

Fall 2025

TheParkNextDoor

magazine



AUTUMN DREAMING

Look inside for : September Celebrations, Sunflower Fields, Seed Harvesting, October Fun For Everyone, Artful Adventures, Autumn Escapes, Door County Festivals, November Events, and more!



Autumn Greetings, Friends ~

Most folks who know me know that autumn is my favorite season. Always has been. But for some reason, I've developed a pattern of having major surgery in early fall. Why should this year be any different? I've had a few health challenges this year, but manageable. However, accidents happen, and in late July I had a fall that dislocated my shoulder, and tore my rotator cuff in two spots. Since that time I've been in a sling, and am scheduled for surgery September 22. So the season I love the most will be spent recovering.

In recent weeks I've been working out how to do one-handed photography, so that I can still get out and document nature. I wasn't able to drive, so I was limited that way, too. But, as I did when I had a knee replacement in September, four years ago, I will somehow manage to get out and enjoy the fall color. It's a good thing my husband is willing to drive me around.

This issue reads like an autumn bucket list to me. There are so many seasonal events, beautiful parks and fall color drives to choose from. The "ber" months offer so many opportunities to enjoy a season that is chilly, but not cold, colorful and cozy, and minus the torture of mosquitoes.

Last fall I was able to take a trip to Marinette County in early October. The turning leaves were amazing, and the area is laden with gorgeous parks, preserves, and waterfalls. Check out the feature *Make Your Way To Marinette*, and plan a weekend north to enjoy all it has to offer.

Sunflowers may have peaked, but there are plenty of sunflower farms to visit into late September. Some even into early October. With apple orchards, pumpkins, and more fun for all, *A Sunflower's Charm* will point you in their bright direction.

Need a list of fall festivals in Door County? We've got one. Looking for a family friendly walk to *#OptOutside* instead of shopping on Black Friday? We have 13 great ideas. Searching for some artful adventures? We've got those, too. *An Artful Autumn* will clue you in.

October's spooky vibes are still family friendly. Night hikes, pumpkins and goblins, and haunted gardens offer treats for the senses.

Take some time to harvest seeds from the blooms in the garden and tuck them away for next spring. It's easy, and you'll be glad you did.

November's color palette may be a bit more subdued, but it's still beautiful. Perfect for a photo walk, some night hikes, or a bit of stargazing.

Wisconsin is a magical place to take a bite out of fall. Relish it.

Wishing you a spectacular season!

~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
Lion's Park
in New Berlin, WI

What's Inside

What's going on in September? Harvest Fair at State Fair Park. Pumpkins and apples at local farms. Fall bird migration, China Lights 2025, fall treats like apple cider donuts. **September Celebrations** include Doors Open at Forest Home Cemetery, The Domes Mum Show, and more!

Add some cheer to your day and visit a local sunflower farm. **A Sunflower's Charm** offers a listing of farms that are open in September. Many offer pumpkins and apple orchards, too.

If you've visited Greenfield Park in the fall, you might just be familiar with this exceptional tree. I documented its transition as the colors changed last year in **A Season Of Change**.

Celebrate your garden by growing it again next year. **Harvesting Seeds From This Season's Bouquet** will show you how to save seeds from some of the more common pollinator friendly blooms.

October is filled with possibility. Night hikes, haunted bookworm gardens, thousands of carved pumpkins, and spooky family fun at local nature centers. It's also a great month to explore your creative side, whether it be hands on workshops, a fall art tour and road trip, or an art exhibit in a local forest. **An Artful Autumn** shares the details.

Take a nature hike with a cat. That's different. **A Little October Magic** tells the tale.

There's nothing like an autumn road trip in Wisconsin. **Make Your Way To Marinette** will introduce you to several beautiful nature spots to explore in Marinette County.

There's more to explore online. **Find More Fall** will link you to online features. And **Fall For Door County** provides a list of several fall festivals in The Door.

Head to Horicon, but not to the marsh (or maybe after the marsh). **Spotlight On Ledge County Park** will illustrate the spectacular beauty of niagara escarpment and walking trails at this amazing park.

November is for stargazing, nature hikes, nature crafting, night hikes, upcycling pumpkins, and a late autumn photo challenge to stretch your creativity. If you'd rather skip the shopping madness on Black Friday this year, we've got 13 local family friendly hikes to help you **#OptOutside**.

If the cooler season tempts you to kick back with a good book, **Escape into A Cozy Read** has five unique titles to enjoy.

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

4 September Celebrations

6 A Sunflower's Charm

8 A Season of Change

9 Harvesting Seeds From This Season's Bouquet

10 October Happenings

11 An Artful Autumn

13 A Little October Magic

14 Make Your Way To Marinette

24 Find More Fall

25 Fall For Door County

26 Spotlight On Ledge County Park

28 November Happenings

30 #OptOutside

32 Escape Into A Cozy Read

34 All Back Issues Available

35 Art For Your Walls & Support The Park Next Door & It's Purpose



September days in Wisconsin perch on the threshold between summer and fall. The temperatures can seemingly swing from sweltering to cold with a strong gust of wind. If you ever set out for your first day of school wearing a new sweater in cool morning temps, and were dripping with sweat by the time you headed home after classes, you know how it's true.

And so, September is perfect for enjoying farmer's markets, pumpkin farms, a last day at the beach, apple picking, trail hiking, gearing up for football season, harvesting seeds for next year's garden, autumn bird migration, or relaxing with a cozy read and a tasty hot beverage.

Harvest Fair - Sept. 26-28

Wisconsin State Fair Park

Fun for the whole family!

Including:

Live music, pumpkin bowling, food vendors, a farmer's market, and a variety of free and low-cost rides and activities for kids.

Admission: \$5 per person 12 and older, 11 and younger - free admission



HORICON MARSH EDUCATION & VISITOR CENTER

**Fall Bird Migration
Mid-Sept. - November**

Visitor Center : W4279 Headquarters Rd
Hours from September 1 - October 31
Mon/Tues/Thurs/Fri/Sat: 9-4 Sun/Wed: Closed

AUTO TOUR: Closes late November
(the day before opening of deer gun season)



EARLY AUTUMN SEASON TREATS

Stock up on fresh picked apples from your local orchard or farm market. Indulge in some fresh apple cider, caramel apples, or apple cider donuts, too!

Patterson's in New Berlin is a popular local favorite.



