



MARSH HAPPENINGS

Astronomy Nights

Late fall and early winter are the best times to observe the night sky; when the smog and haze that mask the heavens give way to crystal-clear nights. Though it is sometimes difficult to face the cold temperatures, the near-perfect viewing conditions of the sky make it worthwhile.

Join us during one of our monthly Astronomy Nights, held every third Thursday of the month, as we celebrate the International Year of Astronomy (IYA2009) with a special presentation by members of the **Royal Astronomical Society of Canada**.

The **International Year of Astronomy** is a year-long celebration of astronomy. It coincides with the 400th anniversary of the first recorded astronomical observations with a telescope by Galileo.

The topic for the November 19th session will be the *Northern Lights*. Discover the magnificent beauty of these natural light displays in the sky and learn about their solar origin. An indoor session will be followed by an outdoor observation session from the rooftop of the Interpretive Centre.

December 17th's topic will be *Winter Constellations*. As the seasons change so do the constellations in the sky as the planet faces a different direction at night. Learn how to recognize them and discover what will grace our night sky this winter while learning the many lores and stories associated with the constellations of the season.

Something Fishy at Oak Hammock Marsh

Every fall, the Interpretive Centre hosts the *Manitoba Fisheries Enhancement Fund Stamp Competition*. The competition features paintings of fish or fishing submitted by artists from across the province. One painting is then selected to become the art for next year's fish stamp the Manitoba fishing licence. With the paintings as the focal point, the Interpretive Centre installed a complimentary exhibit that answers some of the questions you may have about fish.

- What makes a fish, a fish? What is the biggest fish in the world? What are the parts of a fish? The *Fish Basics* display will answer all these questions and more, giving you insight into the lives of these fascinating creatures.
- How do our lives affect fish? What can I do to improve fish habitat? Swinging by the *Threats to Fish* display you will learn about these activities and how we can reverse their effect.
- Have you seen some of the common fish species in the province? Check out the *Common Freshwater Fish of Manitoba* display to see some fishy friends usually hidden in the depths of Manitoba's lakes, rivers and wetlands.
- How do fish use wetlands, such as Oak Hammock Marsh? Find out in the *Fish and Wetlands* display.
- Are fish used for more than just food? Stopping by the *Fish and You* display will show you that fish are used for more than just a meal.

So come find the answers to all these questions and more this winter!

Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, December 19, 2009

In 1900, American ornithologist Frank Chapman asked birders across North America to go out on Christmas Day to count the birds in their home towns and submit the results as the first "Christmas Bird Census." Little did he know that this suggestion would create one of the biggest organized birding events in the world and a holiday tradition for over 50,000 birders each year.

The Christmas Bird Count, as it is now called, is done in over 1,800 locations across Canada, the United States and Latin America. Each local group of birders picks a day between December 14th and January 5th, sets out a 24 km diameter circle, then does its best to count all the birds within the circle on the selected day.



The 110th annual Christmas Bird Count is rapidly approaching and the Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre is currently recruiting volunteers to assist with this fun and exciting event. Come help count the winter birds, while exploring the marsh and surrounding area. The Oak Hammock Marsh Annual Christmas Bird Count takes place on December 19th and costs \$5 plus admission to the Centre.

This event pairs experienced birders with people who want to learn to identify Manitoba's winter birds.

MARSHY QUIZ

- As the length of the days grows shorter and temperatures get colder, which of the following animals change colour?
 - Jackrabbit
 - Short-tailed Weasel
 - Snowshoe Hare
 - Willow Ptarmigan
 - All of the above
 - None of the above
- Numerous species of mammals use stands of spruce trees during winter because their needles:
 - Block the sunlight, making it easier to sleep
 - Hold more snow,



- meaning less on the ground
- Produce chemicals toxic only to predators
 - Block the full force of winter winds
 - A and C
 - B and D



- True or False? Black-capped Chickadees establish territories in winter.
- As the snow becomes deeper, many animals switch from eating grass to eating bark from trees and shrubs, including:
 - Snowshoe Hares
 - White-tailed Deer
 - Coyotes
 - Bald Eagles
 - A and B
 - C and D

- Getting enough vitamin C during the winter months can be challenging for people. Which of the following plants is a valuable source of vitamin C in the winter months?
 - Wood's Rose
 - Wood Lily
 - Common Yarrow
 - Greater Bladderwort
 - All of the above
 - None of the above

Answers:
 1. e
 2. f
 3. true
 4. e
 5. a

Oak Hammock Marsh
 Interpretive Centre
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For More Information

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Website:

www.oakhammockmarsh.ca

Hours of Operation

September & October
 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
 November to August
 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.

ASK THE NATURALIST

Why do Bald Eagles gather at Oak Hammock Marsh in late fall?

The eagles are observing one of nature's oldest mottos, "survival of the fittest." Some of the waterfowl that you see at Oak Hammock Marsh this fall were not healthy enough to complete their migration south. These birds will congregate in areas of open water, which decrease in size as the cold days arrive. The eagles then become the

willing participants in nature's cycle of life, using these areas as convenient places to hunt. By feeding on the sick and injured, predators such as the Bald Eagle help ensure that populations of prey species remain healthy and viable.



ON-THE-GO

Every winter, a team of enthusiastic interpreters is ready to travel across Manitoba and into southeastern Saskatchewan and northwestern Ontario delivering educational programs to people of all ages. These interactive presentations take place in schools, community centres, and senior's residences as well as at various water festivals and community events. Topics vary from birding to bats to astronomy to GPS.

If you would like a visit from the *On-the-Go Team*, contact us today. Spaces are limited.

