger hunt, you're missing out on some creative fun. Got kids? You can take them along to a park, or the beach, or just a wander in the backyard, to search for photo opportunities.

Make a list of ideas to snap photos of, grab your camera of choice - point and shoot, phone camera, instant film, or higher tech gear - and let your imagination run wild.

My four year old nephew and I have done this a couple of times in the neighborhood, and in our backyard, and we had a great time. It was truly fun to see his creativity in action.

You can go with a friend, a group, or go solo. Follow the prompts, and then interpret them in your own way. There's no right or wrong way to snap. When you're done, have fun sharing the results of your exploration.

Here are a few lists you can use to start with. Or simply make up your own based on the location or theme of your choice.

KIDS PHOTO SCAVENGER HUNT #1

I spy something...

1. Tiny
2. That smells good
3. Yellow
4. Scurrying
5. That climbs
6. That sings
7. That can fly
8. That hops
9. You can eat
10. That buzzes
11. Green
12. Sparkly
13. To sit on
14. On a tree
15. That quacks

KIDS PHOTO SCAVENGER HUNT #2

I see...

1. Bubbles
2. A selfie
3. Energy
4. Repeating patterns
5. Reflections
6. Round
7. Sunflowers
8. Shadows
9. Silliness
10. Hidden things
11. Something orange
12. Bugs
13. Lines and rows
14. Toys
15. A hat

WOODLAND PHOTO WALK LIST

1. Make a grand entrance
2. I lichen the forest
3. I moss go for a hike
4. Turn over a new leaf
5. You be-log to me
6. I heart nature
7. I'm stumped
8. My bark is prettier than my bite
9. Look up
10. Rock the woods
11. There's a bend in the road
12. The woods are filled with song
13. There's a fungus among us
14. Sun-beam me up
15. Nature is toad-ally cool





Summer Refresh

Cool off with a drink from local artesian wells.

If you're thirsting for something clear, cool, and refreshing on a hot summer day, why not make an event of it, and visit a local natural spring. Whether you're biking in the area and want to refill your travel water bottle, or want to fill a few jugs of fresh spring water for home, you can have a bit of fun doing it. There are two near to Milwaukee area springs that are popular hydration stops.



FLOWING WELL - Whitewater

The Flowing Well has been in existence since 1895. Lots of cyclists stop at the well to refill their water bottles, along with hikers visiting the Ice Age Trail nearby, or other nearby parks and trails.

Folks appear to come from all over to load up their water jugs with this refreshing elixir.

The spring runs freely in all four seasons. The well, and parking, is very close to the road, so just a word of caution.

Location: Clover Valley Road, Whitewater, WI (Walworth County)(GPS: 42.798925,-88.715157),

PARRY SPRING - Dousman

Once part of the Waukesha Parry Family Dairy Farm, the Parry Spring lives on long after the family farm closed. This natural artesian well is located along the side of Parry Road in Dousman.

There is no sign, but the road juts out on either side of the barrel covered spring. Woodlands and private homes line the road, with plenty of green on display on a hot summer day.

Location: Parry Road, Dousman, WI (Waukesha County) (GPS: 43.002701,-88.447151)





Road Trippin'

Once upon a time I could drive all night. Sadly, those days are over. As much as I'd like to head off on a whim to a destination four states away, it's not so practical these days. It's not just staying awake behind the wheel (a paramount priority), but schedules and logistics, responsibilities. So I sneak away on a weekend trip from time to time,

Luckily, here in Wisconsin, there's plenty of nature to explore within a few hours drive of wherever you live. So, if you're itching for a road trip, start making plans.



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 areas spectacular beauty. I returned again in early June, 2023, to enjoy more of it heading into summer. Both seasons are worthy of the trip.

There's a coastal vibe in Door County. Water is everywhere. From quaint artsy villages, to woodland parks, to Washington Island, a ferry ride across Lake Michigan from the tip top of Door County. There's a bit of a New England vibe, too.

There are plenty of must-sees: Cave Point County Park, Peninsula State Park, art galleries and museums. Popular activities: Kayaking, fishing, swimming, hiking, biking, camping, and dining.

If you've never been to Door County, start making plans. Summer and fall are the most popular seasons to visit, but it's beautiful all year through.

If you live within an hour or two, day trips are a great option. But, if you live further away, you may want to book accommodations. Keep in mind that most places require a minimum stay. Some are two nights, some are three.