ELEGANT FARMER

1545 Main Street Hwys ES & J, Mukwonago



Harvest Fest - Sept. 6 - Oct. 26

Pick your own apples, Smilin' Barn Cafe', Hayrides, pony rides, train rides, corn maze, and farmer's market.

BOERNER BOTANICAL GARDENS

China Lights 2025 - Sept. 12 - Nov. 2

Magical Forest at Boerner



Family fun includes: Amazing lantern and light displays, food vendors, music and more.

Admission: Purchase tickets online, prices vary for children and adults, weekdays vs weekends.

FESTIVE FLOWERS & PUMPKINS

Decorate your surroundings with seasonal blooms, pumpkins and gourds purchased from your local farmer's market. **Sanfelippo's** in New Berlin carries a variety of both.

Open through the end of October. A holiday wreath and Christmas tree lot opens mid-November.





September Celebrations



Doors Open at Forest Home Cemetery & Arboretum

Saturday, Sept. 27, 10am - 5pm

Exclusive access to the 1890's chapel and crematorium.
Advanced registration required.

2405 W. Forest Home Avenue, Milwaukee
Admission: Free

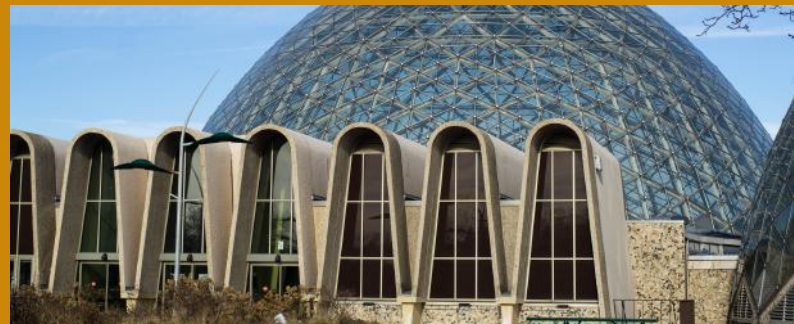


Mitchell Park Domes - Fall Mums Show

September - November, 2025

This annual fall chrysanthemum show includes thousands of mums, in dozens of varieties.

Hours: Monday-Friday 9am - 5pm
Saturday, Sunday & Holidays 9am - 4pm
Adults: \$9 / Juniors (3-12): \$6 / Children (2 & Under): Free



The Nature Of Light - Paine Art Center & Gardens

Now through October 26 - Sunset to 10:30 pm Daily

The Paine estate is transformed into a spectacular showcase of illuminated sculptures and environments in this nighttime experience harmonizing light, art, and nature. Explore four acres of gardens, wandering among numerous lighted vistas and sculptural displays where you can view, touch, explore, and play with the nature of light itself.

Location: Paine Art Center & Gardens, 1410 Algoma Blvd., Oshkosh

Prices range from \$20-\$40 for adults, \$12-\$20 for youth
Reservations Required

The Fall Equinox/First Day of Autumn

Monday, September 22, 2025

This marks the day with equal amounts day and night. Days grow darker from here as we head towards winter.

Native Heritage Celebration

September 25, 2025 - 5pm



A family friendly event celebrating the culture and heritage of Native American Tribes in Wisconsin. Includes traditional smudging, youth drumming, a panel discussion, and a "Living Village" with artifacts and traditions specific to several individual tribes.

Location: Peck Pavilion, 929 N. Water Street, Milwaukee

Admission: Free



A Sunflower's Charm

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.

Sunflower season can vary farm to farm, but, 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.



JERRY SMITH PUMPKIN FARM

Opening September 13
Seasonal Activities - Website
7150 18TH Street (Hwy L),
Kenosha, WI

POLLY'S PUMPKIN PATCH

Opening September 12
Sunflower Viewing Fields
N4367 Hwy 57,
Chilton, WI

OLD HOMESTEAD ORCHARD

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

WALDVOGEL'S FARM

Opening September 13
Field Of Sunflowers
N7416 County Road I,
Juneau, WI

BASSE'S TASTE OF COUNTRY

August 31-Sept.2, Sept. 5-8, 12-15
Apple & Sunflower Fest
3190 County Line Q,
Colgate, WI

BUSY BARNS ADVENTURE FARM

Opening September 20
Sunflower Days At The Farm
W7675 US Hwy 12,
Fort Atkinson, WI

LANNON SUNFLOWER FARM

September Sunflowers Blooming
U-Pick Sunflowers and More
W204 N8525 Lannon Rd.,
Menomonee Falls, WI

GIERACH ORCHARDS

See Facebook for updates
Pick Your Own Sunflowers
9616 W. Bonniwell Road,
Mequon, WI





Along the path at Lannon Sunflower Farm.

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

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



Abuzz at Kelley's Country Creamery.



In full bloom at Roots & Stems Flower Farm.

CENTRAL WISCONSIN GREEN BAY AREA

PUMPKIN HOLLOW

Pumpkin Hollow Facebook Page
230222 Marathon County H,
Edgar, WI

HELENE'S HILLTOP ORCHARD

September 6-28
Sunflower Experience
N1189 Quarter Road,
Merrill, WI





A Season Of Change

The evolution of fall as illustrated by one of my favorite trees at Greenfield Park.





From This Season's Bouquet



The end of the blooming season is still filled with opportunity. Harvest some of your faded favorites and save the seeds for planting next year. You'll have plenty for next year's garden, with plenty to share. Seeds make great holiday gifts, too.

You'll need something to put each type in to dry out before separating out the seeds. I've found paper kraft lunch bags work well. And they can easily be labeled with a marker.

Some of my easy-growing favorites are: Black-eyed Susan, Purple Coneflower, Cosmos, and Zinnias. Black-eyed Susan and Purple Coneflower are native, and perennials. They'll come back next year. Cosmos and Zinnias can self-seed, but in our Wisconsin climate they are best planted as annuals. They do well in both pots and in flower beds. All of these are popular with bees, butterflies, birds, and other pollinators.



Snip off the faded blooms before the seeds have fallen. Store them in the bags to dry out further if they're not ready for seed pulling. Once they are dry, and the petals come off easily, you can separate out the seeds from the center of the seed head.



You can store or package the seeds any way you like, however, you'll want to make sure they stay cool and dry, and aren't disturbed by sunlight.

I purchased a large quantity of pre-printed seed packets, and then filled in the type of flower, etc. But you can use kraft envelopes or letter envelopes. If using clear glass jars or containers, be sure to label and store them in a cool, dry, dark place until you're ready to use them.

