



Tracks Newsletter



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Nature Center Hours

March 1 – Oct 31
(Nov. 1– Feb. 28)

Monday – Saturday

9 am to 5:00 pm
(9 am to 4:30 pm)

Sunday: 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm
(12:30 to 4:30 pm)

**Park trails are open
every day
dawn to dusk**

**909 North K-7 Highway
Olathe, KS 66061
Phone: 913-764-7759**

**www.erniemiller.com
www.jcprd.com**

The Path

I love puttering in my yard, observing changes as winter turns to spring and then to summer. I first noticed the path as a light indentation in the lush grass of spring after passing over it with the mower. As the weeks passed, it was a little flatter, a little more defined. By mid-summer and little rain, it was dead grass, a foot path for something unknown.

This path, could it be rabbits? The same darn rabbits that made the perfect right angles cutting down the stems of my roses and occasionally nibble in my vegetable garden. "Xena" I called to our rambunctious lab/shepherd mix. "Do you see this?" I said, as she wiggled her friendly nose into my hand. "You have got to do a better job keeping these rabbits out of the yard." In all honesty, I rarely noticed many rabbits thanks to her. The roses were the exception.

Storms a few years earlier had damaged several large trees in the neighbor's yard directly behind me. In an effort to clean

Nancy Chapman, Ernie Miller Nature Center Volunteer

up after the storm, they piled all the large branches and limbs. The debris pile was SO TALL that it blocked my view of other homes. After just a short time, rough-leaved dogwood trees filled between the hedge trees. Looking out my kitchen window, all I saw was vegetation. I loved the peaceful view. I told my kids it felt like we backed up to Ernie Miller Park.

Curious, I followed the path to where it entered my yard. There I found a depression in the ground under the chain link fence. Ahh...I spied a bit of fur stuck to the wire. It was pulled out as the mammal slipped under it. I mentioned the path to my kids one day as they were jumping on the trampoline. They laughed at me and replied "Mom, that belongs to the fox family living in the brush pile behind us." What? A fox family? They showed me another dip under the fence. The path was just a cut through to their den. They continued, "The babies line up along the fence every time we play on the trampoline." Sure enough, I saw three pups

at the fence watching my three kids play. To help them out, I left a long strip of unmown grass along the path. As if to say 'welcome to my yard.' Xena, occasionally, laid the unmown grass ...(hopefully lying in wait for those rabbits).

The day I heard loud sharp noise from the yard behind me, my heart sank. The neighbors rented a chipper machine that reduced the fox's home to nothing. I met them at the fence line. Happily the wife said, "we finally are cleaning up & we're so sorry for the years you had to look at the mess of brush." I smiled and thanked them, and went inside. My heart cried. Later, I was happy to find the fox family moved. Just down the street, under the front porch of a family that always enters their home through a side entry garage. More than 15 years has past and probably a few generations of fox still live under that porch. If I'm out front around 9 pm in the summer, I can watch one strolling down the street.

Mudpies

Nature Activities for Children

**Molly Postlewait,
Senior Park Naturalist**



Be a Tree Hugger!

Most people think of Kansas as the prairie but Kansas is the home of many amazing native trees. We admire the lovely fall colors as the oaks, walnuts, and

hickory are ablaze. Even through the winter the silhouette of the bare branches is a thing of beauty. Encourage your child to enjoy trees all year long with these fun simple ideas to get kids outdoors.

- Make leaf piles for playing.
- Examine different kinds of tree bark. Look for the bark of the sycamore trees that has shed. Touch the ridges of the hackberry tree. Notice the curved bark of the shag bark hickory. Smell the bark of a cedar trees. (Please don't take bark from living trees.)

- Collect sticks and acorns. Use a box to count and sort them.
 - Place popcorn onto the branches. Watch to see who comes to nibble, maybe a hungry squirrel.
 - After the leaves have fallen from tree branches, decorate the tree. Tie ribbon to the branches. Hang signs or art work for a temporary outdoor art gallery.
 - List all the things in your home made from trees.
- And of course, don't forget to hug your favorite tree.