Weekday trips, and off-season trips can reduce some of those minimum requirements.

There are several state parks, lots of local parks, nature preserves, and gardens to explore. State parks will require a Wisconsin State Park sticker.



Check out our online guide: **EXPLORING DOOR COUNTY** for lots more details.



Head To The Woods

Pack the car and head north to Central Wisconsin. There you'll find some of the most beautiful woodlands and lakes in the state. Just a few hours away from the Milwaukee area, you can bask in fresh air, tall trees, birdsong, and a world of recreational activities.



Schmeckle Reserve is a 280-acre public natural area, on the campus of UW-Stevens Point, and is enjoyed by students, residents, and visitors alike. With five miles of interweaving trails and boardwalks, you could wander this sanctuary of beauty all day.

My first visit to the reserve was on a very humid and rainy June weekend. The mosquitoes were vicious, but the beauty of the trails and natural surroundings managed to distract me from their incessant whining.



I parked in the visitor center parking lot and made my way over boardwalks and crushed granite trails, past the bird viewing area, the Trail of Reflections, and onward to walk the 1-mile trail around Lake Joanis. The 24-acre lake is a peaceful setting, perfect for a bit of rest and reflection, wildlife watching, or paddling a kayak.



Easy walking trails and boardwalks, prairies, woodlands, and plenty of wildlife, make the reserve a beautiful, natural space to enjoy.

Many of the trails connect with the popular [Green Circle Trail](#), which encompasses over 27 miles of hiking/biking trails throughout Stevens Point. Both the Green Circle Trail, which is crushed granite, and the crushed granite trails within the reserve are wheelchair accessible.

Wildlife was in abundance as I wandered the reserve. I saw quite a few deer, including fawns, a family of sandhill cranes, chipmunks, squirrels, and an assortment of birds. I had a fleeting view of a Pileated Woodpecker as it took off in flight, and spotted several Northern Flickers, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Common Grackles, Northern Cardinals, a Carolina Wren, and a fledgling Warbling Vireo, to name a few. If you're a bird watcher, there's plenty to see on a walk here.



Be sure to check out the Visitor Center, which hosts a conservation history museum, a special bird viewing room, animal and nature exhibits, nature programs, and a really great gift shop.



Art & Nature

Just minutes from Schmeekle Reserve is an amazing mix of nature and art at the Stevens Point Sculpture Park. We first visited the sculpture park two years ago, and I recently visited again to see some of the newly installed sculptures, as well as to see it in summer versus autumn. Still arty, still beautiful. A perfect place to enjoy a hike through nature and enjoy works of art at the same time.

Stevens Point Sculpture Park is a fantastic blend of nature trails and art installations. The park resides on 20 acres of winding woodland trails, via the Brickyard Trail, and connects to the [Green Circle Trail](#), a 27-mile hiking and biking trail that loops through Stevens Point.

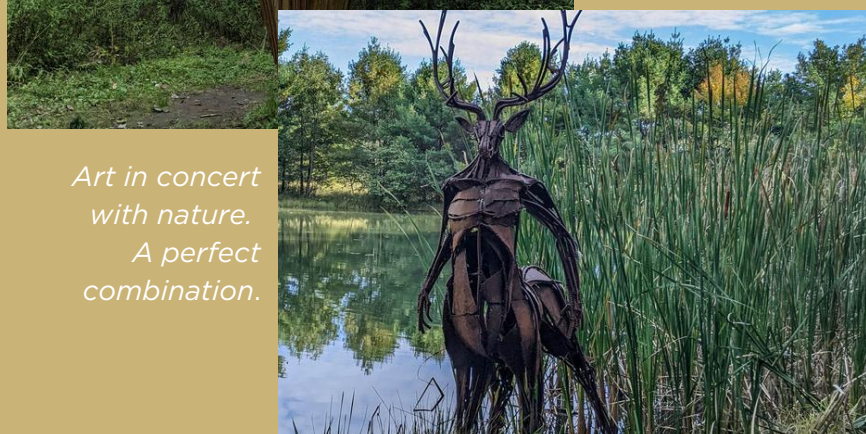
The sculptures are as varied as they are many; creations by local, regional, and national artists. Some abstract, some tongue-in-cheek, there's a bit of whimsy, fantasy, and an inclusion of natural elements and social commentary as well. I confess, one of my curiosities was to see the elk centaur sculpture up close. I can tell you, it did not disappoint!

