



Heron Tracks

The Quarterly Newsletter of Seven Ponds Nature Center

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VENOM

Article by Madison Christol

I've always loved snakes. I've been catching them for as long as I can remember, and have had the opportunity to care for many amazing snake ambassador animals throughout my naturalist career. I have particularly fond memories of being trusted to help feed and care for several venomous snakes while working at Sandy Creek Nature Center in Athens, Georgia. These snakes included a timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*), a cottonmouth (*Agkistrodon piscivorus*), and a copperhead (*Agkistrodon contortrix*). So, for this article we're going to be diving into the science of venom!

Let's start with a common misconception, venom and poison are not interchangeable words. Venom is a toxin that must be injected into the victim, typically through a bite. Poison is a toxin that must be ingested or absorbed. A rattlesnake is venomous because it bites its prey, while a poison dart frog is poisonous because it secretes a toxic liquid that must be consumed. Other types of venomous animals native to the United States include spiders and scorpions.

Venom is extremely complex. It is made from a mix of enzymes, proteins, and peptides. Each venomous snake species has a unique mixture of each of these components. The venom is stored in salivary glands located below a snake's eye as shown in this photo of a cottonmouth. When striking, the snake will flex their cheek muscles to contract the gland and send the liquid through hollow fangs. Snake venom can be separated into two main categories: hemotoxic and neurotoxic. Hemotoxic venom affects an animal's circulatory system and causes damage to tissues and disrupts blood clotting. Neurotoxic venom affects an animal's nervous system resulting in paralysis.

Venom does not immediately incapacitate prey, so these snakes need to be good at tracking. Tongue flicks pick up scent particles that are then sent to a snake's Jacobson's organ and processed into helpful information. Most of the venomous snakes native to the U.S. are pit vipers meaning they also have heat-sensing organs near their eyes that allow them to distin-

guish heat signatures. Even venomous snakes in captivity that are fed a diet of frozen-thawed rats will strike and then wait for the already dead prey to succumb to their venom.

So, why doesn't a snake get sick from eating their prey? Dr. Blair Perry from Washington State University explains that snakes are mostly resistant to their own venom. Now, there have been instances where a snake has accidentally bitten its own body and died due to the venom, but this is very rare and means the snake was most likely not at peak health. Dr. Perry goes on to say that other animals can develop a resistance to certain venoms, forcing snakes to develop stronger venom. This is mainly being seen in the western U.S. with rattlesnakes and ground squirrels.

Since venom is so intricate in its makeup, it takes each snake precious time and energy to replenish their supply once depleted. This is why snakes try to announce their presence to potential threats before resorting to a bite. Rattlesnakes use their rattles, which are made up of keratin rings of different



Ramblings from a Nature Center Executive Director...

One of our naturalists tells me on a regular basis that she has “the best job”, or “Did I tell you this is the best job ever?” After she declares this, my brain pauses for a second and I remember... Yeah, this is a pretty cool job! I like those reminders to take a beat and just appreciate the moment, the experience, or the interaction for the simple, pure thing that it is.

I also like to remember my little girl self running through the woods and swamps, so dirty and so curious, wondering what I will be when I grow up. I never would have thought of this job. I am sure I didn't even know what an executive director was. I don't get to “play” in the woods very often any more. It might surprise many of you, or not, that I now spend most of my time sitting at my desk, looking at my computer. I am not complaining, but when I do get the opportunity to “play” in the woods, I take it!

I've been walking our trails twice a week for the last few weeks, and yes, I make note of all the things that need work, but I also take the time to pause and appreciate the beauty that is Seven Ponds. These morning walks have allowed me to remember the subtle changes to nature the seasons bring. On many of the morning walks, the dew covered spider webs are the star of the show. With the sun low on the horizon, the spider webs are something to behold, and require a moment to appreciate their simple beauty. Some mornings, the mist is so thick on the lakes you can only see the water directly in front of you. Those mornings require a moment at the top of our A-frame Bridge to savor the wonderment of our lakes.

I forget how much I love walking our trails. Even knowing how much I enjoy being on our trails, I sometimes have to force myself to get out there, thinking I have more important things I could be doing. I never, though, regret my time outdoors. It is during those walks that I remember to pause and appreciate, to give myself those moments to wonder... To remember that yeah, I have a pretty cool job!

My hope for you this season is you give yourself opportunities to pause in the wonderment of nature; maybe here at Seven Ponds or in your yards, because I think you won't regret it either.

