



MARSH HAPPENINGS

Celebrate the International Year of Astronomy at Oak Hammock Marsh

The International Year of Astronomy 2009 is a global effort initiated by the International Astronomical Union and UNESCO to help the citizens of the world rediscover their place in the Universe through the day- and night-time sky, and thereby foster a personal sense of wonder and discovery.



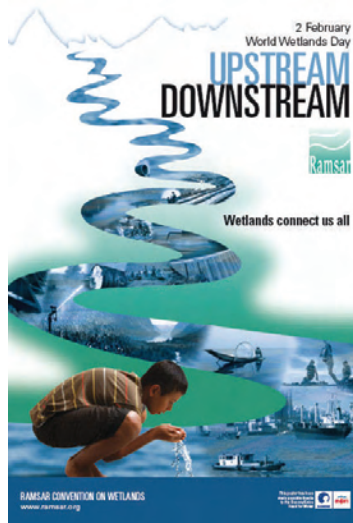
Activities will take place all over the world where collaborations will be made between professional and amateur astronomers, science centres and science communicators to celebrate this event. Already 129 countries are involved and well over 140 are expected to participate.

The Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre is offering a series of 12 theme-nights of stargazing throughout the year to help visitors to better understand the night sky. These events will take place every third Thursday of every month and include an informative session in the theatre followed by an observation session from the rooftop.

World Wetlands Day Celebration – February 1 and 2

World Wetlands Day marks the date of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands on February 2, 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar. Oak Hammock Marsh was officially designated as a Ramsar Site (wetland of international significance to wildlife and people) in 1987. Join the Interpretive Centre on Sunday, February 1st and Monday, February 2nd to celebrate World Wetlands Day.

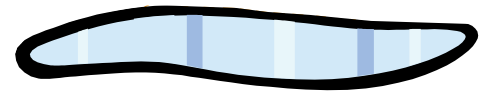
Come learn why wetlands are one of the most productive and diverse ecosystems on the planet. Special wetland demonstrations, films, slideshows, and puppet shows will be offered both days. Children can take part in a colouring contest to win great prizes. Copies of the colouring contest can be downloaded from the Centre's website or picked up at the Centre. Participate in the many outdoor activities including skating on the duck pond, snowshoeing, and animal tracking. Free cake on Sunday at 2 p.m.



Above and Below the Ice

It starts slowly. A thin layer appears overnight and vanishes during the day. As temperatures drop further, it becomes more permanent. It no longer vanishes, but grows and thickens until it covers the entire surface. It will stay all winter to spring, when temperatures again rise. It is ice and it is a major factor in the lives of animals, in the marsh — including people.

Most substances sink in their solid form. Water does the opposite. While solid, it floats. This interesting characteristic proves to be both beneficial and challenging to wildlife through the winter.



As ice forms at the surface of water, it creates a barrier between the cold air above and the water below. This insulating barrier maintains the water beneath at a nearly constant temperature of 4°C (39°F). For animals that stay active (such as fish), and animals that hibernate in the mud near the bottom (such as frogs and turtles), this is key to their survival until spring.

Above the ice, winter wildlife has a new area to travel, hide and hunt for food. Tracks of deer, coyotes, foxes and hares after a snowfall reveal the animals that have made use of this temporary surface.

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MARSHY QUIZ

1. How many sides do snowflakes have?
2. True or False. The Spotted-winged Fly over winters as a larva inside the Goldenrod Ball Gall.
3. True or False. Grasshoppers hibernate for the winter.



4. Which of the following mammals chew discarded deer and moose antlers to gain calcium and salt in the winter?

- a. Mice
- b. Hares
- c. Porcupines
- d. All of the above
- e. None of the above

5. True or False. As the air pressure drops before a snowstorm, spruce and fir trees close their branches together to avoid collecting a heavy load of snow.



Answers: 3. false 4. d
 1. 6 — most lay eggs before
 2. true dying

Above and Below the Ice continued

Muskrats face both challenges and benefits from ice. They require the water below the ice to swim and access their food. They also need an open hole in the ice to breathe. As a compromise Muskrats build lodges and “push-ups”, mounds of mud and plants that form a cover over a hole in the ice to keep it open and provide safe place to eat and rest out of the cold.

Ice becomes a challenge to plants in winter. Blocking sunlight, ice limits the growth of aquatic plants to a point where most will die or become dormant until spring. Without sun, plants cannot create oxygen, limiting the amount available in the water below. This reduces the oxygen available to fish and other aquatic species.

For the human visitors to the marsh, ice presents many of the same challenges and benefits it does for wildlife. Some activities of the warmer, open water season must stop or change with the formation of the ice. Snowshoes replace canoe paddles and ice fishing replaces shore-fishing.



Come to the Interpretive Centre this winter to take a look at the new exhibit on this topic in the Nature Nook. Then head out on snowshoes across the frozen marsh to see for yourself the life above the ice!

ASK THE NATURALIST



Do butterflies hibernate?

Butterflies hibernate as adults, eggs, immature caterpillars or pupae. To survive the extremes of the climate (cold in the winter, heat and drought in the summer, especially in tropical habitats) butterflies undergo a rest period called diapause. During diapause the vital functions are kept to a bare minimum. No growth or development occurs in the egg, caterpillar or pupae, and the adult butterfly just hangs in a suitable place motionless waiting for better conditions to arrive. Sorbitol and glycerol are known to exist in the blood of some butterflies, and they function as natural anti-freeze agents.

TOP 10 LIST

Top 10 things to do at Oak Hammock Marsh this winter:

- Kiteboarding
- Snowshoeing
- Snowy owl viewing
- Geocaching



- Stargazing and watching auroras from the rooftop
- Human curling
- Quinzhee building
- Animal tracking
- Bannock making and eating
- Playing hockey and skating on the duck pond

Oak Hammock Marsh
 Interpretive Centre
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 Stonewall P.O. Box 1160
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For More Information

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 Bookings: 204-467-3299
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 Toll-free: 1-888-50-Marsh
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 E-mail: ohmic@ducks.ca
 Website:
 www.oakhammockmarsh.ca

Hours of Operation

July to October
 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
 November to June
 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

*Call ahead for Café hours.

Extended hours during the fall.

The Interpretive Centre is open beyond its public hours for group bookings and meetings.