

Spring 2024

# The ParkNextDoor

*magazine*







## Welcome Friends,

Ten years on, I'm still enamored with the neighborhood and small community parks and preserves of Wisconsin. They are such a vital part of our everyday lives. They make it possible for us to get outside, in every season, even if just for a short time, without too much effort.

The benefits are ongoing. A bit of exercise and fresh air. A few moments to breathe in peace, to unwind after a long day, or a trying time. Or maybe just the opportunity to revel in natural beauty. To admire the landscape. Listen to birdsong. To appreciate the wildflowers and the trees, the reflection of sunlight on water. Or, maybe relax with a good book on a park bench or a picnic blanket. And if you've got kids, there's something awesome about letting them burn off some of that endless energy at a park.

I am all for bigger adventures, road trips, and escaping to the beauty of other states, and countries. But, after more than a decade of exploring what Wisconsin has to offer, I'm still grateful for what is so wonderfully within reach.

Our green spaces sustain us, and are a vital part of our natural ecosystem. For humans, wildlife, and every other living thing. They play an important role in keeping this planet going. Their value, to me, is immeasurable. I'm betting you have a favorite park or nature preserve. A go-to spot for when you need that moment of peace, or to walk the dog. These spaces are personal. We count on them. We need them.

And for those days when we have more time, more energy, more ambition, our state parks and other wild spaces await. When looking for a change of scenery, there's plenty to choose from.

After ten years, there are over 300 profiles of green spaces on TheParkNextDoor. So much to enjoy. And plenty more to come. So, stay tuned...



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

-Kimberly



# What's Inside

Spring in Wisconsin is a thing of beauty. After months of cold, dreary weather, we finally have warmth and sunshine on deck. It's a great time to look forward and make plans to get outside to enjoy what Wisconsin nature has to offer.

If you're wanting to get out for a walk somewhere new to you, check out **30 Easy, Scenic Nature Walks** for plenty of great ideas. If fishing is more your thing, **Gone Fishing** focuses on casting a reel at local community parks.

Looking to try bird watching? **Let's Go Birding** will guide you into it with plenty of information for novice birders, and those who want to attract birds to their backyards as well.

It's Earth Month - **Celebrate Earth Day** with 25 great ideas that will connect you with nature on Earth Day and beyond.

Ready to step out on a rockier trail? **On The Rocks** will introduce you to four great parks that feature hikes along the magnificent Niagara Escarpment.

Happy Spring!

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# 30 Easy, Scenic Nature Walks



If you're looking forward to getting back outside to enjoy the greener months of the year, start making plans to check out some awesome and easy nature trails. We've got 30 great reasons to put on your walking shoes. Most of these are on the shorter side. Perfect for fitting into your day without a big time commitment. Double up on a couple in the same vicinity, or add a hike to other activities you have going on in the same area. Whatever suits your style.

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## **DODGE COUNTY**

[Horicon Marsh Boardwalk Trail \(Egret Trail\)](#) - There are a variety of nature trails at the Horicon Marsh. But, no matter what, I can't visit the marsh without taking a walk along the marsh boardwalk trail.

It's been updated in recent years, and offers views of the marsh that just can't be beat. From all directions there are views of the waterfowl and other birds that visit the marsh throughout the year.

The trail is located near the midway point parking lot of the 3 mile auto tour, and is free to all.

The boardwalk is accessible to wheelchairs, walkers, and strollers.

The auto tour and boardwalk are open daily, except during hunting season.





## FOND DU LAC COUNTY

Belle Reynolds Nature Trail - This short, but charming nature trail in Oakfield, was born of community efforts. It's also used as the school forest for the Oakfield School District.

It's a birdy little trail, and is just minutes from the Oakfield Ledge State Natural Area, a good spot for a longer hike, if you're so inclined.

Spruce Lake Bog - One of my favorite boardwalk nature trails. It's gorgeous in every season. A quick hike. But if you're interested in rare native plants like pink lady slippers and pitcher plants, treat yourself to a walk through here in spring, especially. The variety of ferns and mosses are so lush and lovely, too. Nearby, Mauthe Lake State Recreation Area is another great spot to spend an afternoon, or a weekend of camping.



## KENOSHA COUNTY

Jean McGraw Memorial Nature Preserve - This 13-acre preserve is just a short turn off of I-94, but it's an easy spot to disappear into. In summer it's so incredibly lush and green, and borders the Des Plaines River and wetlands.

## ROCK COUNTY

Rotary Botanical Gardens - If you're looking for garden inspiration, take a walk through this botanical garden in Janesville. Their 24 different garden styles bring color and lushness to life. In winter they put on a truly festive holiday light show, too.

## PORTAGE COUNTY

Stevens Point Sculpture Park - Incredible art displays mixed in with winding nature trails make this park worthy of a weekend road trip. It connects with the Green Circle Trail, a hiking and biking trail that travels through Stevens Point.



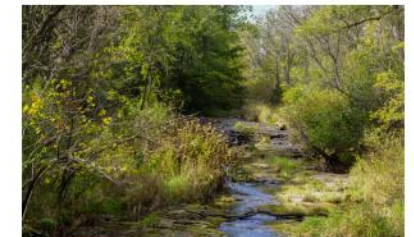
## OZAUKEE COUNTY

Grasslyn Nature Preserve - A 19-acre preserve in a residential area, you'll enjoy the birds, native prairie and walking trails.

