



Olmsted County Parks Quarterly

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 4

WINTER 2020

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Hiking trails remain open at all parks all year
- Zollman Zoo remains open 10am—4pm, everyday except Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day & Easter
- Thank you to all campers for a safe and successful summer!

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Team R.E.D. donates to Oxbow Park's Trails

by Jaide Ryks

Members of Team R.E.D. (Run. Eat. Drink.), a local organization, all have one thing in common: they like to move, have fun, and stay fit! Members meet up in various parks and locations throughout the Rochester area to get out and be active together, whether it's running, walking, snowshoeing or other activities. Team R.E.D. also actively participates in fundraisers for organizations of their choosing. Back in August, Oxbow Park, a common place for Team R.E.D. to run, was lucky enough to be the recipient of another Team R.E.D. fundraiser. There were several contributors to the fundraiser including Team R.E.D., SE Min-

nesota Trail Runners, Rochester Running Club, Byron Cross Country, and many other runners. The fundraiser was put on to raise money to fix Oxbow Park trails and make them better suited for hikers and runners. The trails and bridges need extensive work due to previous flood damage and general wear and tear. Team R.E.D. and many other hikers and runners actively use Oxbow Park's 8 miles of

hiking trails, so this donation is greatly appreciated. In total, they raised \$620 to go toward trail repair!

Thank you, Team R.E.D. and keep up the great work!



Presenting the check to Oxbow Park Manager, Lonnie, are Team R.E.D. members (left to right) Tristan, Marvin, and Jonas

A Legacy Trail by: Ruthann Yeager

A peaceful place with lovely wildflowers, paths and softly lapping water from the lake – a place to remember or honor a loved one or just relax and unwind. Does this sound inviting? Friends of Chester Woods board members thought it did and proposed to help the park staff make such a place a reality.

In 2014, the park informed the board that a plan was needed for the increasing number of memorials that park visitors wished to offer for family members. Benches, trees or rocks are scattered and difficult to maintain.

We discussed the creation of a memorial area and decided where it should be. Decisions

regarding the name and design led to Sandy Hokanson, a graphic designer, who produced a series of beautiful metal panels each with a line from a poem. Large brass leaves are available for engraving names to be placed on a gracefully curved “stem” on the panels. The leaves are available by contacting park staff.

A bridge salvaged from the Meadow Lakes golf course, was refurbished and placed over a wet area. The railings were enhanced with carved metal panels designed by long-time park advocate Byron Stadvold. Board members planted wildflowers from local prairies in the adjacent field. Paved trails and stone benches completed the project.

The result can be seen just off the park entrance on the road to the office. It turned out just as we'd hoped and is so popular, we may soon be faced with the need to plan for expansion!



A Season of Construction By: Celeste Lewis

2020 has proven to be quite a year for everyone. The Covid 19 pandemic forced many companies to rethink how they perform their daily business and that was no different for Olmsted County Parks.

Although the policies that were put in place made it difficult to perform some of the normal daily activities that we have become accustomed to at Chester Woods Park, it did open up the opportunity for alternate projects to be completed.

As you enter the park the first thing you may notice is the fresh black top overlay throughout the park. In August, the County Highway department overlaid blacktop to all the parking lots and roads in the park.

The second thing you may notice is the addition of a new machine/mechanics shop near the park office. The construction for this building began in the spring and is near completion. The exterior is done, and it's down to cosmetics at this point. The new building is a welcome addition for daily operations of the park.

The boat launch parking lot is currently in the middle of a much-needed expansion as well. This expansion will not

only bring additional parking spaces for vehicles and boat trailers, but also a boat wash pull-off station as well.

The parks rental fleet of watercraft that has been stored at this area, is also on the move. Staff is in the process of constructing a new rental watercraft storage area near the beach. This will include an ADA path and a new dock.



Above: Boat launch parking lot under construction.

Left: Beach shoreline under construction for watercraft rentals.

Virtual Education By: Jaide Ryks

COVID-19 has undoubtedly taken a toll on many fun summer activities, including Olmsted County Parks programs. School group educational programs and public programming all had to be cancelled due to stipulations on large group gatherings. Fortunately for Oxbow Park and Zollman Zoo visitors, naturalists got creative this year with public programming. Beginning in March, Oxbow Park

naturalists began making virtual education videos.

They started as simple "Wildlife Wednesday" videos giving information and facts about zoo animals but soon grew to much more. The educational videos include themes like Wildlife Wednesday, Maintenance Monday, Virtual Hikes, Naturalist Talks, Crafts and more!

Naturalists post to both Facebook and the Olmsted County YouTube page multiple times per week.



Chester Woods Facebook has also taken part in virtual education about park plants, gardening, and more! Check out the Olmsted County YouTube page or park Facebook pages to learn more about animals, plants and the world around you in Olmsted County!