I really admired how the sculptures were placed within the woodlands, each taking residence within the natural surroundings along the trail.

The portions of the park that are left to a natural state are simply inspired. There is a creek that winds through the park and trails, autumn leaves floating on the water, past fallen branches and snags, adorned with turtles sunning themselves.

The walking trails are hard-packed crushed granite, perfect for hiking and biking, and wheelchair accessible during seasons of good weather. We walked the Sculpture Park trail combined with a portion of the Brickyard Trail for a total of just under 2.5 miles. The walk was an easy one.

Click [here](#) for a list of the artists and details on their pieces.



*Art in concert
with nature.
A perfect
combination.*



Lakes Aplenty

Head north to Waupaca and the Chain O'Lakes for a ton of summer fun. Hartman Creek State Park encompasses more than seven lakes. So bring your swimming suit, and your fishing gear, and get ready to enjoy everything this Wisconsin state park has to offer.



Located among the wilderness and beauty of Central Wisconsin is **Hartman Creek State Park**. This 1,500-acre state park is on the upper Waupaca Chain O'Lakes. Like most state parks, it offers a wide array of recreational activities - swimming, fishing, boating, canoeing, hiking, biking, picnicking, equestrian trails, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing. They offer two campgrounds - a family campground, and a group campground.

There are about 10 miles of hiking trails within the park. The National Scenic Ice Age Trail also runs through the park. If biking is your thing, you'll find about 15 miles of designated off-road bike trails. Bicycling is also permitted on the roads that wind throughout the park. Also featured is a 7.5-mile equestrian trail, available for day use.



A day of swimming and beach lounging can be had at Hartman Lake, which features a 300-foot long sand beach and swimming area. A more secluded swimming experience, can be found at the Whispering Pines Day Use Area, located off of Whispering Pines Road.

Once a privately owned, yet free beach, the property was given to the State of Wisconsin in 1977. Here you can enjoy an afternoon of swimming in ultra clear water in Marl Lake. The surface of the lake, in the light of the sun, is a bright blue-green. It's a sight to see. Pack a picnic lunch, and spend the day. No camping is allowed at Whispering Pines.



Seven lakes within the park provide plenty of opportunity for fishing and boating, canoeing and kayaking.

Be sure to visit The Hellestad House at Allen Lake for a taste of local history.



Summer is the perfect time to kick back and enjoy a good book. Whether you enjoy fiction, memoirs, mystery, nature subjects, or stories told round a campfire, there are plenty of good books to choose from. Here are a few ideas, some old, some new, to entertain and inspire.



TITLES OF DISCOVERY, ADVENTURE, BEAUTY AND A BIT OF MAGIC

THE BACKYARD BIRD CHRONICLES

Author: Amy Tan
published 2024 by Knopf

CAMPFIRE STORIES - Tales from AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARKS

edited by Dave Kyu and Ilyssa Kyu
published 2018 by Mountaineers Books

THE COMFORT OF CROWS - A Backyard Year

Author: Margaret Renkl
Artwork by: Billy Renkl
published 2023 by Spiegel & Grau

GARDEN SPELLS

Author: Sarah Addison Allen
published 2007 by Bantam Books

BIRDING TO CHANGE THE WORLD A Memoir

Author: Trish O'Kane
published 2024 by HarperCollins



HIGHLIGHTING NATIVE GARDENING FOR KIDS, BIRDWATCHING AS A MEANS OF FINDING HEALING AND INNER PEACE, A MEMOIR OF WILD BIRD RESCUE EXPERIENCES, AND AWAKENING YOUR SENSES BY CONNECTING WITH THE TREES IN OUR MIDST.

NATURE'S BEST HOPE
How You Can Save the World
in Your Own Yard

Author: Douglas W. Tallamy
published 2023 by Timber Press, Inc.

RARE ENCOUNTERS
with ORDINARY BIRDS

Author: Lyanda Lynn Haupt
published 2001 by Sasquatch Books Seattle

KEEP LOOKING UP
Your Guide to the Powerful
Healing of Birdwatching

Author: Tammah Watts
published 2023 by Hay House, Inc.

