

Welcome to Woodlawn Nature Center 2019 Annual Report



Turkey Tail Fungus

Discover, Experience, & Learn
at

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*Dutchman's
Breeches*

The Beginning and Who We Are

Woodlawn Nature Council, Inc. (WNC) was incorporated in 1963 for the purposes of establishing and perpetuating a nature park as sanctuary for local flora and fauna, developing educational opportunities for those, of all ages, interested in nature, to purchase property and erect a building for use as a nature museum with space for nature and geological displays and meetings for other groups predominately interested in nature.

Our founder and benefactor Dorothy Greenleaf-Boynton, an educated woman of the 1920's, was also a person who was advanced beyond her time in acting on her interest in nature and the environment. She understood the importance of sustaining the natural world in our local region. She purchased and financed the construction of the Nature Center building that is currently located on the property. Woodlawn Nature Center opened in 1965.

The property was donated to the City of Elkhart by Dorothy and her husband Charles Boynton. The donation of the property included the terms for the property to be leased to WNC for operating a nature center as-well-as the specific use of the property. Those terms also provided that the lease would be for no less than 50 years. The first 5 year extension of that lease concluded at the end of 2019 and has been renewed for another 5 years beginning January 1, 2020.

The mission of WNC is to reconnect people with nature, natural history, and the environment. We recognize that appreciation and stewardship for our natural world requires that people understand our relationship within it in order to comprehend the value it provides us in every aspect of life. We embrace a motto to Discover, Experience, and Learn as our means to fulfilling our mission and our founder's purpose.

WNC is a member driven organization. Membership support is available to anyone interested in the Nature Center. Annual membership includes complimentary admission to the Nature Center during open hours, fee reduction or complimentary participation in programs, notifications of activities, and availability to use the center to host an event (e.g. child's birthday party or club meeting).

We are also a volunteer run organization. Our volunteer base includes the Directors of Woodlawn Nature Council, members of service organizations, members of groups who meet at WNC. It is also a great opportunity for individuals who seek a place to give their time and energies.



The Nature Center

Woodlawn Nature Center is a natural history museum education center with 10 acres of forest and meadow property. You will find a natural history education activity center, woodland trails for educational, leisurely or fitness walks, and outdoor play and picnic areas to enjoy.

Features of the Nature Center building include an accessible entrance, accessible unisex restrooms, and full kitchen facility. Natural history exhibits include interactive features. Educational resources include a library containing field guides and other books related to nature and natural science along with other types of printed information. There are also meeting, work, and open play spaces.

WNC has provided a variety of programming, events, and activities over the years. Programs with specific focuses regarding topics, age of attendees, interest groups, and the community have been included in our offerings. We have historically provided programming for scout troops, school groups, pre-school and daycare groups, and for other organizations as-well-as the general public. We also host field trips for groups to tour our natural history museum. Community events are also offered each year. At least two (2) Open House type events are offered annually at no cost to attendees.

2019 Experiences

During year 2019 provided the following visits, programs, and events:

1. Open play days (6)
 - January – May (5) In line with school break days
 - November - Area school break day
2. Field Trips (12)
 - Jamestown Preschool (3)
 - General tour of museum and interactive play time
 - Stanley Clark School Kindergarten/1st grade
 - Presented program on birds and interactive play time
 - Carol Zook - Senior Home
 - General tour of the museum
 - Elkhart Community Schools Elementary Academy Self-Directed Education Program (7)
 - Self-directed activity time with
 - Indoor and outdoor nature center features
 - Hands on activities made available by WNC
 - Kids also provided some service to the Nature Center
 - Planting flower seeds
 - Cleaning out the waterfall pond
 - Raking leaves
 - Surprise Saturday Visit (group of 25)
 - They just discovered us and decided to make it a group outing
3. Open Houses/Free Admission Days (4)
 - Repurpose Sale Day
 - Wild Wednesday Program Introduction
 - Wild Wednesday Free Day
 - Concord School Break Day
 - Harvest Celebration and Bake Sale – November 23
4. WNC Learning Community Wild Wednesdays Weekly Program beginning in October (13)



Jack-in-the-Pulpit Twins

Attendance Record for 2019

1. Approximately 635 visitors signed in or convened at the Nature Center.
2. Additionally many visitors enjoy our trails and grounds everyday including folks who enjoy the scenery during a lunch break, walkers (with and without pets), and kids engaging in outdoor play areas.
3. Volunteers logged-in over 475 hours of service to WNC.
4. Other visitors include deer who visit on a regular basis to forage for the evening meal (as many as 6 have been spotted entering the Woodlawn Woods). Hey we are nature nuts here!