Take care and see you soon,

Carrie

2025 Year-end Special Gifts Campaign

Recently, you received our 2025 Special Gifts Campaign appeal letter from Seven Ponds board chairperson Nancy Kautz. If you've already mailed in a donation - thank you! Otherwise, we hope you are considering a gift to Seven Ponds Nature Center during this giving season. Our Special Gifts Campaign is the only regular giving campaign we conduct, and it helps us plan for the upcoming year, providing critical operational funding. This funding allows us to continue offering high-quality environmental education programming to schools, children, families, and adults. It also helps us maintain and improve the building and grounds, including important land stewardship projects as we care for nearly 500 acres of woods, prairie, fields, wetlands, and our beautiful lakes.

When sending your gift, you can send a check using the return envelope provided, or you may visit our website and use the link on our front page. It only takes a few seconds to donate, but the impact you make is far-reaching.

We truly appreciate any gift you are able to make, and pledge to do our very best in utilizing your donation to its fullest.



Heron Tracks

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The mission of Seven Ponds Nature Center is to conserve its natural environment as a sanctuary for native plants and animals and to serve as a community resource for environmental education that fosters an understanding, appreciation, and stewardship for our natural world.

Executive Director:

Carrie Spencer

Office Manager:

Amy Sadler

Naturalists:

Adrianna Allen, Madison Christol, Nico Bradford

Weekday Receptionist & Gift Shop Manager:

Gina Stoldt

Weekend Receptionist/Seasonal Maintenance/Website Manager:

Damian Goidich

Maintenance Engineer - Buildings & Grounds:

Del Hunsinger

sizes that interlock and create a rattling sound when shaken together. Other venomous, and some non-venomous, snakes will recreate this sound by quickly moving the tip of their tail back and forth in dry leaves, patches of pebbles, and other debris-filled areas to create a loud, jarring sound. This is called a tail buzz.

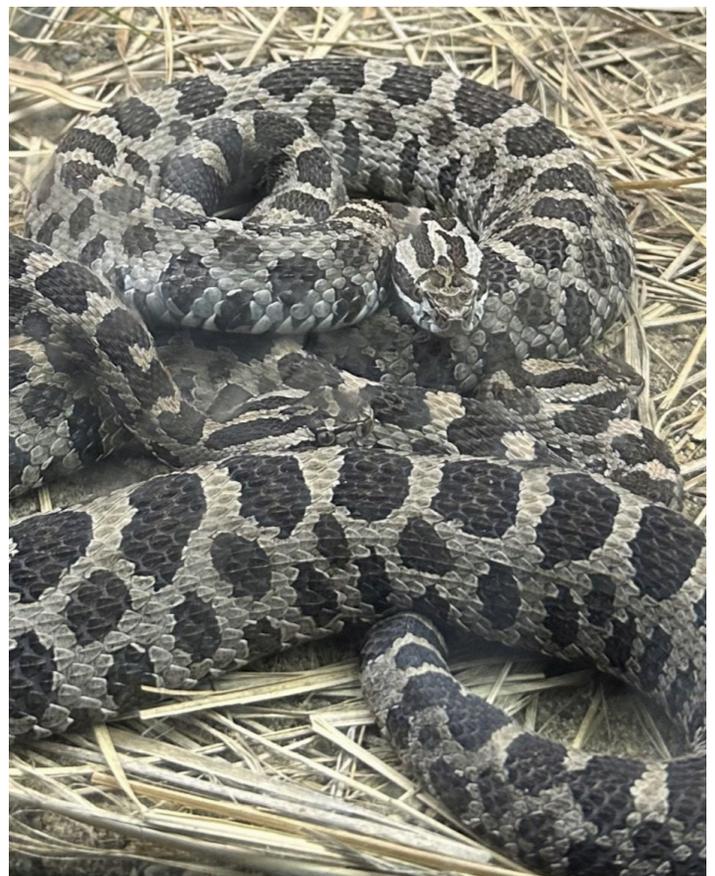
Another misconception is that baby rattlesnakes are more dangerous to humans because they have not “learned” how to control the amount of venom delivered on each bite. Young snakes are smaller and cannot produce as much venom as an older, larger snake. This, coupled with their shorter fangs, means less venom can enter the body. Additionally, not every snake bite contains venom. Scientists at the California Department of Fish and Wildlife report that twenty-five percent of pit viper bites do not contain any venom. These are often called “dry bites”.