Trinity Creek Wetland Habitat - Another residential adjacent preserve, it's 35 acres of native habitat for birds and other wildlife.

Lion's Den Nature Preserve - A treasured preserve along the bluffs of Lake Michigan, with walking trails, great views of the lake, and lots of birds.

Sauk Creek Nature Preserve - Walking trails, waterfalls, a creek, and great bird watching. I've spotted Indigo Buntings and Cedar Waxwings here.





## MILWAUKEE COUNTY

Conservancy for Healing and Heritage - This preserve is located near 74th and Rawson. You'll find a wooded nature trail, a dock on pristine Kopmeier Lake, and a peaceful chapel with stunning views of the surrounding preserve.



Emerald Preserve - This restored wetland in the heart of Drexel Town Square in Oak Creek features an easy, paved walking trail through the wetlands, pollinator habitat, trees, and a storm water retention pond. It's a great bird watching spot, too.



Franklin Woods - It's got a popular children's playground, but this community park features a winding woodland walking trail that's peaceful, lush and green. With plenty of birds, it's a great spot to do some bird watching, too.



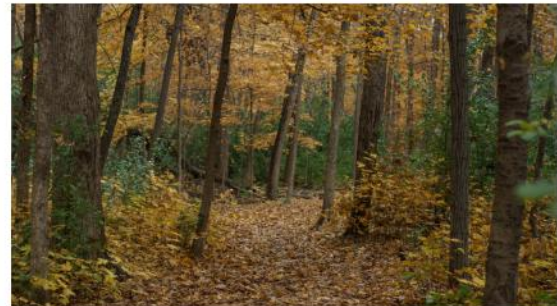
Wehr Nature Center - Located within Whitnall Park, this preserve includes a nature center, multiple walking trails, Mallard Lake, and one of Milwaukee's best known waterfalls. Wildlife viewing, and public events, too.



Whitnall School Forest - At nearly 17 acres, across from Whitnall High School, this school forest is a gem in Greenfield. It's used by the school district for educational purposes, but it's also appreciated by the local community as well.



Forest Exploration Center - An oasis of forest in the middle of the city, this woodland offers respite from the hectic moments of life. A 1-mile, all-accessible walking trail makes this urban wilderness available to all. Wildflowers and wildlife are found here, too.



## SHEBOYGAN COUNTY

James Tellen Woodland Sculpture Garden - Nestled among woodlands, this concrete art sculpture installation is truly unique. Walk the trail past 15 of these incredible works. The 65-foot "wood" concrete fence at the entrance is worth viewing on its own.



Black River Marsh Boardwalk - There are plenty of walking trails at Kohler-Andrae State Park, but the marsh boardwalk is one of my favorites. Off the beaten path, it's a quiet spot, and surrounded by open sky and plenty of birds. And not too far from the beach, either.





## WALWORTH COUNTY

Natureland County Park - A 122-acre park along Whitewater Lake, features over 4 miles of walking trails, over different terrain. Some easier than others, all beautiful. Herons nest along the lake in the summer. A crystal clear natural spring runs through the park.



Rice Lake Nature Trail - This mile-long nature trail resides within Whitewater Lake State Park. Wildflowers, frogs, birds, and dragonflies soaring over Rice Lake offer plenty of scenic views. The hike is short, a little rocky in a few spots, but mildly so.

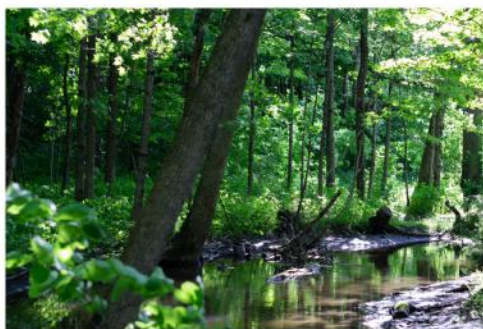


## WASHINGTON COUNTY

Lizard Mound State Park - A 22-acre gorgeous historical park, featuring several native effigy mounds. Walking trails weave past the mounds and through peaceful woodlands.



Richfield Historical Park - A combination of nature trails and Wisconsin history. Several historic buildings are spread through the park, along with a creek and gardens.



Schoen Laufen Park - This 39-acre tree-laden park with easy gravel walking trails is a gem. Wildflowers bloom along the trails in spring and summer. It's a great birding spot, too.



## WAUKESHA COUNTY

Deer Creek Sanctuary - The entrance is located at a dead end in a residential neighborhood. Walking trails travel along a creek and through woodlands. So peaceful and quiet.





## WAUKESHA COUNTY

Eagle Nature Trail - A community project resulted in an 8-acre nature trail that includes native prairie, an ephemeral pond, and a woodland walk. Butterflies love it.



Hartbrook Park - A 12.5-acre park along the Bark River, with a walking trail, lots of bird activity, and scenic views. It connects with part of the Ice Age Trail, too.