O C T O B E R

PARADISE SPRINGS NATURE TRAIL - NIGHT HIKE

Saturday, October 25, 6pm-8pm



A great opportunity to enjoy Paradise Springs Nature Trail after dark is on a guided hike. The easy, half-mile paved trail is both stroller and wheelchair friendly. Come learn about the wild creatures that come out at night in the Southern Kettle Moraine. Flashlights are encouraged.

Location: W374 S8640 County Rd N, Eagle State Park Sticker Required

HAPPILY HAUNTED - BOOKWORM GARDENS

October 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, 24, 25, 26 5 - 8pm



The enchanted Bookworm Gardens, in Sheboygan, offers a family friendly event to celebrate the halloween season. Visitors can stroll through the gardens decorated with twinkling lights, and other fun displays.

Food and drink concessions will be available for purchase. A toasty bonfire, a halloween themed storytime, and a festive carved pumpkin walk add to the fun. All children will receive a festive treat bag.

Tickets can be purchased online. Pricing ranges from \$8 to \$15 per ticket.

OLD WORLD WISCONSIN

Halloween Legends & Lore

Ghost Stories, Games, Food & Drinks

Family Friendly Event

Fridays & Saturdays

October 10-11

October 17-18

October 24-25

5:30pm - 9:30pm

Tickets & Registration Required



The Hollows At Phantom Lake YMCA in Mukwonago

Family friendly hike through a wonderland made of 3,000 carved pumpkin displays of fairylands, Viking ships, mermaids, witches and wizards on the wooded trails of Phantom Lake.

October 3-4, 10-12, 16-19, 23-26

Tickets & Registration Required

37th Annual Halloween Haunts at Wehr Nature Center

300 pumpkins in an enchanted forest light up the trail for a family friendly, slightly spooky event.



October 16 - 18, 6pm - 8:30pm

Advanced Ticket Purchase Required

An Artful Autumn



Autumn is a great time to explore your creative side. Whether it's a hands-on nature-themed workshop, or appreciating the craftsmanship and talents of other artists on a scenic hike or drive through Wisconsin countryside.

ALL THAT TREES PROVIDE

The Value of Trees and Forests in Our Everyday Lives
Community-Curated Trail Spur Exhibition

Inaugural Exhibition Opening:

Saturday, October 4 3pm-4:30pm

MEET THE ARTISTS! John Suess and Holden Van Dyke will be on-hand to celebrate their art inspired by the forest and *All That Trees Provide*.

Visit the Forest Exploration Center website to RSVP to attend this free event.



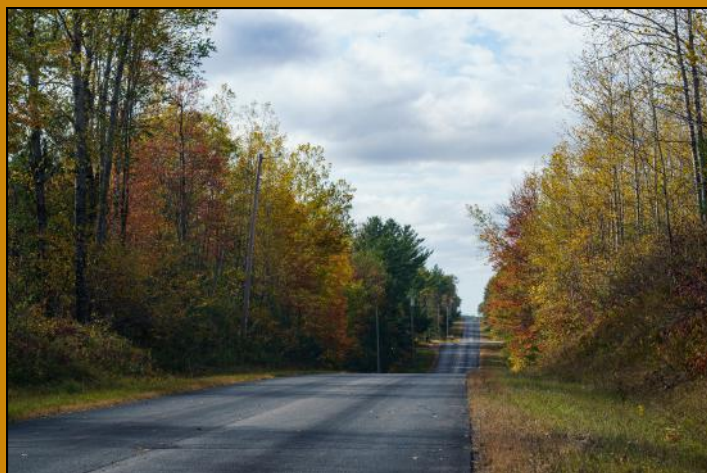
FALL ART TOUR - MINERAL POINT

October 17-19, Daily 10am - 6pm

Autumn is the perfect time to take a scenic drive through the winding countryside of Mineral Point, Spring Green, Dodgeville, and Baraboo. Along the way enjoy creations by, and art studios of, local artists.

Sculptors, potters, jewelers, woodworkers and more open their doors to the public for a behind the scenes peek at art and the creative process.

The tour is free, and there is no registration required.



COLLECTING AND PRINTING WITH LEAVES EXPLORING NATURE THROUGH ART

Lynden Sculpture Garden

Sunday, October 19, 2025, 12:30pm - 2:30pm

Celebrate the beauty of autumn by gathering leaves from Lynden and using them to create nature-inspired prints. Experiment with different printing techniques, layering textures and colors to design a unique print for a friend or loved one.

Fee: \$15/\$10 members per session per family (all materials included). All ages are welcome; children younger than 12 should attend with an adult. Registration Online.





Stevens Point Sculpture Park



JAMES TELLEN WOODLAND SCULPTURE GARDEN

Town of Wilson Open Daily: Dawn to Dusk

Nestled among a woodland path on James Tellen's log cabin property are 15 unique, and meticulously crafted concrete sculptures. A mix of miniature and life-size sculptures in this natural setting highlight his eclectic work.

Fall is a great time to wander through the exhibit.

STEVENS POINT SCULPTURE PARK

Stevens Point Open Daily: Dawn to Dusk

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. The sculptures are placed within the woodlands, each taking residence within the natural surroundings along the trail. Fall colors will frame them out even more.



OLBRICH BOTANICAL GARDENS

Autumn is a great time to visit Olbrich Botanical Gardens. The birch trees are stunning year-round, but incredible in fall. The outdoor gardens are free to roam year-round.

Head into the conservatory to warm up and enjoy tropical blooms. Waterfalls and fountains add to the vibe.

Open Daily, October - March, 10am - 4pm

Admission to conservatory: \$3 - \$6

BOBROWITZ SCULPTURE GARDEN

This spectacular six acre outdoor sculpture gallery displays the artworks of local sculpture artist Paul Bobrowitz. Clever, colorful, whimsical, thoughtful, and plentiful. Everywhere you look there is art. And things that will soon be art.

The outdoor gallery is open to the public from sunrise to sunset. Keep in mind, this is not a park, but an art gallery. All pieces are for sale, but visiting is free. There is a sculpture that serves as a donation box, should you be inclined.