Over time, scientists have mastered a multi-step process to create anti-venom. The Asclepius Snakebite Foundation has broken the method down into a few key steps. First, snakes are milked in secure facilities. The well-being of each snake is top priority, so the venom is extracted through careful stimulation of the venom glands. Each vial is then heavily diluted to lower toxicity and standardize each batch. This new mixture is then transferred to a syringe and injected into a horse. The horse’s immune system will begin producing a large amount of antibodies for several weeks. During this time, the host animal’s blood will be drawn several times and these antibodies will be separated out. Scientists then have to purify the sample and run several tests before it can be sent away to hospitals and rural clinics. Anti-venom can be transported in either liquid or powdered form. Liquid can be administered faster in an emergency, but powder is more stable and can be stored on the shelf for longer periods of time. Additionally, some anti-venom can only be used for the specific snake species that helped create it (monovalent), while others are more general and can combat bites from snakes in the same geographical area (polyvalent).

Michigan boasts only one native venomous snake: the eastern massasauga rattlesnake (*Sistrurus catenatus*). Scientists from all across the United States collaborated on a study cataloging over 30 different species and sub-species of native rattlesnake venom aptly named “A Review of Rattlesnake Venom” published in 2023. They found that the eastern massasauga rattlesnake’s venom had 20 different components which ranked among the most diverse of any species. This species is on the smaller end and can only grow to about three feet in length. According to research conducted by Dr. Laurence Klauber at the University of California, their size makes it difficult to inject large quantities of venom into prey. Smaller salivary glands and shorter fangs limit both production and injection depth. This, combined with their secretive nature, means they pose little threat to people. They are listed as a federal and state level threatened species. Threats include habitat fragmentation, wetland degradation

from invasive species, and targeting from humans. Remember, venomous snakes are not “bad” or “nature’s villains”; they are simply using their incredible adaptations to stay alive. If you are lucky enough to see one in the wild, you can report your sighting to the Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) and Michigan Herp Atlas online. While I’ve never gotten the chance to see one in the wild (yet!), I did get to see these two eastern massasauga rattlesnakes on a trip to the Detroit Zoo (see photo below).

Lastly, you may have heard that all venomous snakes have slit-like pupils and triangular heads. While that is true in Michigan, other states have different rules. The eastern coral snake (*Micrurus fulvius*) which can be found in the southern states, has a rounded head, but is venomous. The best way to identify a mystery snake is to take a photo from a safe distance and zoom in to more closely examine its features. If you can see the pupils of an unidentified snake, you are too close! A field guide that I have found handy for snake identification around here is *Amphibians & Reptiles of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan* by Allen Blake Sheldon. It is full of pictures, range maps, habitat preferences, and fun nature notes. If you are ever bitten by a venomous snake, seek immediate medical attention, and do not try to chase or capture the snake, even for identification purposes; this is how additional bites happen. Never pick up a snake that you are unsure about. As with any animal, if we give these creatures the space and respect they deserve, it is easy to live in harmony, instead of fear.



Volunteer News



We are thankful for the time spent in service to the nature center by dedicated volunteers who helped with a variety of tasks this past fall:

- **Claudine Zach** – for feeding and caring for the critters
- **Bob Albrecht** – for cleaning and maintaining the fish tank in Critter Corner, and feeding and caring for the critters
- **Marianna Fitzgerald, Griffin Barkdoll, Bob Kelly, Georgia Prater, David Berger and Danielle Brigati** – for continuing and expanding the work on the library project
- **Board of Directors** – for their dedication to the nature center and various meetings and activities
- **Mark Fournier** – for helping with various maintenance projects around the nature center
- **Mike Grappin** – for helping the Stingers set up their Resale Shoppe in September, and interior work at the Prairie House
- **Jodi Mallow** – for helping to clean the bird feeders
- **Nathan Spencer** – for helping to prepare a space for upcoming tree planting
- **The Stingers** – **Chris Baker, Paige Bannister, Dianne Bishop, Mary Frost, Karen Gossick, Bobbi Green, Linda Hartman, Barbara Holden, Darlene Johnson, Joyce Korson, Senta Masalskis, Mylene Neal, Beth Piatkowski, Julia Raymond, Lynn Rose, Laurie Sisco, and Marci Stewart** - for their hard work and dedication coordinating and implementing another successful Resale Shoppe, Bake Sale and Book Fair at Party at the Ponds!

