



# The Trailblazer

*Newsletter of the Elkhart County Indiana Master Naturalists*

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Autumn 2020

## Autumn Quarterly Meeting Elkhart County IMN Alumni Club

The autumn meeting of the ECIMNAC was held at the Feedlot Shelter at Bonneyville Mill County Park on October 9. Our guest speaker was Dennis Badke from Foxwood Rehabilitation Center in Bristol who spoke about foxes. The average fox weighs between 7-15 pounds. Red foxes are the most common but there are also gray foxes that can climb trees. Foxes have vertical pupils to improve their night vision. They also have retractable claws. Their preferred food is mice and therefore they prevent a lot of agricultural loss, since mice consume a lot of grain. Mange is a common problem but can be treated. Dennis also stressed that foxes do NOT make good pets! He brought along Luna, one of the foxes he works with. Dennis estimated that he spends between \$10,000 and \$12,000 per year on rehabilitation, and he's been a rehabilitator for 41 years! If you'd like to contribute to the Foxwood Rehabilitation Center, please visit <http://www.foxwoodwildlife.com/>



Other take-aways from the meeting:

- Several members of the recently completed class were in attendance and were introduced. Welcome aboard!
- No potluck this year due to concern about the pandemic. We hope to have it next year!
- Education hours opportunity: Krista talked about a great education opportunity. Click this link to check out the EEAI annual conference in November: [EEAI Annual conference](#)
- We will award the top volunteers at our January meeting. Volunteer hours should be sent to Jenna by the end of the year.
- Since we canceled so much this year due to the pandemic, if you paid your dues in 2020, you're good for 2021. If you didn't pay in 2020, you will still owe \$10 for 2021.
- We have openings on the board that will need to be filled at our April meeting. Please think about helping to keep our group going strong!

Next meeting:

**Thursday, January 14, 6:30 p.m. at the Shrock Pavilion at Shanklin Park in Goshen.**

(We've changed the location so that we can socially distance. The Reith Center is too small for us to spread out the necessary amount.)

## Still naturally inclined.....

It seems to me, that most of us are still reeling a bit from the effects of the stay-at-home mandate as we try to return to some semblance of normalcy. Unfortunately, we have witnessed too much loss of life, income and schooling, not to mention the disruption of daily routines and entertainment activities.

American writer, Sarah Payton Parton wrote in 1853 that “every cloud has a silver lining” and as I was thinking about that, from a naturalist’s standpoint, several things came to mind.

Scientists, using satellite measurements of air quality to estimate the changes in nitrogen dioxide pollution over the major epicenters of the outbreak (China, South Korea, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Iran and the United States), found that nitrogen dioxide pollution decreased by an average of 40 percent over Chinese cities and by 20 to 38 percent over Western Europe and the United States during the 2020 lockdown earlier this year, as compared to the same time period in 2019. While closing factories and prohibiting cars from the roads is not a sustainable solution to tackle air pollution, it certainly is a strong indicator that we can reduce air pollution. The declines were temporary, but the cleaner pandemic skies show how fast we can bring down pollution levels when we reduce burning fossil fuels.

As people across the globe stayed at home to stop the spread of the coronavirus, the planet not only became cleaner, but “wilder”. Wild animals were noticed in unusual places. Coyotes were spotted wandering along downtown Chicago’s Michigan Avenue and near San Francisco’s Golden Gate Bridge. For the first time in recent memory, pronghorns ventured into the lowlands of Death Valley National Park. In other national parks deer, bobcats, and black bears congregated around buildings, along roadways, and in parts of the parks typically busy with visitors. A handful of workers, who remained in Yosemite during the closures and were able to travel by foot and bike along the deserted roadways, described an abundance of wildlife not seen in the last century. Similar behaviors were documented in other national parks including Rocky Mountain NP in Colorado and Yellowstone NP in Wyoming.

Toilet paper, paper towels, and hand sanitizer were not the only items that experienced high demands. People unable to go to their gyms looked for other ways to exercise, and families looked for ways to keep kids busy during the stay-at-home orders. As a result, bicycle sales saw their biggest spike in the US since the oil crisis of the 1970s, but that’s if you could find one. Mass merchandisers like Walmart and Target were swept clean, and independent shops were doing a brisk business and were selling out of affordable “family” bikes. The demand led to shortages that could take weeks, maybe months, to resolve. Basic adult bicycles, known in the industry as “leisure” bicycles, saw double- and triple-digit sales increases. And not only bicycles were in demand, the boat business exploded for canoes and kayaks. Some boat manufacturers were backed up six to eight weeks. Those of us who kayak know that getting out on the water is a relaxing, healthy way to get out of the house, (and maintain social-distancing). No wonder others have discovered the appeal there, too.

The question I pose is, will our society, world, recognize how we impact the natural world, and will we, can we, make adjustments to the way we live that benefit both our world and our daily lives?

## Chuck

(Chuck Harvuot was a former Chair of the Elkhart County IMNs and wrote the *Naturally Inclined* column for the **Trailblazer** during his time in office.)

Our socially distanced and safe ECIMNA  
September board meeting.



## Suet recipe

Winter is approaching, so you might be interested in this suet recipe for bird feeding from the **National Audubon Society**. With this vegetarian version of suet (traditionally it's made from rendered animal fat) you can provide the perfect winter substitute for birds that normally feast on insects. This lipid-rich treat can help prepare year-round residents for the long winter and is quite the draw for birds such as woodpeckers, wrens, chickadees, nuthatches, and titmice. Check out this recipe, inspired by "The Misfit Baker" blog.