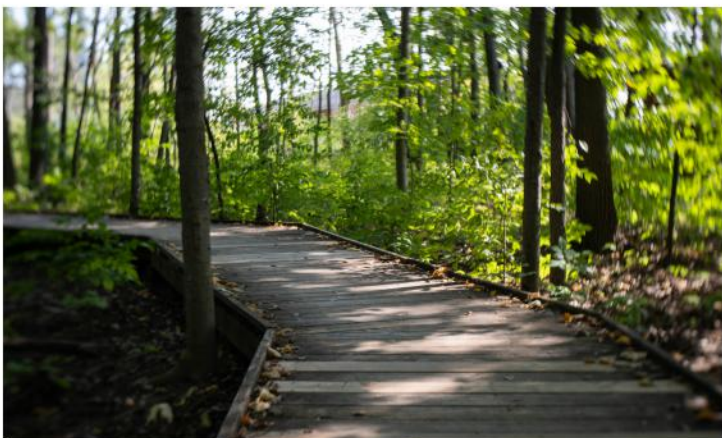
Kinsey Park - A charming neighborhood park with a secret woodland trail just beyond the playground. Lots of wildflowers in spring, and a creek running through it.



Lulu Lake Nature Preserve - Hiking trails wind along sedge meadows and wetlands, and up and over prairie remnants and oak openings. Great bird watching, too.



Muskego Boardwalk Nature Trail - This charming woodland boardwalk trail is located behind Veterans Memorial Park. Spring wildflowers line the trail, and bird watching is fun here, too.



Stigler Nature Preserve - Hidden beyond an industrial park, a woodland walking trail loops past a creek, prairie, evergreens, and plenty of oak trees. Lots of birds and butterflies, too.







## GONE FISHING

I don't believe I've cast a fishing reel in decades, but every time I pass someone throwing a line in the water at a local park pond, lake, or river, a wave of nostalgia washes over me. It takes me back to my childhood and summer weekends at my grandparents cozy cabin at a lake in the Wisconsin woods.

At the time, we were living in the city of St. Paul, Minnesota, and the hour-long trip to Amery seemed to carry us a world away from the hubbub of the city streets, the neighborhood kids, and summer fun. But we were headed for a different kind of fun. Saturday afternoon picnics, swimming in the lake, outdoor (freezing) showers, and the regular use of a biffy (the outhouse). Adventurous!



Holding up some northern pike caught at the lake by my grandparents cabin in Amery, late 1960's.

And then there was the fishing. Sometimes from the dock, sometimes in a rowboat, or a small flat-bottomed fishing boat powered by a tiny outboard motor. Sunfish, perch, largemouth bass, northern pike. You had to take the boat out on the lake to have any luck catching the bigger fish. But perch and sunfish were quick to bite in the shallow waters near the dock. I wasn't thrilled having to put a worm on a hook, but I loved seeing that bobber go beneath the water, and reeling in my catch. It took a while, but soon I felt brave enough to hold the smaller fish in my hand so I could remove the hook and let it go.

Our household was one of four daughters. When we girls were young my dad took us out fishing. But as we got older, other interests captured our attentions. I always knew he would have liked to have a son to do all those outdoor things he liked to do, but he taught his daughters how to toss that line out anyway. I always enjoyed casting that reel.

Eventually, my older sister married, and my dad had a son-in-law to go fishing with. And then grandsons. I think, actually, that he really enjoyed going fishing on his own. The peace and quiet of sitting in a boat on the water trolling for the big one seemed to suit him.



# LOCAL PARKS

Now that spring is finally settling in, I have noticed folks taking advantage of the nicer weather and doing some fishing from the shores and piers of our local parks. There's that nostalgia wave, again. How wonderful to be able to capture a bit of summer vacation right here at home, on a random afternoon at the park.

Our local neighborhood, and bigger community parks in urban, suburban, and rural areas offer a wealth of fishing opportunities. Checkout the following gallery for 48 area fishing spots worthy of your rod and reel.

For more fishing spots at Nature Preserves and State Parks and Recreation Areas, check out the full feature [online](#).



Local parks offer great everyday fishing opportunities close to home.