September Programs



Yoga: Green at Heart (*Ages 16 & older*) **Wednesdays, Sept. 6 - Oct. 25 6:00-7:30 pm** Come try yoga at the Nature Center. This class will focus on gentle stretching, serenity, and rejuvenation and will be tailored to individual abilities. Please bring your mat to class. **Registration required.** 8 - 90 min. sessions - \$56/\$62 nonresidents. **Barcode:** 40017

Monarch Migration & Tagging (*50's Plus*) **Wednesday, Sept. 20, 10:00-11:30 am** Be a part of one of the world's greatest migrations. Learn about the incredible journey of these butterflies while engaging in a tagging demonstration. Receive three tags to tag butterflies in the park or in your own yard. Bring your walking shoes and enjoy the trails after the event. This event is through JCPRD's 50's plus programming. \$15 per person. **Barcode:** 40410

Fishing: Family Night (*All Ages*) **Friday, Sept. 22, 5:30-6:30** Join us for a family fun night of fishing. Dinner of hotdogs, chips, and apples will be provided from 5:30 to 6 pm. Fishing at the Catfish pond from 6 to 7 pm with boats available. We will end the evening roasting marshmallows at a campfire from 7 to 7:30 pm. Staff will assist with boats and can help with basic fishing questions (life vests must be worn). Bring your own pole and tackle or we can provide a fishing pole. We will also provide bait and marshmallows. Participants age 16 and older are required to have a Kansas fishing license. Licenses will not be sold on site. Program fee is nonrefundable. Parents need to be able to assist their children with fishing. Earns JCPRD U Environmental Credit. \$10/\$11 nonresidents; including adults **Barcode:** 39839

Flight of the Monarch (*Recommended for ages 8 & up; children accompanied by an adult per group of 5*) **Saturday, Sept 23, 10:00-12:00 pm** Help scientists to better understand the Monarchs' migration to Mexico by tagging and releasing them. Remember to wear long pants. Earns JCPRD Environmental Credit. **Registration Required.** Registration for this event closes Sept. 21. \$5 per person (including adults) paid in advance, \$7 onsite day of event (If space is available) **Barcode:** 39971



Cub Scout Bear Adventure (*must be accompanied by 1 adult per group of 5*) **Saturday, Sept. 30, 10:00-12:00 pm** Learn about extinct and endangered animals. Smell and taste herbs and plant an herb to take home. You will meet all of the requirements for the Fur, Feathers, and Fern Adventure Badge. **Registration Required.** \$5 per person paid in advance. \$7 per person on site day of event. (If space is available) **Barcode:** 39973

Yoga & Climbing (*Ages 16 & Older*) **Saturday, Sept. 30 1:00-4:00 pm** Unleash your inner daredevil with a yoga and climbing experience at **TimberRidge Adventure Center**. Use the power of ancient yoga movements to become a warrior on our Hawk's Nest, the 40 foot climbing wall. This session is open for beginners or experienced, you choose your level of challenge. Participants will need to supply a sack lunch. For more information contact Park Naturalist Molly Postlewait (913) 826-2804 or molly.postlewait@jocogov.org. Earns JCPRD U Mindfulness Credit. **Registration Required.** \$30/\$33 nonresidents **Barcode:** 40021

Preschool Programs

Preschool Twilight Hike (*Ages 2-6 with Adult*) **Friday, Sept. 15 & 29, 7:00-8:30 pm** Explore the trails as the sun sets. Listen for the nocturnal sounds of a cricket's chorus and a barred owl's call. Participants should bring a flashlight. Earns JCPRD U Physical Credit. \$7/\$8 nonresidents per person (including adults). **Reservation Required.** **Barcode:** Sept. 15: 39922; Sept. 29: 39923

Animal Tales, (*Ages 2-6 with Adult*) **Wednesdays, 10:30-11:00 am** Visit the Nature Center for stories, songs, and animals. Children must be accompanied by an adult. \$2 per person (including adults). Paid at site.