Monarch Tagging at Oxbow Park

By: Megan Long

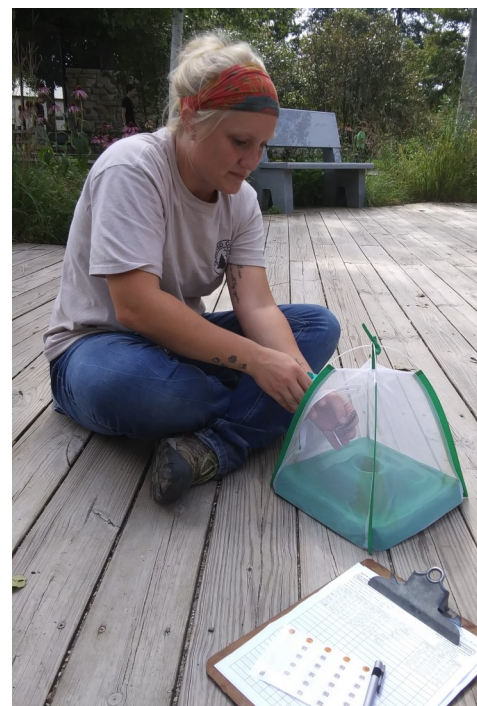
At the end of summer, Oxbow Park Naturalists tagged Monarchs through the citizen science program, Monarch Watch. This program was started in 1992 to learn more about the Monarchs' 2,000-3,000-mile migration to Mexi-

co that happens each fall. The information gathered from tagging can be used to answer questions about Monarch population numbers, timing and pace of the migration, and mortality during migration - among other things. This information helps us better understand Monarchs and find ways we can help their declining population.

The tags used to mark each Monarch is a small sticker, about the size of a pencil eraser, with a unique letter and number combination. To tag the Monarchs, they are first caught with an insect net, then carefully held near the body so the wings are not damaged. Before the tag is put on, data

is collected including: the tag code, date, sex, and tagging location. This data is then submitted to an online database at Monarch-Watch.org at the end of the tagging season. Once the tag is firmly placed on the discal cell, a certain area of the wing, the Monarch can be released and sent on their way with warm wishes of safe travels!

Naturalist, Jaide Ryks, tagging monarchs.



CALENDAR COVER ART CONTEST FOR KIDS ONLY

FRIENDS OF OXBOW IS MAKING A 2021 CALENDAR

Kids! Grab your art supplies!
Draw your favorite animal at Zollman Zoo, the scenery, or plants.
Your drawing could help raise money for the new Nature Center!

THE RULES

18 and under only
Original art only, sorry no photos
Hand or digital designs accepted
1 entry per person
Include name, age, and phone number with entry
Physical submissions will not be returned
Entrants release art by submitting it to Friends of Oxbow
Entries can be dropped off at the Nature Center, mailed, or e-mailed

Friends of Oxbow
Attn: Calendar Contest
9781 County Road 100 NW
Byron, MN 55802
friends@oxbow@gmail.com

Entries accepted through September 30th, 2020
Winners receive a FREE calendar!

PIC-COLLAGES

This summer Friends of Oxbow (FOX) planned fun and safe activities for park patrons. The Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota organized a scavenger hunt contest for many parks across the state. We were excited to be added to their website and increase

Friends of Oxbow Update

By: Kris Nelson

our visibility statewide! To contribute, Oxbow Park staff created an A to Z hunt and FOX added prizes and extended the hunt through mid-October. We hope families enjoyed the educational opportunity of getting onto the trails and hunting for flowers, animals, and so much more.

As we continue to raise funds for displays in the new nature center, we had to think differently this year. Through the month of September FOX hosted an art contest for area kids. The winning art will become the front and back covers of a 2021 Oxbow Park and Zollman Zoo photo calendar. Proceeds from calendar sales will help us continue our mission of supporting park projects. The fast

approach of winter brings us a new opportunity to plan safe family-friendly activities at the park, please keep an eye out for exciting new activities from FOX.





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The mission of Olmsted County Parks is to foster an appreciation of the natural world through environmental education, natural resource management, and public participation in the stewardship of our park lands.

If you would like more information, please visit our website at: www.co.olmsted.mn.us/pw/parks

Learning life-long lessons in natural places

Winter Park Activities

By: Clarissa Schrooten

As winter approaches some people forget the many outdoor activities available to them. This year with COVID-19, groups will need to be kept small, it will be the perfect time to find new outdoor activities for families. Each Olmsted County Park has a different set of winter activities available.

Chester Woods Park: has 5+ miles of groomed trails for cross-country skiing, skate style and track set for classic skiing, groomed trails for fat tire biking, and any ungroomed trail can be used for snowshoeing. Once the Bear Creek Reservoir, aka Chester Woods Lake, freezes thick enough, ice fishing becomes a popular activity as well.

Oxbow Park & Zollman Zoo: has 2.5+ miles of groomed ski trails with track set for classic cross-country skiing, packed trails across the river for fat tire biking, and many ungroomed trails to explore on snowshoes. The Zollman Zoo remains open from 10am – 4pm daily to see the Minnesota native ani-

mals in their beautiful, thick, winter fur coats. The hills in the Path of Imagination make for great snow tubing fun and the play elements are fun in the snow as well!

Root River Park: has ungroomed trails that can be used for cutting tracks with snowshoes or skis. The hills in the park can also be used for snow tubing and hiking back up the hill.

White Bridge Fishing Pier: has ice fishing opportunities on Lake Zumbro once it's frozen to a safe thickness.

As temperatures cool down be prepared to bundle up and continue to enjoy Olmsted County Parks.