Astico County Park - Columbus



Asylum Point Park - Oshkosh



Beckman Mill County Park - Beloit



Carlin-Weld County Park - Palmyra



Calhoun Park - New Berlin



Brown Deer Park - Brown Deer



Elm Grove Park - Elm Grove



Case Eagle Park - Burlington



Estabrook Park - Milwaukee



Frame Park - Waukesha



George K. Pinney County Park - Sturgeon Bay



Glacial Hills County Park - Hubertus





Harnischfeger Park - Ixonia



Grant Park - South Milwaukee



Hart Park - Wauwatosa



Homestead Hollow County Park - Germantown



Hika Bay Park - Cleveland



Humboldt Park - Milwaukee



Indianhead Park - Mukwonago



Idle Isle Park - Muskego



John Muir Memorial County Park - Town of Buffalo



Jackson Park - Milwaukee



Kinsey Park - Brookfield



Lime Kiln Park - Grafton



Lion's Park - New Berlin



Lisbon Community Park - Hartland



Mukwonago Park - Mukwonago



McCarty Park - West Allis



Nashotah Park - Nashotah



Muskego Park - Muskego





Picnic Point Park - Oshkosh



Nixon Park - Hartland



Prairie Springs Park - Pleasant Prairie



River's Edge Park - Menomonee Falls



Ridge Run Park - West Bend



Riverside Park - West Bend



Riverside Park - Watertown



Saveland Park - Milwaukee



Sandy Knoll County Park - Town of Trenton



Scout Lake Park - Greendale



Schoetz Park - Hales Corners



Tyranena Park - Lake Mills



Sunset Beach County Park - Sturgeon Bay



Veterans Memorial Park - Grafton



Viking County Park - Stoughton



Washington Park - Milwaukee



White River County Park - Walworth County



Wilson Park - Milwaukee





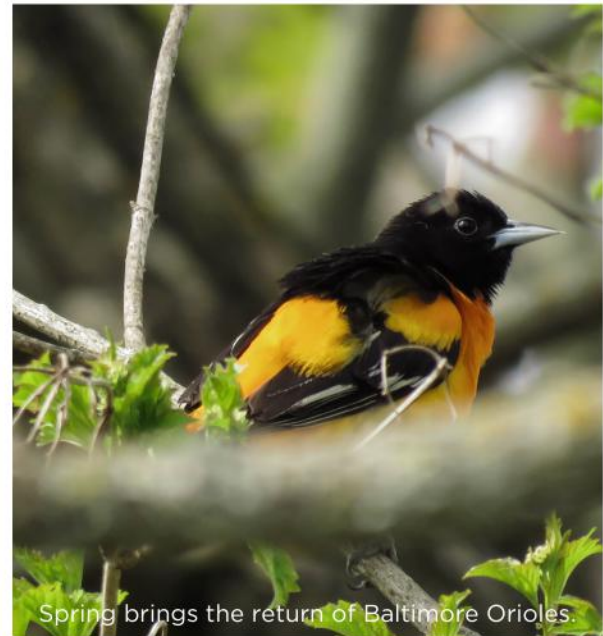
An Eastern Wood-Peelee

# Let's Go Birding

Once considered a hobby for the older set, or the nature nerds among us, birding is becoming a very popular pastime. And one that all walks of life can enjoy. It's exciting to see birders of every age, sex, race, and ability enjoying this natural adventure. Face it, folks, bird watching is now hip. And that means good things for the birds of the world.

The more people that engage in the enjoyment and conservation of birds and their habitat, the better. It's one of those activities that offers instant gratification, too.

Equipment required is minimal: a pair of binoculars comes in handy, or a camera with a zoom lens. A pocket bird identification guidebook, or a bird identification smartphone app, and a notebook, if you're keeping track of the species you see.



Spring brings the return of Baltimore Orioles.

## Where To Find The Birds In Wisconsin

The wonderful thing about admiring birds is that it can be done in a wide variety of habitats. Whether you live in urban or rural spaces, the opportunity to enjoy the sights and sounds of birds is all around us.

Of course, Wisconsin State Parks, trails and nature preserves are a great place to go bird watching, but don't count out your local neighborhood parks or your own backyard.

During migration, birds fly thousands of miles from places like South America, to the United States and Canada, where they will breed, nest, and raise their young over the spring and summer.

En route to these destinations, you can find them feeding and resting in green spaces all across the state of Wisconsin. If there's a park or yard with trees, bushes, a birdbath, and a river, creek, pond or wetland of some sort, they will find it.



It's always exciting to spot a Blue Heron.



## When To Go Birding

Spring is a great time to bird watch in Wisconsin. There are many bird species (about 250) that make Wisconsin their year-round home, but during spring and fall migration, upwards of 400 birds have been recorded throughout the state.

Many of these birds pass right over our homes while we sleep at night, en route to their summer nesting destinations.

In fact, if you sit outside, late, on a quiet evening, you can actually hear the call of migrating birds overhead. Even in the city. Usually they'll be too high up to see them with the naked eye, but you can hear them.

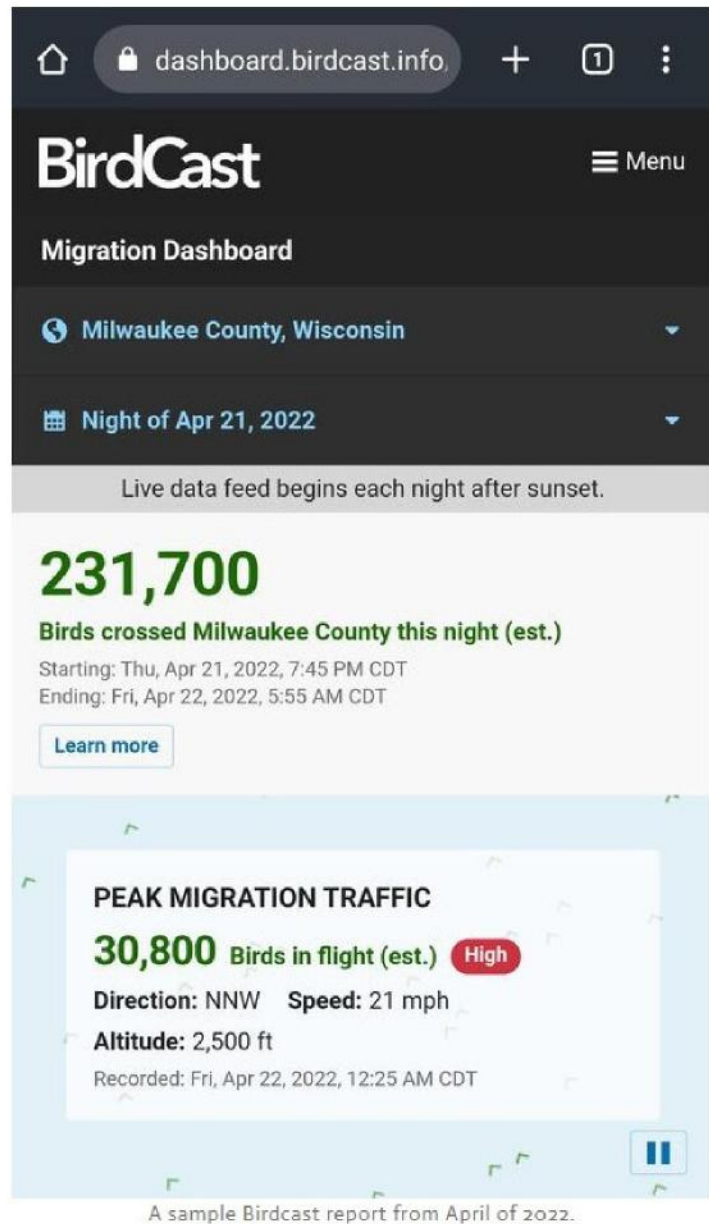
There are even bird migration forecast maps that can tell you when birds are migrating, where they will be heading, and what types of birds are migrating.