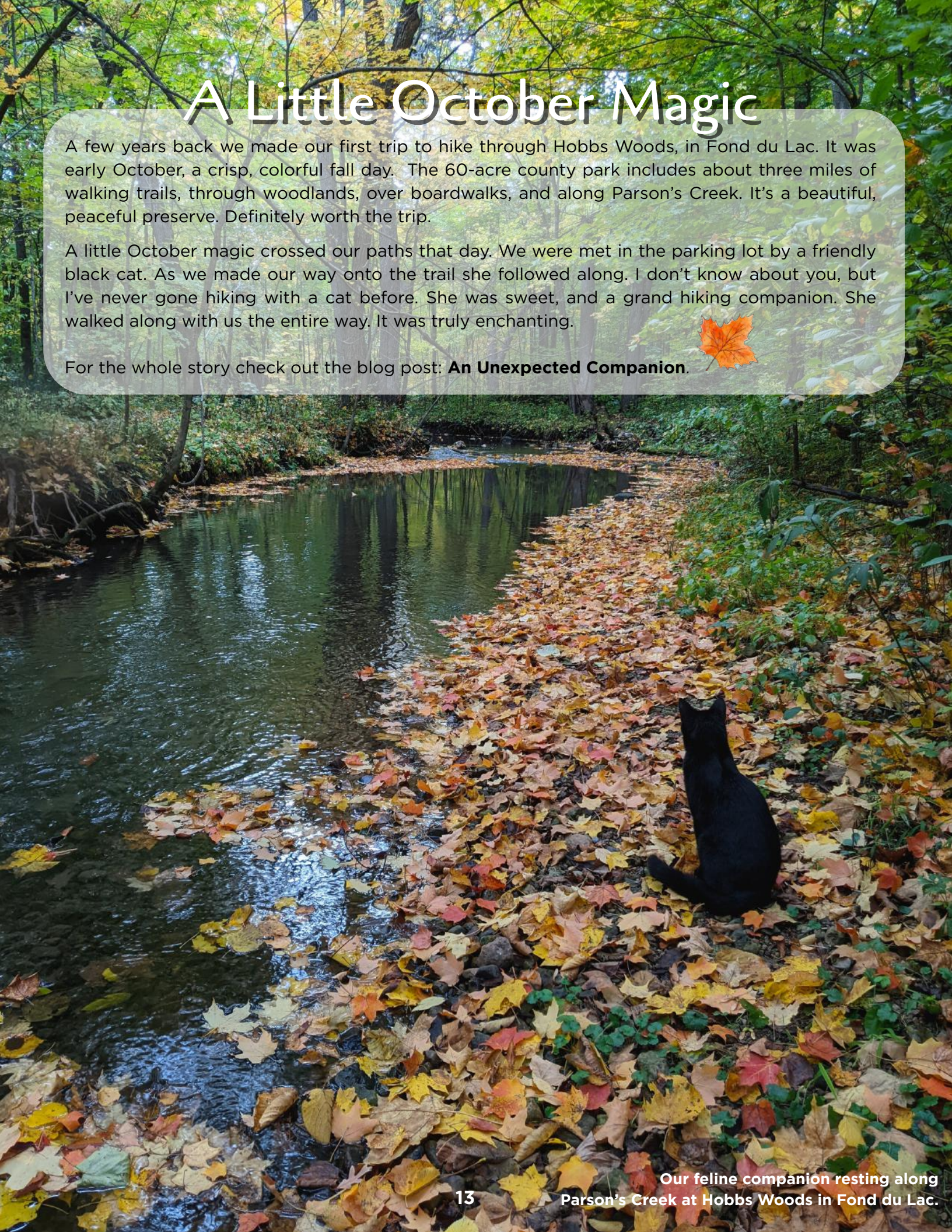


A Little October Magic

A few years back we made our first trip to hike through Hobbs Woods, in Fond du Lac. It was early October, a crisp, colorful fall day. The 60-acre county park includes about three miles of walking trails, through woodlands, over boardwalks, and along Parson's Creek. It's a beautiful, peaceful preserve. Definitely worth the trip.

A little October magic crossed our paths that day. We were met in the parking lot by a friendly black cat. As we made our way onto the trail she followed along. I don't know about you, but I've never gone hiking with a cat before. She was sweet, and a grand hiking companion. She walked along with us the entire way. It was truly enchanting.

For the whole story check out the blog post: **An Unexpected Companion.**





Goodman County Park

Last fall I embarked on a weekend driving tour of Marinette County that featured waterfalls, scenic overlooks, and plenty of turning leaves. It was a lot of driving and wandering, but it was so worth it! All of it was beautiful. The weather, the changing colors, the waterfalls.

I took my trip in early October, when the colors were really beginning to change in Marinette County. To pick the best time to enjoy autumn leaf peeping in Wisconsin, make it a point to check out Travel Wisconsin's online annual **Fall Color Report**. It's a fantastic resource.

Heckrodt Wetland Reserve - Appleton

Enroute to Marinette, I took the opportunity to take a break from the drive and get in a nature walk at Heckrodt Wetland Reserve in Appleton. It was definitely worth the effort. I can see why it's a popular nature spot in the area.

The 91-acre nature preserve features just under three miles of walking trails. A majority of them are easily accessible boardwalk. They wind through the reserves multiple habitats: upland forest, forested wetland, prairie meadow, and marsh. The 4,000 square foot nature center offers a wide array of exhibits that educate on the landscapes and wildlife found in the reserve.



Trail Hours: Daily, 6am-9pm

Nature Center Hours: Sunday and Monday: Closed;

Tuesday-Friday: 8am-4:30pm; Saturday: 11am-4pm

Admission: Free, with donations accepted

Parking is available on-site

Pets are not allowed on the trails, however, uniformed assistance animals are welcome.

Bicycles are not allowed on the trails. Trails are for pedestrian traffic, strollers, and wheelchairs and motorized medical aids.

Location: 1305 Plank Road, Menasha
(Winnebago County)

14 For more information, click [here](#). Trail map [here](#).



Menomonee River Park



MENOMONEE RIVER PARK - Wausaukee

This 65-acre Menominee County park resides along the scenic Menominee River. Located about 18 miles north of Marinette, it's a great spot to spend an afternoon relaxing by the water. A day-use area, it offers picnic tables, horseshoe pits, fishing, a boat landing, and a rentable open-air pavilion. If you're looking for a peaceful spot for a wander near the river, or to enjoy a picnic lunch, check it out. There is a \$5 day use fee.

The fee can be paid using the self-serve envelopes on-site, or you can pre-pay online and print out a pass to put on your dash. One pass can be used to access multiple Marinette County Parks in one day. If you reside in the area, a yearly park pass will run \$25.