As in nature, WNC had experienced a time of dormancy where activity had decreased somewhat for a time in 2018. 2019 has been a year for regrouping and rebuilding. WNC has been working on short and long term plans for the Nature Center. We have been reviewing what we have been doing to determine what to continue, discontinue, or revise, and what new initiatives to take moving forward.

In August Carl Rust, who had recently retired from a long career as an educator, joined the Woodlawn Nature Council, and agreed to serve as our new Education Facilitator. He introduced a self-directed education program for kids in September and began the program on a weekly basis. The Wild Wednesday program extended through 2019. In 2020 it has expanded to include Terrific Tuesdays.

What's In The Planning?

Woodlawn Nature Council engaged in brainstorming sessions during the first three quarters of 2019. Resulting plans included reorganization of the Nature Center facility and our exhibits. We also worked on assessing our needs moving forward. We worked to identify items that have not been utilized for some time and began working to repurpose or remove them from the Center.

Goals and plans to be accomplished over the next 1-5 years include:

1. Rearrangement of the Nature Center
 - a. Placement of exhibits with focus and flow enhancement
 - b. Creating a flexible activity area to serve as a
 - i. Work area
 - ii. Meeting area
 - iii. Library area
 - iv. Interactive exhibit area
2. Revitalization of exhibits
 - a. Switching out items in storage with those that have been on display for some time
 - b. Repairs to exhibit features and contents that may be needed
 - c. Adding new features to exhibits
3. Renewal and expansion of programming
 - a. Educational Programs
 - i. Woodlawn Learning Community self-directed educational programming expansion to include more sessions weekly.
 - ii. Visits to school classrooms to talk about a variety of topics including Indiana plants and animals, invasive species, and anything nature and natural science related.
 - iii. Expand offerings of field trips for schools, preschools, church groups, senior groups, etc.
 - iv. Renewing scout programs for badge work and other educational needs
 - v. Master Gardener seminars
 - vi. Raise funds to hire a full or part time naturalist/educator
 - b. Other programming and activities
 - i. Public interest programs and workshops
 - ii. Open play days
 - iii. Farmers market
 - iv. Saturday & Sunday afternoon programs and focused activities
 - c. Seasonal Events
 - i. Spring fling and flowers event
 - ii. International Mud Day event
 - iii. Fall harvest time event
 - iv. Winter Holidays event
4. Expand days and hours open to at least 4 days weekly
5. Increase membership and offer sustaining memberships to provide more reliable cash flow
6. Replace flooring in large exhibit room
7. Improve main door and exterior lighting
8. Acquire technology equipment for enhancing presentation of exhibits and programs
9. Continue, rekindle, and create new relationships with other organizations



- a. WNC current and past partnerships and participations
 - i. Environmental Center events
 - ii. Tolson Center events
 - iii. Elkhart Parks Department events
 - iv. Elkhart County Parks events
 - v. Elkhart County Fair special activity days
 - vi. Regional Earth Day committee and events
 - vii. Elkhart County Historical Museum
 - viii. Master Gardeners
 - ix. South Bend Audubon Society
- b. Organizational Memberships
 - i. ANCA (Association of Nature Center Administrators)
 - ii. Indiana Natural History Association
 - iii. Elkhart County Museum Association
- c. Seeking out other organizations that may be a mutual fit



Reverse printing during Wild Wednesdays

Certainly our plan will be evolving as we work through initiating projects with consideration of member and community input. WNC is committed to continue providing our “Haven in the City” for the Elkhart area community. We look forward to new adventures as we Discover, Experience, & Learn together.

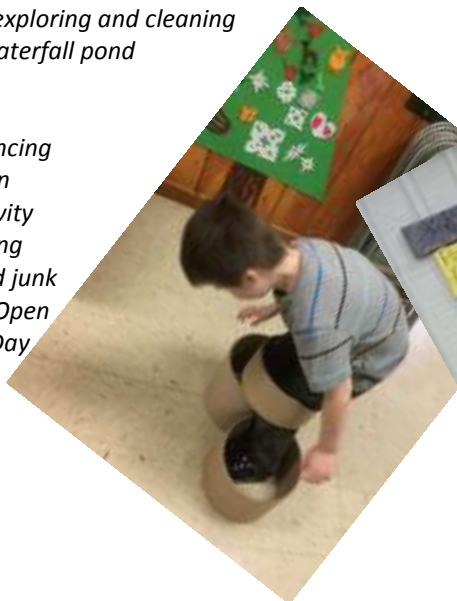


Elkhart Elementary Academy students exploring and cleaning out the waterfall pond



Learning Rock Identification during Wild Wednesdays

Experiencing open creativity reusing salvaged junk during Open Play Day



Discovering gravitational flow at the Mud Day program