Of course, summer is nesting season, so be on the lookout for fledgling birds being fed by their parents.

And fall migration is a hot bird watching time of year, too, as birds that winter in the southern United States, and even further south, head back in that direction.

Winter also has its highlights, with plenty of local resident birds out and about.

For migration forecasts, check out: [birdcast.info](https://birdcast.info)



## Invite The Birds To Your Backyard

Chances are, no matter where you live, you see birds. But if you want to attract more of them to your yard, you can do some simple things to make your yard more hospitable. Got trees or shrubs already? Great!

Add a simple bird bath. Resident birds will enjoy the water source, as will the migrating birds passing through. Whether in your backyard or on a balcony, you will be amazed at the different birds that will visit a birdbath.

You can create a simple bird bath using a medium sized flower pot, putting the bottom flower pot tray in the top of the pot. Fill it with water, and maybe a big rock for birds to land on, and you have a welcoming spot for thirsty birds.



A homemade birdbath is a splash for birds of all kinds.





Brush piles provide great shelter for birds and other small wildlife.

## Provide Some Shelter

Birds need shelter. Trees and bushes are great. But another simple way to provide shelter for birds is to make a brush pile using fallen branches and sticks. The birds will appreciate being able to find shelter under the sticks, sitting on top of the brush in the sun, and scrounging for bugs to eat beneath the brush as well.

You can place your brush pile off to a corner of the yard, or next to a fence or garden border. We have ours next to a leaf compost bin, in a spot where we can easily see it from the window so we can watch the birds come and go.

Brush piles will provide shelter for birds in all seasons. They are great places to hide out from predators, a winter storm, or a heavy rain. Keep an eye on your brush pile. You'll be amazed at the wildlife visiting there.

## Provide Good Things To Eat

Feed the birds with native plants, shrubs and trees. We have a variety of native plants in our garden. One of the most popular, and easily maintained native plants is Coneflower.

This plant returns year after year, and its pollen feeds butterflies and bees, and its seeds, later in the season, will feed a variety of birds. Leave them in the garden over the winter as well, and birds will find them a great source of food during a time of year when natural food is more scarce.

If you don't have a yard, but have space for a planter or two, plant natives and pollinator friendly plants in those.

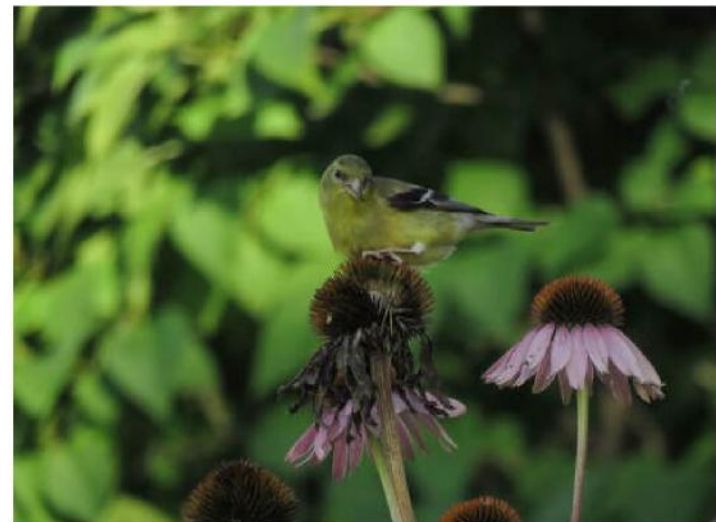
Every little bit can make a difference. Sunflowers make a great potted plant, and offer food for the birds in the fall as growing season fades.

For native plants ideas, visit the National Wildlife Federation website Native [Plantfinder](#).

A lot of local nature centers and gardening groups offer native plant sales in spring, too.



Ruby-throated hummingbirds love native honeysuckle.



Goldfinches are fond of eating the seeds from Purple Coneflowers.