Entrance Fees: \$5 day pass, or annual pass required (per vehicle)

Hours: Daily, 8am - 10pm

Parking: Parking lot on site

Restrooms Available

Location: 2226 Park Place Drive, Wausaukee

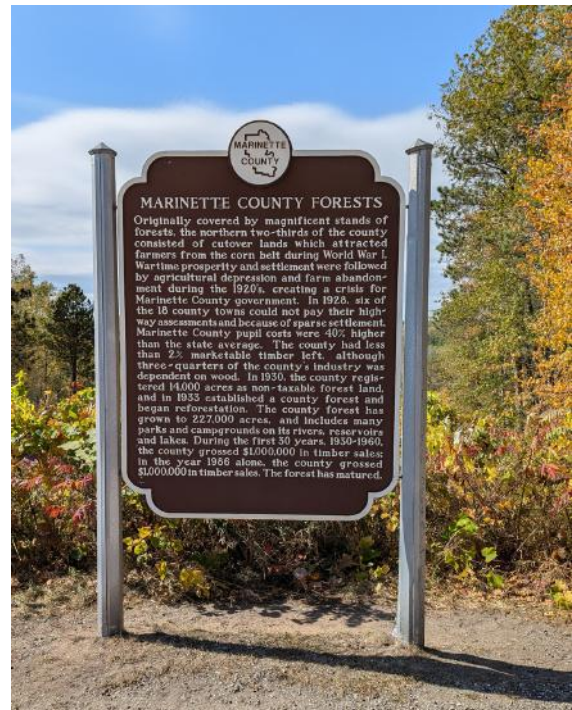
For more information, [click here](#).



Hwy 141 Scenic Overlook - Wausaukee, Marinette County

HWY 141 SCENIC OVERLOOK - Wausaukee

Headed north along Hwy 141, just past Island Lake Road, up the hill, and on the left, is a scenic overlook. In fall, especially, it's worth the stop. Here you'll find a stunning view of some of Marinette County's forest land. There's a sign detailing the logging history of the county through generations come and gone. It's a good spot to stretch your legs and enjoy the view.





Dave's Falls County Park

DAVE'S FALLS COUNTY PARK - Amberg

There are 15 waterfalls in Marinette County. Dave's Falls is one of the largest, and more notable. It's a spectacular park. A short walk from the parking lot, including a lengthy stairway, leads down to the falls. The walking trails themselves are pretty easy going, but keep watch for the exposed roots and rocks. Plenty of rock formations to climb around, and a footbridge over the Pike River, with stunning views in all directions of the river, the waterfalls, and the trees. A sturdy pair of shoes would be a wise choice.

You'll find a picnic area, children's play area, and pit toilets near the parking lot. Even a designated dog walking area. *Winter Use:* the park is open for use during winter months, although the parking lot is not always maintained. Restrooms, bridges, and trails are not maintained during the winter months, so plan accordingly.



Entrance Fees: There is a \$5 day use fee. The fee can be paid using the self-serve envelopes on-site, or you can pre-pay online and print out a pass to put on your dash. One pass can be used to access multiple Marinette County Parks in one day. If you reside in the area, or plan a longer stay, a yearly park pass will run \$25.



Hours: Daily - 5am - 10pm
 Parking: Parking lot on site
 Restrooms available
 Dogs are permitted on-leash

Location: W7902 County Park Road, Amberg
 For more information, click [here](#). Trail map [here](#).





Along Benson Lake Rd., en route to Goodman Park/Strong Falls



GOODMAN COUNTY PARK/STRONG FALLS - Athelstane

Goodman Park is 240 acres of gorgeous located on the Peshtigo River in Marinette County. The park features hiking trails, ski trails, trout fishing, an ATV/UTV trail access spur, campgrounds, and a day use lodge. A highlight of the park is the scenic Strong Falls, which flow through the Peshtigo River.

I was impressed by the lengthy, all-accessible footbridge over the falls, which offers some great views. The landscape here is stunning and impressive, twisting trees sprouting out from among large flat rocks scattered through the falls.



Entrance Fees: There is a \$5 day use fee. The fee can be paid using the self-serve envelopes on-site, or you can pre-pay online and print out a pass to put on your dash. One pass can be used to access multiple Marinette County Parks in one day. If you reside in the area, or plan a longer stay, a yearly park pass will run \$25.

Hours: Daily - 5am - 10pm / **Parking:** Parking lot on site
Restrooms available / **Dogs** are permitted on-leash

Location: N15201 Goodman Park Road, Athelstane
For more information, click [here](#). Park [map](#).





Thunder Mountain Overlook



THUNDER MOUNTAIN OVERLOOK - Crivitz

Located in Western Marinette County, Thunder Mountain Overlook is 160 acres of walking and mountain biking trails that feature stellar views of the surrounding area. Three miles of mowed trails traverse native plants and trees, along varying hilly terrain. Reaching the top of the overlook, the autumn colors in view are vivid and breathtaking.

Rustic restrooms, and picnic areas are located along the trails. A water pump is available.

Pets: dogs are permitted on-leash, and must be cleaned up after

Hours: Open Daily 5am - 10pm, May 1 through end of hunting season. Closed in winter.

Fees: Marinette County Parks day or season pass required.

Location: W14000 Thunder Mountain Road, Crivitz
For more information, click [here](#). Find a trail map [here](#).





Harmony Arboretum & Gardens

HARMONY ARBORETUM & GARDENS - Peshtigo

To say I was impressed with Harmony Arboretum and Gardens, in Peshtigo, is an understatement. On my autumn trip to Marinette County, I took a side trip to visit the arboretum and gardens. I'm so glad I did. At nearly 500 acres, I barely scratched the surface.

Collaboration between the Northern Lights Master Gardeners, Friends of Harmony Farms, Chappee Rapids Audubon Society, and UW-Extension Marinette County manage the gardens, Children's Learning Garden, and Harmony Hardwoods Memorial Forest.

A 17-acre prairie is managed by Land & Water Conservation. Walking trails wander through the prairie among native plants and grasses.

The hardwood forest features walking trails among trees over 150 years old, some remnants/survivors from the Great Peshtigo Fire of 1871. The forest is a popular bird watching spot, and is alive with wildflowers in spring. Guided tours are offered on occasion. The forest, like the gardens, is open to the public.