- **Marianna Fitzgerald, Kathy Cole, Nancy Kautz and Richard Klee, Jayme Fields, Jeff Nedwick and Veleta Carpenter** – for attending ASNAT training classes and assisting with school groups
- **Marianna Fitzgerald, Matt Smith, Nancy Kautz, Kathy Cole, Karen Blaszyk, Sandy Vukonich, Ginger Fricke, Tom Harpootlian, Stu Davis, Paul Wakabayashi, Veleta Carpenter, Jim Lewis, Bobbie Lewis, Wayne Zibell, Paul Luotonen, Mark Sortzi, Beth Piatkowski, Jeanette Farley** – for helping to make this year's Party at the Ponds! event fun and memorable for our attendees
- **The Butterfly Gardeners and Friends of Herbs** – for keeping the Herb and Butterfly Gardens beautiful this season for the enjoyment of our visitors and feeding the pollinators
- **Lauren Barber, Stacey Berger, David Berger, Joseph Berger, Alyson Grabowski, Theresa O'Brien, Bethann Smith-Oliver and Gestamp Metal Stamping Group** – for attending the Invasive Species Workday in September and helping to remove invasive species
- **Madelynn DeVlaminck, Mason Russell and Melanie Villeda from 4H** – for helping to remove invasive bittersweet
- **Lapeer County Democratic Party** – for spending an afternoon working to remove invasive bittersweet
- **Miss Howell's 6th Grade Class from Dryden Elementary** - for helping plant trees

We want to thank everyone who came out and helped at this year's *Enchanted Woodland* event. The perfect autumn weather set the tone and our hard-working volunteers pulled it all together. We could not hold this popular event without you!

- **Miranda Stoldt, Kathy Cole, Jayden Chandler, Madison Kaeding, Penelope Spencer, Marianna Fitzgerald, Nancy Kautz, Joy Bradford, Rose Bradford, Dom Bhavsar, Bruce Young, Polly Young, Karen Blaszyk, Jodi Mallow, Ella Nelden, Anita Spencer, Linda Hartman, Chris Baker, Allen Rosenbalm, Katylyn Behm and Kat Stoldt** - for helping this year's Enchanted Woodland continue to be a fall family favorite event at the nature center

If you have a heart for service and community, we are always looking for volunteers like you! Please reach out to Amy Sadler at asadler@sevenponds.org, fill out the Volunteer Interest form on our website, or call the nature center at 810-796-3200.

Seven Ponds Tributes

Memorials, Buy-a-Tree, In Honor

In Memory of Beverly Ann Scotford

- Swiss Farms Families
- Paula and Ken Fry

In Memory of Eleanor Wasilewski

- Ullman and Suyama Families

In Memory of Kay Dancoe

- Sue Akey

In Memory of Rex Anthony Ziebarth

- Shirlene VanEek Abma
- Ziebarth Friends and family

In Memory of Tom Osmer

- Dave Osmer and Sandra Griffith

***In Memory of David Renville
Townsend***

- Elizabeth Townsend Alltop

In Memory of Margaret Alyea

- Curt and Denni Glick
- Debbie and Aaron Glick
- Rose Demczuk
- Larry and Michelle Shields
- Burnt Cabin Point Neighborhood Association

In Memory of Mike Champagne

- Dave Osmer and Sandra Griffith



ASSISTANT NATURALIST CLASSES

These classes are open to Assistant Naturalists only. Classes take place on the third Thursday of the month and begin at 3:00 PM. If you would like to become a part of this rewarding program helping to educate and inform visitors of the nature center, contact Amy Sadler at 810-796-3200 or asadler@sevenponds.org.

DECEMBER

No class this month

Enjoy the holiday season!

JANUARY 15

Trivia!

Let's compete, and have a treat! Join us for nature trivia, and if you wish, bring a dish to pass.

FEBRUARY 19

Get to Know the Nature Center

Do you know where we keep the clipboards and pencils? What about the secret trapdoor? We'll explore the building and answer any questions you have about our Explorer Programs or the nature center itself.

Seven Ponds Clubs!

**Astronomy Club • Beekeeping Club
Birding Club • Photography Club
Butterfly Gardeners • Friends of Herbs
Friends of Seven Ponds (The Stingers)**

Visitors are welcome at all club meetings.

For additional information about any of the clubs which meet at Seven Ponds, please visit sevenponds.org

Community Connection

By Adrianna Allen

Welcome to the new “Community Connection” section! In this section, the naturalists of Seven Ponds will spotlight their favorite environmental resources. Why? We want to empower our community so that you can learn new ways to explore, support, and play in nature!

Ready to finally figure out what that amazing tree is in your yard? Or that weird insect you always see on your porch? Then you will love this season’s resource spotlight: iNaturalist!

iNaturalist is a nonprofit organization with a mission to “connect people to nature and advance biodiversity science and conservation.” You can use either their website (inaturalist.org) or their mobile app to identify almost anything in nature, including plants, insects, mammals, fish, fungi, etc. Simply by taking pictures, you contribute data that helps scientists and resource managers across the globe.