## Should You Put Out A Bird Feeder?

Bird feeders can be a great way to supplement the natural foods in your garden, or provide food in a space that isn't conducive to gardening. The most prevalent bird seed is black oil sunflower seeds. They are enjoyed by a wide variety of birds. And squirrels, and other critters, too, so be aware.

We don't mind feeding the squirrels and chipmunks in our habitat, but we offer safflower seed feeders as well, since the squirrels don't seem to care for safflower.

During spring migration we often put out fresh orange slices, as they are a favorite of Baltimore Orioles. Other birds, such as Gray Catbirds, and House Finches enjoy them as well.

As our garden fills in with more native plants, berries, and other natural food sources for the birds that visit, we will probably decrease the amount of feeders we offer, except during stressful times of year when natural foods are scarce (winter, anyone?).

As mentioned above, leaving the spent plants and seed heads over the winter does provide a supply of natural foods for feathered diners.

Keep in mind that feeders require regular cleaning and maintenance, and, in the event of an avian virus outbreak, they should be cleaned more often, or even taken down for a time.

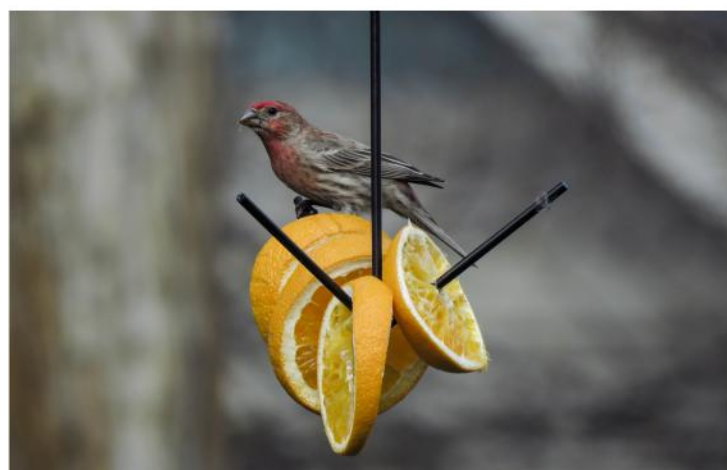
For more tips on offering backyard birdfeeders, check out additional bird feeding tips [here](#).



A White-breasted Nuthatch enjoys safflower seeds.



Baltimore Orioles enjoy sliced oranges.



House finches enjoy oranges, too.



## Avoid Pesticides and Rodenticides

Pesticides don't just kill weeds or unwanted bugs. They eventually kill all living creatures. The bugs found in our gardens and yards are natural food sources for birds and other wildlife.

Poisoning mice, rats, and other small critters, can also lead to the death of larger birds of prey (hawks, for example), and even your neighborhood pets, which could come upon dead critters and ingest the poisons.

Bees, butterflies, and other pollinators are also harmed by pesticides (even if it's just on your lawn), and that is detrimental to flowers, shrubs, and any produce grown in the garden. Not for nothing, they are bad for us, too.



A Monarch butterfly feasting on nectar from a purple coneflower

## Bird Watching Is Good For Your Health

Not only can bird watching benefit your physical health by getting you outdoors for some fresh air, sunshine, and physical activity, but it can offer positive benefits to your mental health and stress levels, too. The act of supporting bird conservation is good for the planet, too. It's a win-win.

There are multitudes of [studies](#) on this very subject, and the proof is out there. I, personally, have found bird watching to be, not only a stress reliever for me, but a benefit to my physical and creative energies as well.



A Rose-breasted Grosbeak at a backyard birdbath.

When life is overwhelming, spending a few minutes watching the birds in my backyard, or along the walking trail at a local park can take me out of myself long enough to improve my outlook.

Bird watching is such a rewarding activity. Birds are fascinating, beautiful creatures. I love that I can watch them, and hear their song, whether in my city backyard, neighborhood park, or in wider, wilder environments. It's a great way to infuse the day with a bit of joy.

For more information on backyard birding, visit the [Wisconsin DNR](#) website.

For information on preserving birds and other wildlife, visit the [National Wildlife Federation website](#).



# CELEBRATE

April 22 is Earth Day.

The modern movement to cleanup the planet, conserve and sustain our natural resources, and all that inhabit it, officially began in 1970. Wisconsin Junior Senator, Gaylord Nelson, witnessed the damages done by a massive oil spill in Santa Barbara, and wanted to find a way to raise public consciousness about air and water pollution. The movement grew from there, and has been ongoing ever since.

For a more detailed history of Earth Day, visit [Earthday.org](https://earthday.org).

Looking for Earth Day events near you?

Find options here:





# EARTH DAY

## 25 Ways To Celebrate Earth Day, Week And Month

1. Volunteer at a local park cleanup day.
2. Donate to your local nature center.
3. Plant a native plant or two in your garden space
4. Take a walk at a new to you park or nature preserve.
5. Introduce a friend to one of your favorite parks or preserves.
6. Enjoy reading a good book with a nature theme.
7. Skip the chemicals on your lawn and let the birds and bees eat safely.
8. Shop secondhand clothing and home goods first.
9. Join in a tree planting event.
10. Make your own chemical free household cleaner with vinegar and water.
11. Shop your local farmers market.
12. Go bird watching at a local park, or on a guided bird watching hike.
13. Start composting and benefit your garden.
14. Install a rain garden in your yard.
15. Go forest bathing, on your own, or join a group event.
16. Enjoy relaxing underneath the night sky.
17. Install a rain barrel in your garden.
18. Go on a nature photography walk. Make a list of ten things or themes to incorporate into your photos. Use your phone camera or a traditional camera. It's up to you.
19. Switch to LED lightbulbs.
20. Make a homemade birdbath with a gently used planter pot and saucer.
21. Recycle old books - donate some to a local Little Free Library.
22. Watch a nature documentary on your favorite streaming channel.
23. Take a notebook or sketchbook to a park and document your experience there.
24. Write a poem or essay about a favorite nature memory.
25. Visit a local arboretum and revel in the beauty of a wide variety of trees.