BEING with TREES
Awaken Your Senses
to the Wonders of Nature

Author: Hannah Fries
published 2018 by Storey Publishing

BLOOMS GALORE

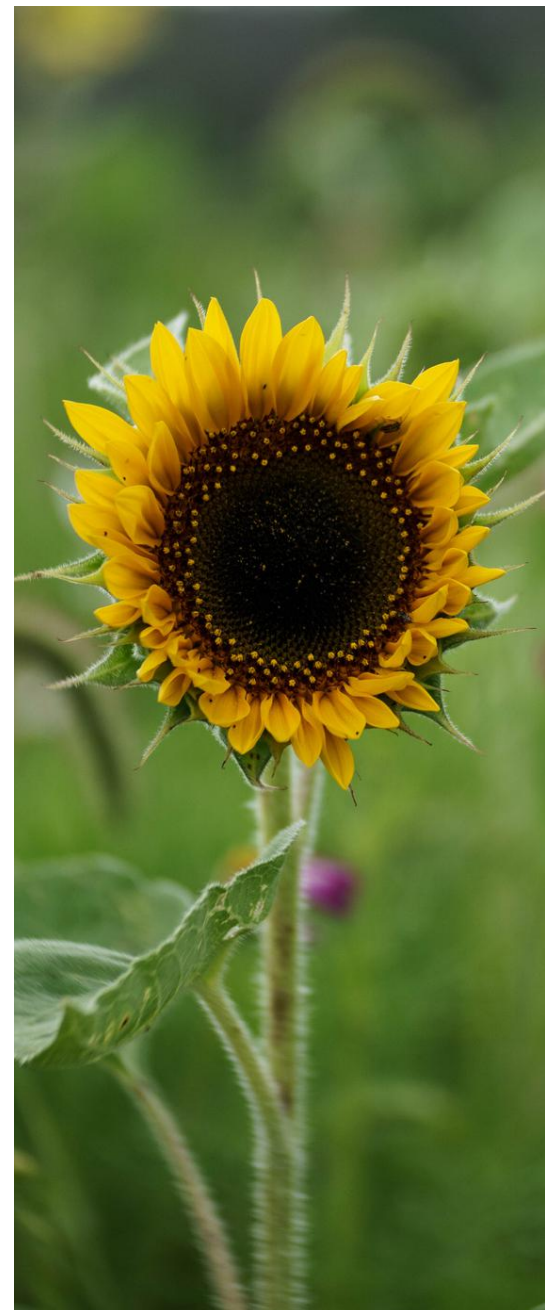
Sunflower fields, cut flower farms, and lavender fields make for a colorful summer.

It's hard to resist the bold, cheerful charm of a sunflower in bloom. In recent years, sunflower farms and fields have become a late-summer, early autumn destination for the masses. People thrill to wander up and down the golden paths, taking family photos, selfies, and close-ups of the blooms as rows and rows of them rise up against a bright blue summer sky.

No matter where you live in Wisconsin, there's bound to be a sunflower farm near you. I've assembled a list of locations in Southeastern Wisconsin, and within a couple hours drive as well. The list changes a bit year to year, but there are always plenty of offerings.

Be sure to check out the websites and Facebook pages linked for more details. Not all fields bloom at the same time. Some are opening in late July, early August; some will open in September. Some offer U-pick flowers, some do not.

Pricing structures, photography rules, etc. can vary. Due to weather and field conditions, it's always best to confirm before going.



Sunflower Bits...Just Some Random Facts About Sunflowers

~ They are native to North America as far back as 3000 BC.

~ It takes between 70-120 days from planted seed to bloom, depending on variety.

~ Young, immature sunflowers rotate to follow the sun. Once mature, blooms forever turn eastward, toward the rising sun. Poetic, isn't it?

~ Every sunflower is actually made up of thousands of tiny flowers.

~ Wild birds will feed on the seeds formed in the head of the sunflower.

~ Mature sunflowers can be harvested for the seeds to grow even more sunflowers.

~ Each sunflower can contain as many as 2000 seeds.

~ There are 52 species of sunflowers.

~ Sunflowers are often considered a symbol of love and friendship.