I use iNaturalist for many reasons: the app helps me confirm my species identifications, I can use the interactive map to explore past species observations in an area, and I enjoy contributing to projects whose data helps protect our local environment!

As an added bonus, if you use iNaturalist when you are at Seven Ponds, you help us catalog our unique biodiversity! This helps us reach our goals as a nature sanctuary to provide a safe space for wildlife.

I look forward to seeing your observations!
Happy exploring!



iNaturalist

Seven Ponds Nature Center Presents: Adirondacks in the Spring May 24 – 29, 2026

Come explore “new mountains from old rocks” with Seven Ponds as we immerse ourselves in the springtime beauty of the Adirondack Park. Established in 1892, the Adirondack Park is over six million acres, and is a patchwork of public and private lands with quaint little towns dispersed amongst the wilderness.

In late May, the mountains will be awash with leaves in hues of light greens and pinks, spring ephemerals blanketing the forest floors, and the rivers and waterfalls rushing with freshly melted snow. Migrating birds moving through, along with year-round bird residents, will add to the kaleidoscope of colors.

Adirondack Park is not only rich in natural history, but human history is tied very closely to these lands. Iroquoian people, Mohawk (Kenyengehaga) and Oneida (Oneyotdehaga), as well as the Algonquian people, Mahican, call this place home, and their ancestors hunted, made pottery, and practiced agriculture throughout the mountains.

During the Gilded Age, the Adirondacks became a destination for elite families wanting to get away from the “evils” of city life, and inspired them to build luxurious retreats that blended into the natural surroundings. This trip will allow us to delight in our senses, as we explore the wonders of the Adirondack Mountains.

Visit sevenponds.org/field-tours for more information. Registration will open January 6, 2026 at 9:00 am.



Around the Center

2025 Trek the Trails! Recap

Research shows that walking in nature improves both mental and physical health. In October the staff challenged themselves and anybody else who wanted to participate to "Trek the Trails" both at the nature center and elsewhere. This year the Seven Ponds staff trekked a total of 539.31 miles, smashing our previous staff record of 413.3 miles, set in 2024. We also led Tuesday and Thursday treks around the trails at Seven Ponds, where visitors joined us and put in many healthy, nature-inspired miles throughout the month. Keep on trekking out there, and join us again next October for Trek the Trails!



Corks & Caps 2026 - Save the Date!

The 2026 edition of our annual Corks & Caps Fundraiser will be held **Saturday, June 20th** at the Boulder Pointe Golf Club in Oxford. This fun event is one of our most important fundraisers of the year and we hope you will be able to attend and support the nature center. Corks & Caps keeps getting better year after year, and the revenue generated during the event helps make everything we do possible. Be sure to mark your 2026 calendars now so you won't miss this exciting event.

Critter Corner Holiday Giving Tree

Don't forget to stop by the holiday giving tree for the Critter Corner! The nature center houses live reptile, amphibian, and fish species that call Michigan home. These critters play an essential role, providing visitors with an opportunity to learn first-hand about our fellow animals that live in the wetlands, forests, and prairies of Seven Ponds. We love our ambassador animals, so we strive to give them the best possible care. That's where you come in! Donate on our website or when you visit the nature center. In the front lobby, you can find the holiday giving tree with tags listing suggested donation amounts to help buy food, equipment, and supplies for our animal friends. Grab a tag and see Gina or Damian at the front desk to make a donation. "Grrriiiihhlll!" (That's tree frog for "Thank you!")



2025 Nest Box Report

Here at Seven Ponds we have some amazing volunteers who perform nest box monitoring on our 88 different nest boxes each year. The volunteers are given their own section of boxes to mon-

itor once a week from April through early August. Once the nesting season has come to a close those volunteers return their data sheets to the nature center and we enter the data into Nest Watch. Nest Watch is The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's citizen science network for nest monitoring. All the data that is collected and submitted to Cornell helps scientists gain a better understanding of nesting patterns and how birds are doing collectively. Our nests are primarily inhabited by Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*), Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*), and House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*). Overall this year our data shows a little over 180 birds fledged from the nest boxes, which is an excellent number! If you are interested in becoming a Citizen Scientist or would like to know how to add nest boxes to your own property, please call the Nature Center at 810-796-3200.