# On The Rocks Hiking The Niagara Escarpment

Cherney Maribel Caves County Park - Manitowoc County

You may have already hiked over the beauty that is the [Niagara Escarpment](#). A wide swath of this ancient and natural rock formation runs northeast 230 miles through Wisconsin, beginning in the Southern Kettle Moraine Forest, 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).

The "Ledge" as it is often called, is over 1,000 miles of geologic wonder, that began forming over 430 million years ago. Over the course of time, and through an ice age 12,000 years ago, the natural rock, cliffs, ledges, caves, and crevices were revealed. Not all of the escarpment is visible above ground. A large portion of it remains beneath the surface, and under the Great Lakes. But the portions of it that reside above ground are an incredible sight to see.

To experience the escarpment is to connect to the ancient history of the land. To the wildlife, cultures and indigenous people that lived here long before us. To preserve the cliffs and crags of the escarpment is to preserve, as well, the bogs, meadows, sandy beaches and rocky shores that follow along its corridor.

To experience its beauty one does not have to go far. There are several natural spaces within an hour or so of Milwaukee. And several more within a 2-3 hour drive of the city. Some are more dramatic than others, but they all, in my opinion, are worth the journey.





## **Ledge View Nature Center**

Ledge View is a 105-acre nature park and education center that features over 3 miles of walking trails, some of which pass along the rocky outcrops of part of the Niagara Escarpment.

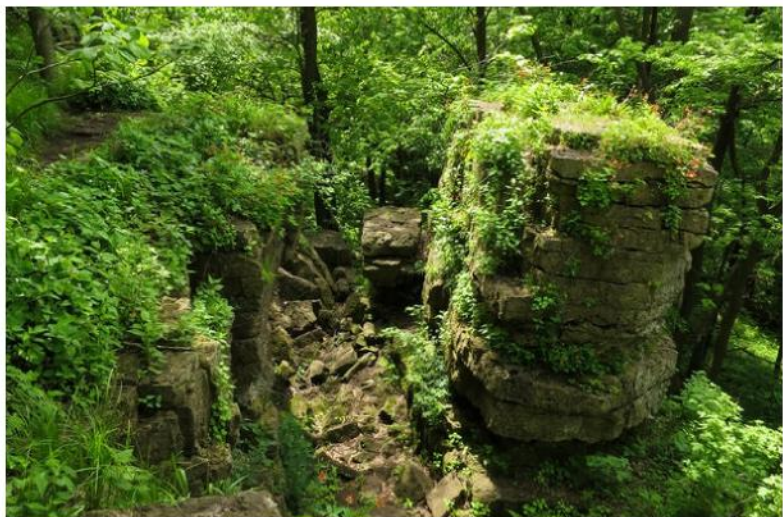
There are actually caves at Ledge View Nature Center that are home to bats during the colder months of the year. Come summer, however, the bats leave the caves and roost in the woods and trees where they breed and raise their young until fall arrives. During these months you can actually take a guided tour of the caves.

Other features here are an arboretum, the nature center with several educational exhibits, and a 60-foot-tall observation tower.

Location: W2348 Short Road, Chilton, WI (Calumet County)



Lush and green along the escarpment at Ledge View Nature Center.



The rocky ledges of High Cliff State Park

## **High Cliff State Park**

High Cliff State Park was officially opened in 1957, but its history goes back much further. With stunning views of Lake Winnebago, the cliffs of the park were formed by the settling and hardening of limy ooze at the bottom of the Silurian Sea, going back over 400 million years.

The cliffs, often called "the ledge" are part of the Niagara Escarpment.

On our first visit we walked the Lime Kiln Trail. This hilly trail starts with a descent down wooden stairs, then climbs down over rocks and ledge.

The hills are often rocky and steep, but the lush green surroundings are captivating. Definitely wear good hiking shoes. You'll need them.

In addition to the escarpment, there is an ancient history of Native American effigy mounds, and a limestone quarry. Out of 30 sacred effigy mounds, nine remain in High Cliff State Park. You can view these along the Indian Mounds Trail on the upper section of the park. The first mound, of a large panther, is about 285 feet in length! Signage along the trail defines the shapes of the mounds.

Location: N7630 State Park Road, Sherwood, WI (Calumet County)



## **Ledge County Park**

Ledge County 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 beautiful area can be seen from both the upper and lower ledges.

The ledges themselves, are amazing rock formations, and, on our first spring visit, were incredibly lush with trees, plants, and vegetation. I was in awe of the ferns, mosses, and Wild Columbine, that adorned the cavernous rock.

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.



There are lots of scenic ledges at Ledge County Park.