9/20	Johnny Appleseed	10/18	Bats & Night Flight	11/15	Turkey Time
10/4	Spider Surprise	11/1	Fall Sights & Sounds	12/6	Mrs. Claus Reads
				12/20	A Visit with Santa



Nature Time Yoga (*Ages 2-6 with Adult*) **Wednesdays; 10:30-11:00 am** Join the Nature Center staff as parents/adults and children act out stories with animal and yoga movements that encourage creativity & coordination. See a live animal every time. All children must be accompanied by a participating adult. \$2 per person (including adults). Paid at Site. Sept. 27; Oct. 11; Oct. 8; Dec. 13

To register for our programs visit jcrpd.com and search using the barcodes or call (913) 831-3359.

For full descriptions, visit our Events Calendar at erniemiller.com or call (913) 764-7759.

October Programs



Whimsical Woods (Ages 11 & under; must be accompanied by 1 adult per group of 5) **Saturday, Oct. 7, 1:00-4:00 pm**

Meet with the Good Fairy and her Forest Friends. Live animals, stories, songs, and surprises will highlight childhood favorites. Group sessions begin every 15 minutes with program length approximately 1.5 hours. In case of inclement weather, program will be held indoors. Earns JCPRD Social Credit. **Registration Required.**

\$5 per person (including adults) Paid in advance. \$7 per person on site day of event. (If space is available)

***See the JCPRD Brochure for times and barcodes**

Haunted Kansas (Ages 8 & up; must be accompanied by 1 adult per group of 5) **Saturday, Oct. 21, 6:30–8:00 pm**

Characters from the past will share legends around the campfire for those who dare enter the forest on this autumn evening. Group sessions begin every 15 minutes and program is approximately 1.5 hours. This is an outdoor event, dress appropriately. In case of inclement weather, program will be held indoors. Earns JCPRD Physical Credit. **Registration Required.**

\$5 per person (including adults) Paid in advance. \$7 per person on site day of event (If space is available)

***See the JCPRD Brochure for times and barcodes**

International Observe the Moon Night (All Ages) **Saturday, Oct. 28, 7:30-9:00 pm** Join us for a lunar astronomy program at Ernie Miller Nature Center as we observe the moon in this internationally coordinated event! You may also bring your own binoculars, blanket, or chairs. Check out the International Observe the Moon Night website at:

www.observethemoonnight.org Earns JCPRD U Environmental credit. **Registration required.** \$7/\$8 nonresidents.

Barcode: 39835

Map & Compass: Orienteering Workshop (Ages 16 & Older) **Saturday, Oct. 21, 9:00 am-12:00 pm** This beginner's workshop introduces you to orienteering as well as provides a workbook and compass to borrow. Dress for the weather.

Instructor: Possum Trot Orienteering Club. Earns JCPRD U Mindfulness. **Registration required.** \$15/\$17 nonresidents.

Barcode: 39998

November Programs

Owl Prowl (Ages 16 & Older; Children Ages 5 & Older accompanied by Adult) **Fri- Sun, Nov. 3-5, 7:00-8:30 pm** Come for an informative talk featuring live owls and an evening hike through the park. Come dressed for the weather and warm up with a cup of hot cider after the hike. Earns JCPRD Environmental Credit. **Registration required.**

\$8/\$9 nonresidents per person. **Barcode:** Nov. 3: 39836; Nov. 4: 39837; Nov. 5: 39838

Tellabration (All Ages) **Saturday, Nov. 18, 10:30-11:30 am**

Want to hear a good story? Come celebrate the International Day of Storytelling at the Nature Center. Hear nature stories with live animals. These stories will combine themes of environmental awareness and ancient myths. Stories will delight all ages. Earns JCPRD Social Credit. **Reservations preferred!** \$3 per person (including adults). Paid at site.