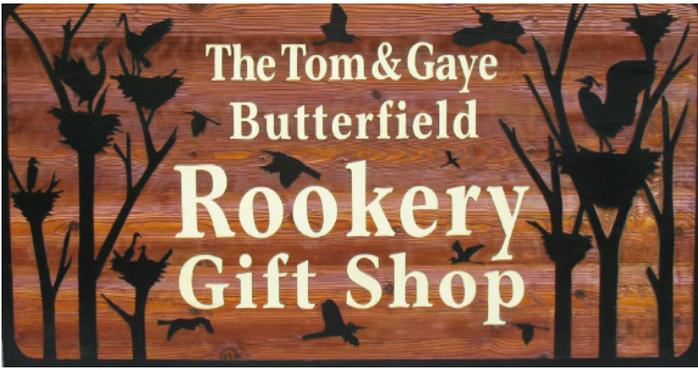
Forest of the Future: New Trees in the Swamp

This year we planted 9 native trees and shrubs: two very large swamp white oaks (*Quercus bicolor*), two very large bur oaks (*Quercus macrocarpa*), and five Michigan holly (*Ilex verticillata*). All were planted in an area between our Wildflower Area and Turtle Pond. Each tree is protected to keep deer away. These plants were made possible through a generous donation from the Troy Garden Club, and our "buy-a-tree" program. Special THANKS to Dryden Elementary 6th grade students for helping plant these wonderful trees!

Stingers 2025 Bake Sale and Resale Shoppe Results



Founded in 1974, our group is 50 years + and still going strong! Many thanks go out to all of our members for what we do together to support Seven Ponds Nature Center. This year's bake sale at the Party at The Ponds! event in September netted close to \$733.00, and the Resale Shoppe brought in \$1045.00. Coupled with a generous donation jar amount of \$62.00, the Stingers generated almost \$1840.00 for the Nature Center. These volunteer events help raise money to support many aspects of Seven Ponds, including our public programming and needed maintenance projects around the center. The Stingers volunteer group continues to grow, and new members are always welcome!



For a gift that will be enjoyed throughout the year, consider giving a Seven Ponds Membership. \$50.00 will purchase a Family Membership that includes everyone in the household. That family will then be able to explore the beautiful Seven Ponds property any day of the year as well as enjoying reduced program fees, gift shop discounts and many other benefits.

The gift shop is open Tuesday through Sunday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. We look forward to seeing you soon!

Thank you to all who have shopped at the Rookery Gift Shop this year. We appreciate you and your support of Seven Ponds Nature Center.

THINK GLOBALLY, SHOP LOCALLY

Want to enjoy the holiday season and leave the hustle and bustle behind? The Rookery Gift Shop is the perfect place to do just that. We are here to help you find fun and thoughtful gifts for those special people on your list. After that's done, let the beauty of nature refresh your spirit with a stroll around Seven Ponds.

When you come in you will find a selection of bird feeders, nature related books and field guides, Vortex binoculars, puzzles and games for the whole family, a selection of teas, honey, agate bookends, nature-themed jewelry, and more. Gift Certificates are available as well!



Seven Ponds Nature Center

3854 Crawford Road
Dryden, MI 48428
810-796-3200
www.sevenponds.org

Winter Programs

December 2025 -
February 2026

Exploring the winter world can be a wondrous experience with endless possibilities for adventure. Look over this winter's offerings of activities and make plans to join us as we explore winter's nature. Seven Ponds offers something for everyone, from pre-schoolers and families to adults. Mark your calendar for some programs in our Winter Series, seasonal activities, or WinterFest. Programs are \$3 for members and \$5 for non-members unless otherwise noted. **Pre-registration is required for most programs**, and registering online is quick and easy. Visit sevenponds.org to register.

The Winter Series from Seven Ponds

Each winter Seven Ponds sponsors the Winter Series, a series of Sunday afternoon programs highlighted by noted naturalists and photographers, live animals, fascinating natural and cultural history, and enjoyment for all ages. Come out for one or all of these programs. Sessions are open to everyone, but **pre-registration is required**. Seating is limited and these programs often fill quickly. Fee: \$3.00 (non-members \$5.00). **Please register online.**

Gathered: On Foraging, Feasting, and the Seasonal Life

SUNDAY, JANUARY 25TH, 2026, 2:00 PM

AUTHOR

Gabrielle Cerberville, also known as the “Chaotic Forager” online, is a “celebrated foraging educator, community mycologist, and climate advocate.” Her new book, *Gathered*, is an illustrated field guide, cookbook, and memoir combined. If you're interested in mushrooms, foraging, and reconnecting with nature, this is the event for you! Copies of the book will be available for sale.