Three other hiking trails make their way through woodlands, and circle back to the campground area.

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

## **Cherney Maribel Caves County Park**

Cherney Maribel Caves County Park is 75 acres along the West Twin River, north of the village of Maribel. Hiking trails traverse woodland terrain, as well as along the ledges and ridges of multiple naturally formed caves and rock formations, and along the West Twin River, culminating in a stunning view of the spring fed waterfall that empties into the river.

These majestic rock formations are some of the most viewable portions of the Escarpment that I have seen in the state. The surrounding trails are well plotted out, scenic, and, other than a few sets of stairs from the upper to lower portions of the park, are easily walked.

The trail leading from the River Trail to the Spring Waterfall is very rocky (and wet), however, so take note. Good hiking shoes will be worth the wear.



Cherney Maribel Caves County Park is especially scenic.

At present, there are 10 caves. Some are open daily to the public. New Hope Cave is home to four species of resident bat populations (which explains why the mosquitoes seemed pretty quiet as we walked the trails).

Location: 15401 County Road R, Maribel, WI (Manitowoc County)



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**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.

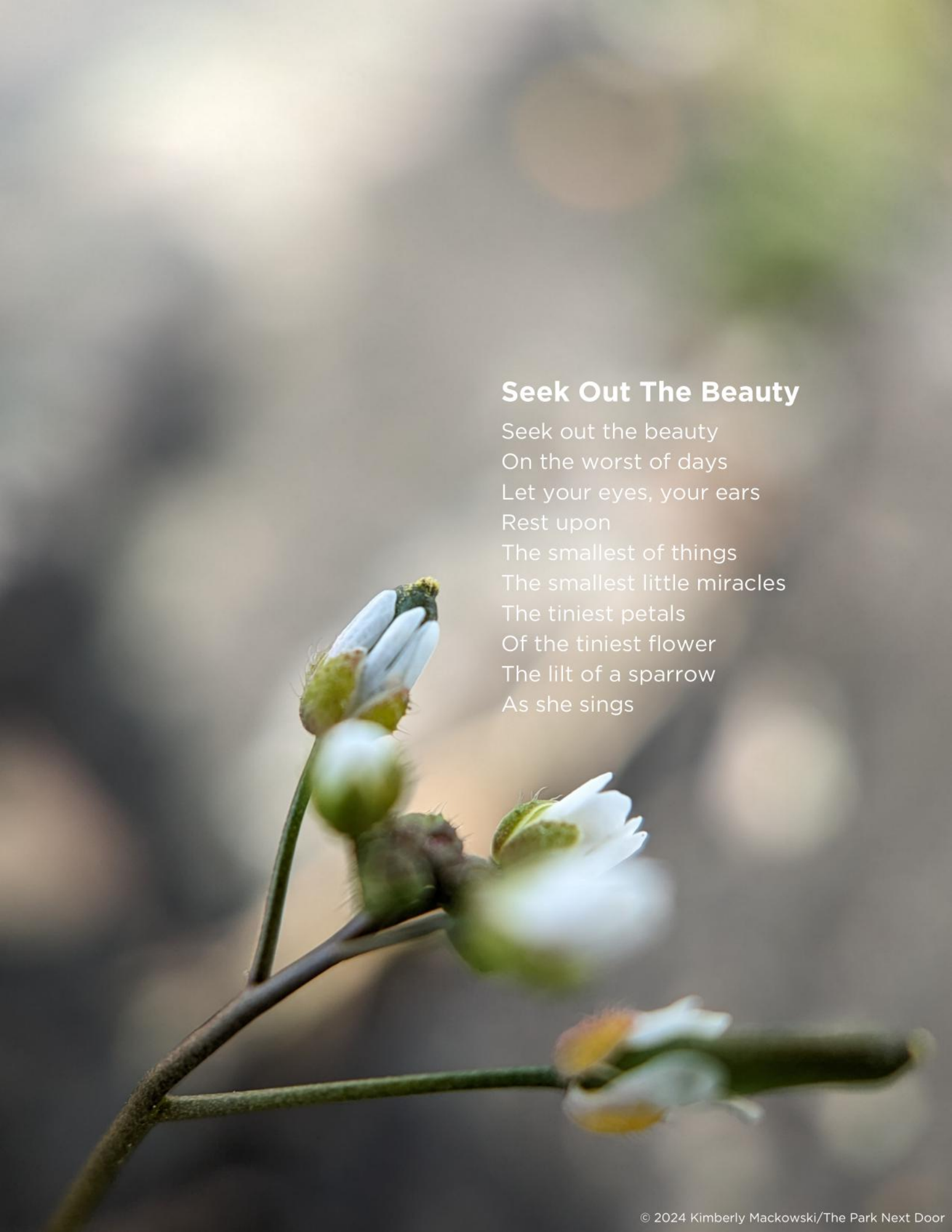
**Share a favorite feature, blog, or location listing.** If a specific feature page, blog, or location tickles your fancy, please share it with friends, or on your social media feed. Every little bit of exposure helps.

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





## Seek Out The Beauty

Seek out the beauty  
On the worst of days  
Let your eyes, your ears  
Rest upon  
The smallest of things  
The smallest little miracles  
The tiniest petals  
Of the tiniest flower  
The lilt of a sparrow  
As she sings