VAN DER BROHE ARBORETUM
Sunflowers Blooming Early August
Arboretum Meadows Are Blooming
3800 Lincoln Ave.,
Two Rivers, WI

POLLY'S PUMPKIN PATCH
Dates To Be Determined
Sunflower Viewing Fields
N4367 Hwy 57,
Chilton, WI

KRESS-HILL SUNFLOWER FARM
late June/July - see Facebook
Sunflowers, U-pick, Special Events
10821 W. Washington Road,
Newton, WI

BERGSBAKEN FARMS
July 26-28th
Sunflower Fest
W2095 County Road E,
Cecil, WI

KELLEY COUNTRY CREAMERY
Tentatively Early August, see Facebook
Sunflowers Taking Flight
W5215 County Road B,
Fond du Lac, WI

WALDVOGEL'S FARM
Opening September 14
Field Of Sunflowers
N7416 County Road I,
Juneau, WI

THOMPSON STRAWBERRY FARM
Late Summer, TBD
Pick Your Own Sunflowers
14000 75th Street,
Bristol, WI

OLD HOMESTEAD ORCHARD
September, see Facebook for updates
Sunflower Fest
7814 Raynor Avenue,
Franksville, WI

JERRY SMITH FARM
Mid-July, TBD
Seasonal Activities - Website
7150 18TH Street (Hwy L),
Kenosha, WI

HELENE'S HILLTOP ORCHARD
August 31 - September 21, 2024
Sunflower Experience
N1189 Quarter Road,
Merrill, WI

REI ENGINEERING with PEYTON'S PROMISE
Sunflower Field Dates To Be Determined
Visit their Facebook Page for Updates
4080 N. 20th Avenue,
Wausau, WI

PUMPKIN HOLLOW
Tentatively Late July, TBD
Pumpkin Hollow Facebook Page
230222 Marathon County H,
Edgar, WI

BASSE'S TASTE OF COUNTRY
August 31-Sept.2, Sept. 5-8, 12-15
Apple & Sunflower Fest
3190 County Line Q,
Colgate, WI

LANNON SUNFLOWER FARM
Tentatively Opening in July
U-Pick Sunflowers and More
W204 N8525 Lannon Rd.,
Menomonee Falls, WI

ROOTS & STEMS FLOWER FARM
TBD: late July, see Facebook
U-pick Sunflower Field
11627 Highland Road,
Mequon, WI

GIERACH ORCHARDS
TBD - see Facebook
Pick Your Own Sunflowers
9616 W. Bonniwell Road,
Mequon, WI

BUSY BARNS ADVENTURE FARM
October 2024
Sunflower Days At The Farm
W7675 US Hwy 12,
Fort Atkinson, WI

SKELLY'S FARM MARKET
TBD: Last Week July, August
Skelly's Sunflower Experience
2713 South Hayner Road,
Janesville, WI

EUGSTER'S FARM MARKET
Tentatively - end of July
Sunflower Days
3865 WI-138,
Stoughton, WI

SCHUSTER'S FARM
Tentatively late July-TBD
Blooms On The Farm
1326 US Hwy 12 & 18,
Deerfield, WI

BLASER'S ACRES
Late July, TBD
Sunflower Festival
1535 Sunset Beach Rd.,
Suamico, WI

SOPA FAIRVIEW FARM
Late Summer, TBD
Visit Facebook for Details
8290 Old Amish Road,
Amherst, WI

ARNOLD'S STRAWBERRIES
Sunflower Dates TBD
See Facebook for updates
343 Wood County PP,
Rudolph, WI

KUCKUK FARMS
August, TBD
Sunflower Days
W9756 Dakota Avenue,
Wautoma, WI



U-PICK FLOWER FARMS

If you're not the gardening kind, or you're anxious to put together a stunning summer bouquet to brighten up your space, or give as a gift before your garden is ready, check out these fantastic local cutting flower farms.

Some of them offer both U-pick flowers and sunflowers (as well as apple picking in the fall). I ended up returning a few times to satisfy my craving for cheerful arrangements. It was fun to pick just the blooms I wanted. Most offer pre-picked bouquet options as well.

You'll find a wide variety of colors, shapes, textures, and sizes. Lots of opportunity to be creative. Many of the farms offer specialty events and tours, as well as other home-grown items for sale as well.

As with the sunflower fields, be sure to check out their websites and/or Facebook pages for current field status. Heavy rains, and super dry days, among other things, can affect picking dates and hours.

It's best to bring your own gloves, clippers, and a vase or container for transporting your blooms home.