Turtles of Michigan

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1ST, 2026, 2:00 PM

WILDLIFE REHABILITATOR

Join Sarah Matuszak, local naturalist and licensed wildlife rehabilitator with Happy Snapper Rescue to learn more about Michigan's turtles, turtle rescue, and how you can help!



Hibernation, Bats, and White-nose Syndrome

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8TH, 2026, 2:00 PM

BIOLOGIST

This program will explore hibernation, why bats do it, and where in the state hibernating bats are found. Dr. Allen Kurta, one of Michigan's leading bat experts, will discuss the overwintering behavior of the nine species of bats in Michigan and concentrate on the species that

overwinter underground, in mines and caves. The presentation will include an introduction to white-nose syndrome, a fungal disease that has killed millions of bats in eastern North America.



Wolves and Moose of Isle Royale

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15TH, 2026, 2:00 PM

NATURALIST

Did you know that the world's longest predator-prey study is happening right here in Michigan? Learn about the history of the program and find out what's happening right now on Isle Royale!



Lawn Desert to Wildlife Oasis

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22ND, 2026, 2:00 PM

NATURALIST

Though a lawn of green, cut grass may look wonderful to us, it is essentially a dead ecosystem. Learn with a naturalist about how to make your yard not just a beautiful space for humans, but a thriving oasis full of plants and wildlife.

December

Nature Ornaments

Saturday, December 13th, 2:00-4:00 PM

Get ready for the holidays by creating beautiful natural ornaments! These are the perfect gift, for yourself or loved ones. This program is intended for those age 14+. Supplies provided. Cost: members: \$5, non-members: \$7

First Day of Winter Walk

Sunday, December 21st, 2:00 PM

Let's hit the trails and welcome this new season with open arms. We'll take a relaxing stroll and talk about all things winter.

Lapeer County Christmas Bird Count at Seven Ponds

Saturday, December 27th, 8:00 AM

Do you have a passion for birds or community science? If so, please join us for the National Audubon Society's annual Christmas Bird Count. Come bird with a naturalist as we hike throughout Seven Ponds Nature Center's property to contribute to over a century of data! The count happens for most of the day, so stay as little or as long as you like, but you must arrive at 8:00 AM to attend. Binoculars will be available to borrow. This program is intended for those age 18+.

Holiday Closures

Wednesday, December 24 - Thursday, December 25

Wednesday, December 31 - Thursday, January 1

January

Explore the Collections

Sunday, January 4th, 2:00 PM

Ever wonder what's in those big cabinets in the back room? What makes a good specimen? Join one of our naturalists as we look through some of the interesting animal and nature items in our extensive collections!

Meet the Critters

Sunday, January 11th, 2:00 PM

Come meet the critters of Critter Corner! Our reptile and amphibian ambassadors have so much to teach us. We'll feel shells and scales and talk about Michigan's amazing animals!

Winterfest

Saturday, January 24th, 10:00 AM-3:00 PM

See Winterfest event flier for details (insert)



Winter Story Hour

Wednesday, January 28th, 10:00 AM

Isn't winter the best time to curl up with a good book? Join us for a cozy winter-themed story and crafts! This one hour program is best for children from 3 years old to 6 years old.

Nature Wreaths

Saturday, January 31st, 1:30 PM

Bring the beauty of nature to your front door! Using natural materials, we will make and decorate wreaths for you to take home. Supplies provided. This program is intended for those age 14+. Cost: members: \$5, non-members: \$7

February

Winter Story Time: 'Walking on A Trail'

Saturday, February 7th, 10:30 AM

Join us for a cozy storytime! Author Allison Bartlette will read her new children's picture book followed by some fun activities.

Snowshoeing at Seven Ponds

Saturday, February 21st, 2:00 PM

Come snowshoeing with us and enjoy Seven Ponds in the winter! In the event of no snow, an interpretive walk will still take place. Snowshoes are provided.

Nature Study Series for Homeschoolers

Seven Ponds Nature Center is an ideal outdoor classroom where children can experience nature first hand. In this series of programs, our experienced naturalists guide students toward an awareness and appreciation of our natural world, using hands-on activities, specimens, slide shows, and nature walks. These programs complement state science objectives and focus on ecological concepts. Fee: \$4.00 per person. Register for the Nature Study Series for Homeschoolers sessions online at sevenponds.org. **Registration opens Dec. 2, 2025 at 9:00 AM.**

NATURE BOOKS

Wednesday, December 17th, 1:00-3:00 pm

Grades K-2 and Grades 3-6

Where do you go when you have a question about nature? If you're thinking like a naturalist, you'll turn to books! For this nature study, we will use Seven Pond's natural history library to answer our nature questions and inspire our creativity.

