

March 2, 2024
Medina Gazette Edition

medinacountyparks.com
(330) 722-9364

Leaflet

Your Connection to Nature



Medina County Park District

Board of Commissioners
Kathleen E. Davis
Dennis B. Neate
Jason C. Venner

Nathan D. Eppink, Director
Jill M. Teubl, Editor



Facebook
@MedinaCountyParkDistrict



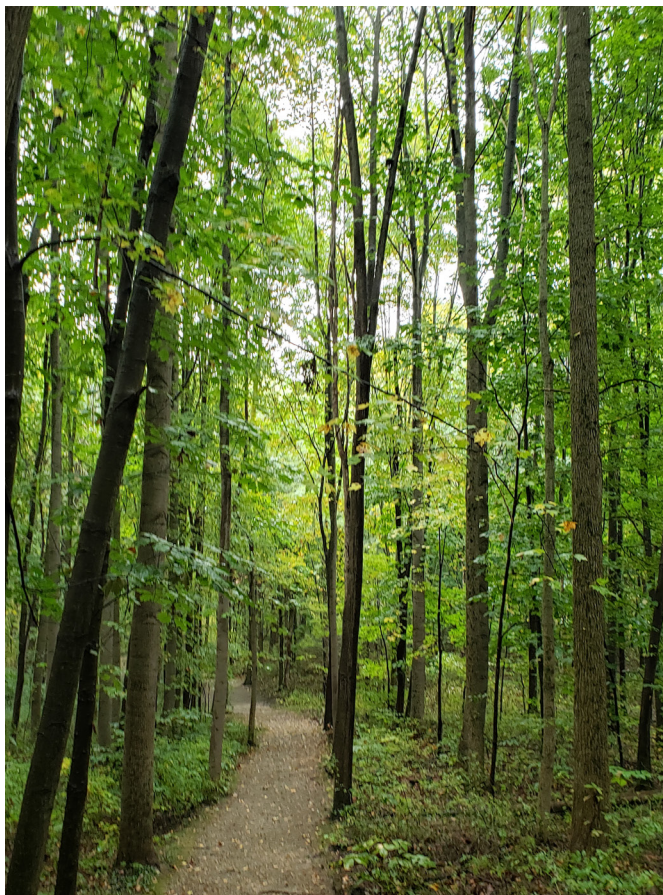
Formerly Twitter
@medinacoparks



Instagram
@medinacountyparks

How a Forest Serves the Wildlife Community

By: Nichole Schill, Community Education Coordinator



Allardale Park

Photo by: David Harrison

The forest is more than just the presence of trees -- it is an ecosystem made up of several layers of living and non-living things. A greater diversity of plants facilitates healthier forests and higher-quality soils.

The longevity of trees provides somewhat steady homes for wildlife like tree and flying squirrels, deer, turkey, opossum, and more. A single oak tree can host 897 different caterpillar species. Fruits, nuts, seeds, and vegetation provide food for wildlife. Spring blooms also provide nectar for native insects, including bumblebee queens that are building their hives after hibernating alone for the winter.

Nearly every part of a dead tree's decay benefits wildlife species, providing a home for some and a buffet for others. Dead, standing trees, called snags, are just as important as mature trees. Minute holes are created by invertebrates, like native bees and boring beetles, while foraging or creating nesting chambers. Large cavities can be used by other wildlife for roosting, resting, and food storage.

The Layers of the Forest

Canopy

The availability of sunlight, soil, and water impact the growth and success of the forest community. From top to bottom, sunlight steadily decreases, and the plants grow accordingly. Trees with large, sprawling limbs and leaves make up the highest layer, the canopy, and have earned the top spot with the most sunlight.

Understory

Below the canopy, medium-sized trees and saplings patiently absorb the sunlight that the canopy did not. Slow growing trees, like maples, can stay a stunted size for decades waiting for an opening in the canopy. Because it is dimly lit and not windy, the understory provides excellent shelter for wildlife.

Shrub Layer

Specialized woody plants thrive beneath the shade of the trees. Thickets of native shrubs like viburnums, northern spicebush, blackberry and black raspberry also provide blooms, fruits, and shelter for wildlife.

Herbaceous Layer

The blooms of spring wildflowers are eye-catching but short-lived below the other layers. These ephemerals rush to complete their growth and pollination cycles in the early spring once the sunlight is more abundant and before the leaves fill out in the trees. Ferns, mosses, and the wildflowers' foliage persists throughout the year.

Forest Floor

At the bottom, a healthy forest floor is the most diverse layer and is blanketed with leaves, twigs, and logs. In addition to providing cover for wildlife and tender wildflowers, the debris also contributes to soil stabilization, recycling of nutrients, moisture retention, and biodiversity. Fallen branches are home to salamanders, lightning beetles, chipmunks, and shrews. Hollow logs can be dens for foxes and coyote. This dead material is consumed by the organisms living in and among it, which returns the nutrients to the soil. Rotting logs are sometimes referred to as "nurse logs" because they can provide protection and moisture for seedlings. Toppled trees can leave depressions that fill with water and become vernal pools, for several species of amphibians to use as breeding sites.

The Big Picture

From the smallest beetle larvae in the soil to the tallest tree in the canopy, each organism serves a purpose in the community. Biodiversity is essential at every layer in the forest to support various ecological functions, such as nutrient cycling, pollination, flood and erosion control, and to provide resilience to environmental changes.

Woodland Health Days of Service



Come work together with OSU Extension Master Gardener volunteers and park district volunteers to remove garlic mustard and other non-native plants from sensitive wildflower habitats in the parks. No prior experience is necessary. Please bring your own work gloves. This is an excellent opportunity to give back to your community and ensure a healthy park for future generations. Ages eight to adult.

Times and locations for these events are found at www.medinacountyparks.com. Click on the *Public Programs and Events* tab, then click on the green *Programs and Registration* icon at the bottom of the webpage. Registration is encouraged but not required. Registered participants will be contacted in the event of cancellation; others may call the cancellation hotline at (330) 239-3305.

DONATION CORNER

Tree of Life

In Memory of Loretta and Edward Januska

Larry and Vicki Lusheck

In Memory of Bill Dumbauld

Sally and Bernie Willoughby

In Memory of Judy Waterman

Sally and Bernie Willoughby

Oenslager Nature Center

In Memory of Bob Leget

Allen and Rosalie Beal

Other

Firewood

Joe and Linda Scarella