GIERACH ORCHARDS

To Be Determined - see Facebook
U-Pick Flowers
9616 W. Bonniwell Road,
Mequon, WI

ROOTS & STEMS FLOWER FARM

Flower Farm Opens Mid-July
U-Pick Flowers
11627 Highland Road,
Mequon, WI

BARNWOOD FARMS

Opening July, 2024
U-pick Flower Farm
E290 Johnson Road,
Waupaca, WI

FOR THE LOVE OF FLOWERS FARM

Opening July (TBD)
U-pick Flower Farm
12114 W. 5 Mile Road,
Franksville, WI

EUGSTER'S FARM MARKET

Late Summer, TBD, see Facebook
Eugster's U-Cut Flower Field
3865 WI-138,
Stoughton, WI

THE FLOWER BEE

Open Wednesday, July 24
U-pick Flower Farm
22428 7 Mile Road,
Franksville, WI

57FARMSTORE

To Be Determined
U-Pick Flowers
4216 State Hwy 57,
Sturgeon Bay, WI

ONE EIGHTY PETALS

Currently Taking Reservations
U-pick Flower Farm
8999 S. Highland Road,
Fish Creek, WI

TWO BEES AND A BUD

Opening July 13
U-pick Flower Farm
1549 200th Avenue,
New Richmond, WI



LAVENDER FARMS

Ahhh, lavender. The scent of it is so heady and relaxing. The precious oils are used in aromatherapy, and all kinds of skin care and healing concoctions. And, of course, the blooms are delicately beautiful - perfect for a timeless dried arrangement.

It may surprise you to know that there are several lavender farms in Wisconsin. Originally, I knew of two, but a quick search recently educated me further.

Summer is the time to visit a lavender farm. For the beauty, for the homemade products, for the tasty treats like lavender lemonade and lavender ice cream. And for all kinds of events hosted on the farms, including yoga classes, art classes, even classes on how to grow your own lavender.

So, if you're a lavender fan, put one of these Wisconsin lavender farms on your list, and check out their websites to browse the menu of items and experiences they have to offer.

NEW LIFE LAVENDER & CHERRY FARM

Open June 1 through October 5
Lavender Farm Experience
E10766 County Road W,
Baraboo, WI

ROWLEY CREEK LAVENDER FARM

Season Begins June 29
Special Events & U-Pick
E13901 County Road W,
Baraboo, WI

PONDVIEW LAVENDER FARM

Begins mid-June to mid-July
Special Events & U-Pick
3735 Business Hwy 29,
Chippewa Falls, WI

LAVENDER BLUFF FARM

Open June 14, 2024
Shop and U-pick Lavender
W11976 Hwy 35,
Stockholm, WI

EUGSTERS FARM MARKET

Mid-June to July
Lavender Days
3865 WI-138,
Stoughton, WI

POTTER CREEK LAVENDER

June 26 - July 31, Reservations Required
Scheduled Tours & Photography Bookings
3987 State Hwy 32,
Pulaski, WI

FRAGRANT ISLE LAVENDER FARM & SHOP

Mid-June to early September
Special Events, Tours, U-Pick
1350 Airport Road,
Washington Island, WI

Keep On Wandering

Keep the summer vibes going with local adventure ideas from our Online Special Features

LOCAL WATERFALLS ARE CALLING

If waterfalls are your jam, you don't have to journey too far from Milwaukee to enjoy one. They might not be rushing waters, but they can offer views cascading enough to satisfy. And on a hot summer day, a nearby waterfall is pretty cool.

IT'S GARDEN PARTY TIME

No matter where you live in Wisconsin, no matter your gardening skill or desire, you can enjoy plenty of gardens in bloom throughout the state. Many are free to visit. Some are part garden center, part walking gardens of creativity. Some as close as your local park, or historical society. If you're looking for petals of inspiration, pay a visit to one of these spaces and add some color to your day.

A WALK ON THE BEACH

Summer, of course, is the perfect time for a wander along a lakeshore, or to enjoy a festive day at the beach. From man-made swimming holes at local parks, to full-on sandy beaches along the Lake Michigan shore, and beautiful, scenic lakes throughout the state.

ESCAPE TO THE WOODS

Walking woodland trails in our local and state parks and trails can invoke that "Up North" feeling, without having to actually go "Up North".

LEGACIES OF NATURE

When I'm scouting out natural beauty in our state, I have a soft spot for the spaces that have been preserved by individuals, communities, and conservancy organizations. There are many in Wisconsin.

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](https://www.instagram.com/theparknextdoor)



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



SUMMER DAYS

These are the days to hold on to
Sun rises early in the morn
These are the days to hold on to
Summer days, Summer days, Summer days