The Children's Learning Garden is, open to the public, but is also a popular local field trip destination for school groups. The learning garden serves to introduce children to gardening, and to connect them with nature in a multitude of ways.

Hours: Open Daily
Fees: Free
Parking: Lot on site

Location: N3890 County E, Peshtigo
Check out their [website](#) for more information.





Copper Culture State Park

COPPER CULTURE STATE PARK - Oconto

Copper Culture State Park is a 42-acre Wisconsin State Park, located just west of the city of Oconto. It's an easy access from Hwy 41, and a perfect spot to stop and stretch your legs, get some fresh air, and take in some beautiful scenery and local history. If you're on a road trip through the area, add a visit to this park to your itinerary.

There are four walking trails through prairie, woodlands, and along the Oconto River. It also connects to an accessible paved 3-mile Copper Culture Trail, via a Hwy-41 underpass. The trail offers both walking, wheelchair access, and biking around the Oconto River, and connecting the state park to the city of Oconto. Pets on-leash are also permitted on this trail.

The site was officially designated a Wisconsin State Park in 1959. It was added to the National Register of Historic Landmarks in 1961. The park building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1966. Now a museum, the brick building was originally built in 1924, as a home for Charles and Emma Werrebroeck, an immigrant family from Belgium. The museum is open daily, 10am - 4pm, from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Entrance is free, though donations are welcome.



There is ample parking, a modern restroom, and an open air picnic shelter.

Hours: Open Daily 10am - 4pm

Fees: No entrance fee.

No state park sticker is required.

Location: 260 Copper Culture Way, Oconto, WI (Oconto County)

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





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 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. Here you'll find a quick guide to exploring the Door.

HIKING SAFELY DURING HUNTING SEASON - 2025

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.

FALL FOR DOOR COUNTY

Festivals Abound in 2025

September 13 - Bailey's Harbor, Autumn Fest

September 20 - Sturgeon Bay, Harvest Fest

October 11-12 - Egg Harbor, Pumpkin Patch Festival

October 11 - Washington Island, Fall Fun Fest & Cider Pressing Party

October 17-19 - Sister Bay, Fall Fest

October 25 - Fish Creek, Jack O'Lantern Days

October 25 - Sturgeon Bay, Thrills & Chills



I've made many trips to Horicon over the years, most often to visit Horicon Marsh. On the way to the marsh we often passed signs for Ledge County Park. We finally made the trip to Horicon specifically to visit Ledge County Park, and it was so worth the effort!

The park is 82 acres, and lies along the Niagara Escarpment. This natural rock ledge divides the park into upper and lower areas, and, from the upper ledge, provides stunning views of the not too distant Horicon Marsh. Views of the surrounding area can be seen from both the upper and lower ledges.

The ledges themselves, are amazing rock formations, embellished by incredibly lush trees, plants, and vegetation. I was in awe of the ferns, mosses, and Wild Columbine, that adorned the cavernous rock. On a steamy summer day, a walk among the ledges can offer the comfort of cooler temperatures.

The ledge trails are quite rocky, and a bit tricky at times, so good hiking shoes are a must. The upper-most scenic lookout has its own parking lot, and a new all-accessible boardwalk and deck for taking in the view. Three other hiking trails make their way through woodlands, and circle back to the campground area.



The upper level all-accessible boardwalk and deck.

Autumn casts a golden glow throughout the park, and along the walking trails. Perfect for a bit of leaf peeping that will not disappoint.



The park offers picnic sites, and 45 camp sites, with nearby showers. Both 30 amp, and non-electric sites are available. Grills, shelters, and picnic tables are available. There are pit toilets along some of the trails. A playground is available on the lower level, and volleyball facilities on the upper level.

Daily Hours: 7am to 8:30pm

Daily Entrance Fees: Free

Camping Fees [Here](#)

Location: N7403 Park Road, Horicon, WI (Dodge County)

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



Autumn view of Horicon Marsh and the surrounding area.



Columbine bloom rising from the moss covered rock.





WOODLAND DUNES NATURE CENTER & PRESERVE FALL STAR PARTY - Saturday, November 15, 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



HAVENWOODS STATE FOREST

Havenwoods State Forest is Wisconsin's only urban state forest. If you're looking to escape the city hustle, escape to the forest and hike its nature trails. They'll be bathed in fall colors.

November events hosted at Havenwoods include an introduction to birding class, open crafting sessions, educational seminars on how wild animals eat, and stewardship Saturdays, where volunteers will learn to identify and remove invasive species in the forest. View the November calendar for more details.

RIVEREDGE NATURE CENTER - OPEN HOUSE Free Trail Access!! November 8, 9am-4pm

Located in Saukville, Riveredge Nature Center is a 379-acre nature sanctuary, with over 10 miles of walking trails. Workshops, summer camps and more are offered throughout the year.

This November they celebrate the grand reopening of the newly renovated visitor center. Take a tour to learn about all the new features, and then enjoy Free access to the nature trails all day.



ICE AGE TRAIL - EAGLE SEGMENT - NIGHT HIKE Saturday, November 15 - 6pm - 8pm

Night creatures come out to play with the setting of the sun! Bats flutter in the dusk air, and coyotes call to the stars. Come and join us for a hike to find these friends and see the forest in a new light! Bringing a flashlight is highly recommended. Hike consists of 2 miles of gentle rolling hills.

Meet at the parking lot for the Ice Age Trail "Eagle Segment" on Hwy. 59, 1 mile west of Eagle.





FALL BACK

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME ENDS
Sunday, November 2 - 2am



FULL SUPER MOON HIKE - Schlitz Audubon Nature Center

Wednesday, November 5, 2025 4pm - 5:30pm

A guided hike for all ages exploring Schlitz Audubon Nature Center by the light of the November super moon. Along the way, you'll discover why this natural phenomenon occurs and learn about Wisconsin's native nightlife. View the moonlit lake from atop the center tower and call for owls in the southern ravine.

Tickets: \$12-\$18 Purchase Online

THE PUMPKIN DINER

Once Halloween has passed, as the autumn season is speeding by, it's a great time to make use of leftover pumpkins, turning them into feeders for the birds, squirrels, and chipmunks.

Seeds can be a mix of different types. Woodpecker nut mixes, along with black oil sunflower, safflower, and shelled, and unshelled peanuts. You can even mix in some of the pumpkin seeds as well.

For more details visit the blog post: [THE PUMPKIN DINER](#).