### Materials:

- 1 1/2 cups shortening (look for palm oil free options)
- 3/4 cups nut butter (any kind)
- 3 1/2 cups wild bird seed
- 1 cup quick oats
- 1/2 cup corn meal
- Ice cube tray

### Steps:

1. Mix the dry ingredients of bird seed, oats, and corn meal together and set aside.
2. Combine the shortening and nut butter in a separate bowl and melt. Stir until completely combined.
3. Pour the melted mixture into the dry ingredients and stir until combined.
4. Spoon mixture into the ice cube tray.
5. Freeze for one to two hours and place in your suet feeder!

*Note: Not recommended for outdoor temperatures above 50 degrees .*



## Frightened Toad

The boy was only four years old,  
as he searched the wild outside.  
For him it was mostly bugs and worms,  
he could find in his small backyard.

But on this day he found a toad,  
which made him very happy.  
Peering in close and following its jumps,  
as it led him across the yard.

The toad was slow so he thought he might,  
move in for a careful grab.  
The third time was the charm,  
as he clutched it in his hand.

As he comprehends the mystery,  
he holds in his hand so tight.  
He's soon to learn that as a defense,  
a toad might urinate in fright.



That boy will become a man,  
and respect all living things.  
Shaped in part by a frightened toad,  
the mystery never ends.

Jim Carpenter

The idea for this poem came from an experience I had as a young boy. When trying to impress a neighbor girl I actually put a small toad in my mouth. The results were the same as in this poem!



### Volunteers Needed

Help Potato Creek SP during Fall Fest **Oct 24** at 2pm  
The park is still needing 2-3 volunteer judges for the Costume Contest. This is a popular event. Please considering giving your time to help the park. The contest will run approx. 45 minutes. To sign up or get more details please email or call Allison Pudlo, [APudlo@dnr.IN.gov](mailto:APudlo@dnr.IN.gov)  
574-656-8186 ext. 225.



### Pictures from the most recent Elkhart County IMN class



### Volunteers Needed at Elkhart County Parks

#### Nov. 7 - Boot Lake Tree Removal

Assist in the removal of invasive trees from the prairie.

*Plan to bring:* Work gloves

*Meet at:* The main parking lot

*Directions and map:* <https://elkhartcountyparks.org/destinations/boot-lake/>

#### Nov. 14 - Ox Bow Firewood

Assist with firewood splitting and stacking for use in our winter warming houses.

*Plan to bring:* Work gloves

*Meet at:* The Ox Bow Service Center

*Directions and map:* <https://elkhartcountyparks.org/destinations/ox-bow/>

#### Dec. 5 - Boot Lake Tree Removal

Assist in the removal of invasive trees from the prairie.

*Plan to bring:* Work gloves

*Meet at:* The main parking lot

*Directions and map:* <https://elkhartcountyparks.org/destinations/boot-lake/>

All work days will be from 10:00am - 12:00pm on the days listed above. Face coverings are required. There is no pre-registration, just show up if you are interested and able to help.

## Reduction in 2020 Advanced IMN hour requirement

For those doing the 2020 Advanced IMN, required hours have been reduced this year due to the COVID-19 situation. For 2020, the hours have been reduced to 15 hours of volunteer time and 4 hours of education time which are due by Dec. 22. Most places were shut down in the spring and have had limited opportunities in the summer. There is still time to reach out and help this fall or find citizen science projects. For education hours, virtual and/or on-site will be accepted.

Include your name, address, email address, class host and year of class with a brief description of your volunteer hours and education hours. An Advanced IMN administration fee of \$10 is also due by Dec. 22. The fee of \$10 along with the description of your hours can be mailed to this address: Ouabache State Park, Jody Heaston, IMN, 4930 E. State Rd 201 Bluffton, IN 46714 or emailed to [jheaston@dnr.IN.gov](mailto:jheaston@dnr.IN.gov)

\*\*If you do NOT want a pin but still want on the Advanced list still send in your hours. In this case, the \$10 fee is not needed. Please be sure to note that when you turn in your hours.

If you have turned in your hours and fee earlier in the year, please email me a friendly reminder in December. Pins and certificates will be sent out in early February.

NOTE: JENNA IS **NOT** FORWARDING HOURS TO JODY—SEND THEM DIRECTLY TO JODY ! (Send them to Jenna, too, if you want to be considered for our local awards.)

Do you have any pictures or a story that you'd like to share with other Elkhart County IMNs? Send it to [chapman\\_ej@yahoo.com](mailto:chapman_ej@yahoo.com) for the next issue of the *Trailblazer*.

From Carole Mitchell:

I know some people aren't on Facebook, but for those who are:

[Elkhart County Indiana Master Naturalists Alumni Group](#)

This Facebook page was created [April 11, 2012](#). We have 59 members. Can we encourage others to join? It would be a good place to interact with fellow members.

I know people see posts but don't always interact. I would like to see that change and become more interactive.



The mission of the Indiana Master Naturalist program is to bring together natural resource specialists with adult learners to foster an understanding of Indiana's plants, water, soils and wildlife, and promote natural resource volunteer service within the State of Indiana.