INTO THE MICROVERSE

Wednesday, January 21st, 1:00-3:00 pm

Grades K-2 and Grades 3-6

There's a whole universe we can't see with the naked eye. Join us as we explore the microscopic building blocks that make up the world around us!

ANIMAL ENGINEERS

Wednesday, February 18th, 1:00-3:00 pm

Grades K-2 and Grades 3-6

Did you know that animals are incredible engineers? Focusing on bird nests, we'll learn about basic engineering principles, adaptation, and animal instinct. Then, we'll test our knowledge by building our own bird nests.

Knee-high Naturalists

Fridays 10:00 - 11:30 am

Fee: \$7.00 per child

For preschool children around 3 or 4 years old.

Come out and enjoy nature with your child. All classes include nature fun like walks, crafts, games, stories, snacks, and so much more! Please make arrangements for your other children.

Space limited. Online registration required.

Please dress for the weather!

Nocturnal Animals ~ December 19

Critter Clues ~ January 16

Kindness is Key ~ February 20

Pint-sized Explorers

Wednesdays 10:00 - 10:45 am

Fee: \$7.00 per child

Pint-sized Explorers (1-2 years old) will have fun exploring nature with their adults. During this special time, toddlers and their adults will be outside exploring nature with the help of stories, songs, activities, and nature discovery. Please make arrangements for your other children.

Space limited. Online registration required.

Please dress for the weather!

Deer ~ December 10

Hot and Cold ~ January 7

Numbers in Nature ~ February 11

WINTER BIRD WALKS

This winter we will offer three bird walks, one for each month from December through February and all at Seven Ponds. Seven Ponds bird walks are open to birders of all skill and experience levels, and beginners are always welcome. Bring your binoculars, your enthusiasm, and be sure to dress for the weather. These bird walks are \$3 for Seven Ponds members, and \$5 for non-members, unless otherwise noted. Pre-registration is required, and bird walks are limited to twelve (12) participants. Please note the start times below and arrive on time and ready to bird! We have Vortex 8x42 binoculars available for loan.

Winter Bird Walk #1

OWLS OF SEVEN PONDS

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20TH, 6:00 PM

Join us at the nature center as we learn about the owls that call Seven Ponds home! We'll look at taxidermy and then go on a night hike.



WINTER BIRD WALK #2

FEEDER WATCH

SATURDAY, JANUARY 17TH, 9:00 AM

Come spend the morning with a naturalist as we watch our feeders and learn about the birds visiting them! Coffee and tea will be provided.

WINTER BIRD WALK #3

WINTER BIRDS WALK

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28TH, 8:00 AM

Winter birding is in full swing at the nature center. Let's hit the trails and see how many species we can find!

2026 SEVEN PONDS FIELD TOURS

Southwest Colorado: Birding the Mesa Verde Country

May 9-16, 2026

A birding field tour with Seven Ponds Nature Center and Rocky Mountain Birding

We will be exploring the vast Mesa Verde Country of the southwest part of the state on the hunt for the unique birds that call this amazing region home!



Northeast New York State: Adirondacks in the Spring

May 24-29, 2026

A natural history tour with Seven Ponds Nature Center

Birding, botany, and culture of the Adirondacks! Come explore "new mountains from old rocks" with Seven Ponds as we immerse ourselves in the springtime beauty of the Adirondack Park.



Join Seven Ponds staff as we explore beautiful wild places. Let us do all the planning and take care of the trip logistics while you come along for a grand adventure!

Registration for both field tours opens Tuesday, January 6, 2026 at 9:00 AM.

Space is limited and tours often fill quickly.

Visit the nature center's website for full field tour itineraries and registration information.



SEVEN PONDS NATURE CENTER

WINTERFEST

JOIN US FOR OUR ANNUAL WINTER FUN DAY!

ACTIVITIES:

- ICE CUTTING
- ICE SKATING
- LAWN GAMES
- SNOWMAN BUILDING COMPETITION
- FIRE WITH SMORES 
- INTERPRETIVE WALKS

*In the event there is not sufficient snow or ice, alternative activities will be provided



**SATURDAY
JANUARY
24TH 2026**

10:00AM - 3:00PM



FEE: \$3.00 PER PERSON

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN

Please pre-register at sevenponds.org