NOVEMBER PHOTO CHALLENGE

Take some time to explore your creative side this November. Whether you pick up a digital camera, a smartphone, or an instant-film camera, get outside, visit your local coffee shop, get baking something decadent, or enjoy some fall fun with friends.

Some ideas to get you started:

Autumn leaves
Spider webs
Sunlit nature path
A cozy blanket
A mini pumpkin display
Deer sightings
Squirrels gathering nuts
Faded fall blooms
A colorful fall scarf
Boots in a puddle
Apple picking
Pumpkin pie baking

Coffee shop vibes
A fall wreath
Jumping in leaves
A woodland nature trail
Acorns
Turkeys in the wild
A foggy day
An umbrella in the rain
Berries on a branch
An Autumn selfie
A crisp juicy apple
A knitting project

Holding out a giant leaf
A cozy fall sweater
A cup of tea and a book
A view through a window
The autumn sky
A giant tree with faded leaves
Fall road view
Autumn sunset
Full moon
A heart shaped from leaves
Your favorite hobby
Someone you love



Something you're thankful for
Your pet being cute
Frost on branches
A reflection
A wild bird
The first holiday lights you see
A candlelit table
Harvesting seeds in the garden
A late season bouquet

#OptOutside



Kinsey Park, Brookfield

Instead of hitting the mall on Black Friday, November 28, 2025, 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. Here are a few of my favorite local spots for November days. Visit *TheParkNextDoor* to find plenty more.



BROWN DEER PARK - Brown Deer
7835 N. Green Bay Road
Milwaukee County



RIDGE RUN PARK - West Bend
300 S. University Drive
Washington County



JACKSON PARK - Milwaukee
3500 W. Forest Home Avenue
Milwaukee County



NATURELAND COUNTY PARK
W8338 Territorial Rd, Whitewater
Walworth County



SCHOEN LAUFEN PARK - Germantown
N108 W18500 Lilac Lane
Washington County



FOREST EXPLORATION CENTER - Wauwatosa
1800 Forest Exploration Drive
Milwaukee County



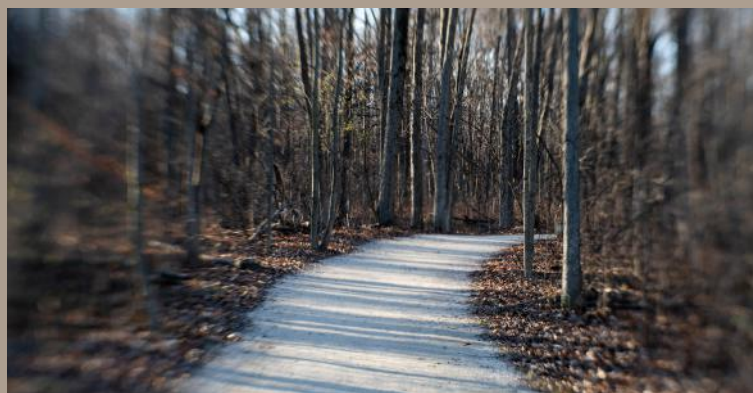
RICHFIELD HISTORICAL PARK - Richfield
4399 Pleasant Hill Road
Washington County



CARVER-ROEHL COUNTY PARK - Clinton
4907 Carvers Rock Road
Rock County



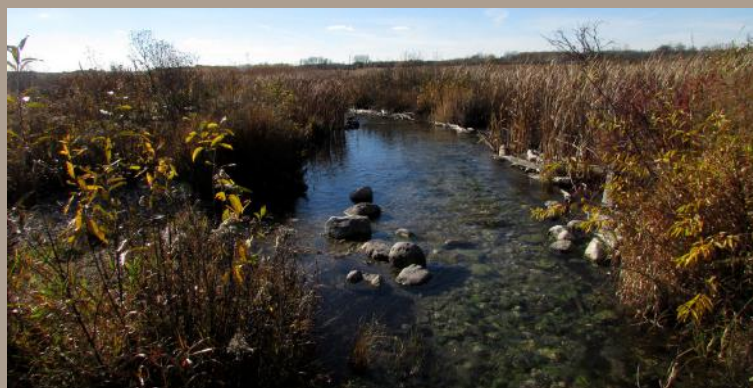
WADEWITZ NATURE CAMP - Rochester
2716 Buena Park Road
Racine County



FRANKLIN WOODS - Franklin
3723 W. Puetz Road
Milwaukee County



BLACK RIVER TRAILS - Sheboygan
6167 S. 12th Street
Sheboygan County



SCUPPERNONG SPRINGS NATURE TRAIL
County Road ZZ, Dousman
Waukesha County

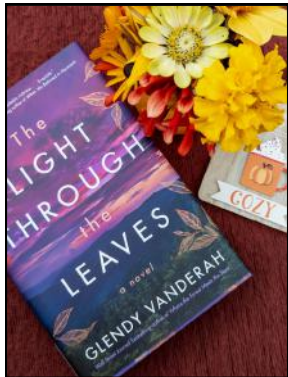


Escape Into A Cozy Read



If your autumn bucket list includes cozying up with a good book, here are a few titles to consider. Some old and some new, to enjoy as the season settles in. Themes include surviving heartbreak by disappearing into the wilderness and exploring connections to nature, ghost stories at summer camp, healing through gardening, friendship in a small town, and an adventure into a mysterious forest realm.

THE LIGHT THROUGH THE LEAVES by Glendy Vanderah



published 2021 by
Lake Union Publishing

Ellis Abbey is a young mother of three. A hike in the forest with her children soon turns into a nightmare. In the rush of everyday family chaos, Ellis' young daughter is left unattended, for just a few minutes. Then disappears.

Ellis cannot bear the guilt and eventually leaves her husband and sons behind. Fearing she is not a good mother, and that they would be better off without her, she embarks on a trek through the wilderness of the country, avoiding making lasting connections with anyone.

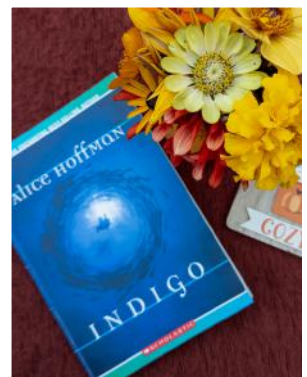
Raven is a young girl growing up in a remote part of Washington, home schooled by her mysterious, over protective mother. She yearns for connection to other kids her age, to experience more of the everyday world, instead of her isolated life. Will she be able to convince her mother to give her that chance?

It's been a while since I couldn't put a book down. This story drew me in and kept me there. All the elements I love in a story were represented. Interesting lead characters, a bit of mystery, connections to nature, a pinch of magic, and love. A story of healing and redemption, forgiveness and hope.

INDIGO by Alice Hoffman (For ages 9-12)

Martha is thirteen, has lost her mother, and lives in a dry and dusty small town. She and her two best friends, Trevor and Eli, feel like misfits and dream of a life of fun and adventure. Together they decide to run away, pack their bags, and meet late at night to head out of town. Sometimes, though, things don't go as planned. And their journey is about to change their lives in unexpected ways.

I love a good coming-of-age tale, and one with touches of magic sweetens the journey.



published 2002 by
Scholastic Inc.



THE BUMBLEBEE FLIES ANYWAY - A Memoir of Love, Loss, and Muddy Hands by Kate Bradbury



published 2018 by
Bloomsbury Publishing PLC

How does an avid gardener, a lover of nature and the wild world, leave her own treasured garden behind? Kate's marriage of ten years has ended, and she is unmoored. She left her husband, her home, and her cherished wildlife garden behind to make an unexpected new start.

She lands in a small flat with a tiny urban deck covered backyard. Virtually no green space. And she sets out to rewild this barren little plot with plants and trees, inviting in the birds, the pollinators, and other wildlife, while surrounded by neighbors doing just the opposite.

Will tending the land heal her broken heart? Rewild her spirit? She's about to find out.

THE MYSTERY OF THE HAUNTED DANCE HALL by Charis Cotter (For ages 9-12)

Charis Cotter lives near one of the most haunted parts of Newfoundland. And she knows how to tell a good ghost story.

Bee is spending her first summer at camp feeling like an outsider. But she soon makes a friend, Zippy, and together they set out to solve a mystery unfolding at the camp.

A combination of outdoor adventures, spooky stories, and finding friendships. Just the sort of things that make the experience of going to summer camp memorable.



published 2025 by
Tundra Books



published 2024 by
Ballantine Books

THE LOST STORY by Meg Shaffer

As boys, best friends Jeremy and Rafe disappeared into a forest in West Virginia. Endless searches turned up nothing. And then, six months later, the boys mysteriously reappeared. No memory of where they had been. No physical evidence of trauma.

Fifteen years later they are living very separate lives. One nearly a recluse, the other a famous missing persons investigator. Now they must join together again to return to the forest in a search to bring back the missing sister of Emilie, who went missing at the same time Jeremy and Rafe did. Had they ever seen her? Might they remember what happened back then?

The three of them, Rafe, Jeremy, and Emilie, head into the forest together. Into an otherworldly realm of magic, and danger. Will they succeed in their quest?

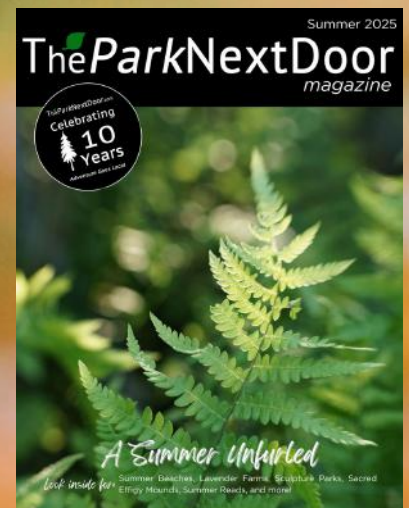
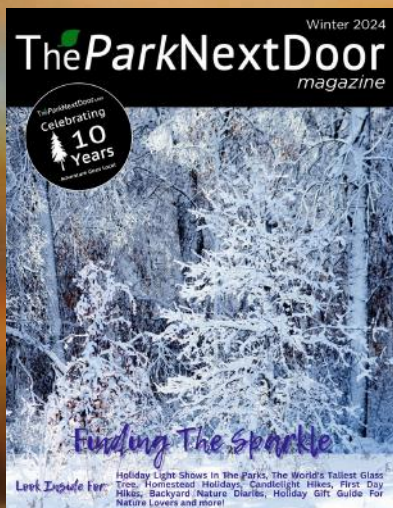
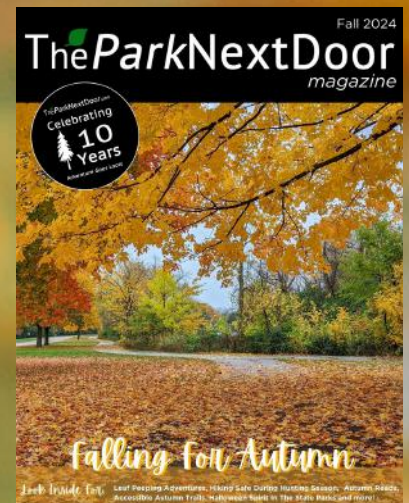
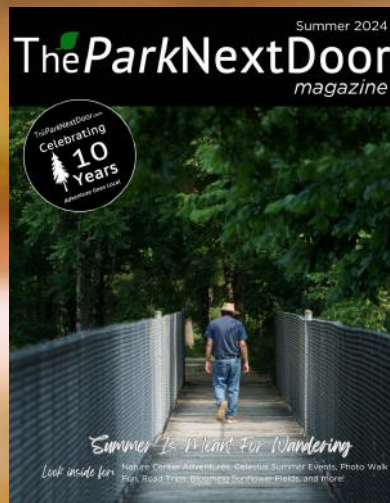
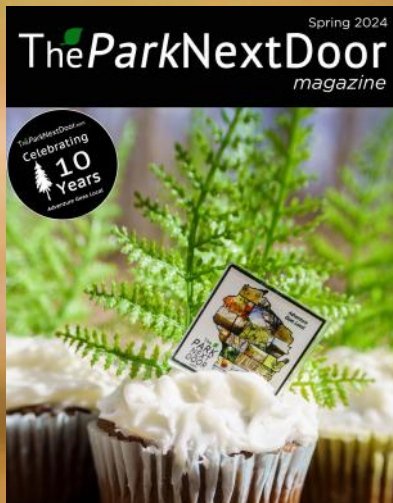


Exploring the local parks, state parks, nature areas,
and other bits of wilderness in Wisconsin.

All Back Issues Available Online

TheParkNextDoor

magazine



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.



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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.