December Programs

Breakfast with Santa (Ages 3-5 with Adult) **Saturday, Dec. 9, 9:00-10:30 am**

Kids! Bring a parent and enjoy eating a pancake breakfast, then meet Santa to hear his story about animals. He will sit with you and listen to your Christmas list. Earns JCPRD U Social Credit. **Registration Required.** \$7/\$8 nonresidents (including adults) **Barcode:** 39937

Squaw Creek-Eagle Days (Ages 18 and Older) **Saturday, Dec. 2, 6:45 am-2:00 pm**

Visit the yearly celebration of "Eagle Days" at Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge. This program leaves from [Antioch Park](#). We will stop for lunch after birding. Participants must provide meal expenses and binoculars. Earns JCPRD Environmental Credit. **Registration required.** \$47 per person **Barcode:** 40022

Winter Solstice Celebration (All Ages) **Saturday, Dec. 17, 4:30-8:00 pm**

Hike through the woods lit by luminaries then warm up by the fireside and listen to ancient stories about the longest night of the year. Please dress for the weather, parts of this program will be outdoors. Earns JCPRD U Environmental Credit. \$6/\$8 nonresident (including adults) Paid in Advance. \$8 per person on site day of event. **Barcode:** 39880



Ernie Miller Nature Center

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Olathe, Kansas 66061
Phone: 913-764-7759

Visit us at www.erniemiller.com

Follow us on: Twitter @JCPRDemncnature

Facebook: Ernie Miller Park & Nature Center



Ernie Miller Nature Center Staff

Bill McGowan.....Outdoor Education Manager
Andrea Joslin.....Outdoor Education Specialist
Cindy Lawrence.....Interpretive Assistant
Leon Gordon.....Park Supervisor
Molly Postlewait.....Sr. Park Naturalist
Diana Bliss.....Park Naturalist
Regina Wasson.....Park Naturalist and *Tracks* Editor
Rachel Magathan.....Animal Caretaker



Rachel Magathan Animal Caretaker

Rachel is an Olathe native and our new animal caretaker to join the staff at the nature center. She graduated from Pittsburg State University in December 2016 with a Bachelor of Integrated Studies with an emphasis in Sustainability, Society, & Resource Management and a minor in Geography.

She began to work at the front desk in February and then began to care for the animals in April. She took on another role when she joined the Outdoor Discovery Camp as a substitute counselor. This past summer she also worked as Sustainability Coach during KS School for the Deaf's summer school program. She recently started a position working with youth in an afterschool program. In her free time, she enjoys traveling and photography. Rachel has used her skills as a photographer to take a friend's engagement pictures in the park! We are very pleased to have her join our staff.

Thank You

- **Arbor Creek Animal Hospital** (Olathe) donates veterinary care for the animals at the nature center. www.acanimalhospital.com.
- **PetLand on K7 Highway** (Olathe) donates crickets for animal feeding. www.petlandolathe.com
- **Price Chopper on K7 Highway** (Olathe) donates fresh produce for the animals at the nature center
- To Carter for donating bird seed
- To all of you who donated newspaper



"Great little visitor center with educational exhibits. If you enjoy bird watching there's a cute little room where windows overlook a water feature with feeders. My favorite part is the trails outside. Worth a visit for all!"

-mom_with_5

A Golden Horizon By Diana Bliss, Park Naturalist



Fall is on the horizon, and if the changing of the leaves isn't indicator enough, the vibrant shine of the goldenrod on the prairie surely is! The glowing summer sun pales in comparison to the golden shine of the fall's goldenrod, which captivates insects and humans alike.

Being a fall flower, it is easy to point one's finger at goldenrod to blame for your allergies, when it is not the culprit at all. Goldenrod is insect pollinated and blooms at the same time as ragweed, which is wind pollinated. Ragweed is responsible for releasing billions of pollen grains into the air which stirs up your allergies. In order to be affected by

Goldenrod, you'd have to stick your nose in it, just like an insect!

Goldenrod is a rugged, adaptable, and opportunistic perennial wildflower native to North America. You may find it shining in open woodlands or fields from late summer until the first frost, standing four to five feet with simple, lanced or egg shaped, toothed margin leaves, and large clusters of yellow flowers. Goldenrod is a member of the Aster family, and 12 species can be found in Kansas with a variety of color in the fall ranging from bronze, russet, orange, and purple.

This flowering plant is one of the last to bloom before winter which sends nearly every insect with an interest in flowers straight to it. They congregate, breed, and feed on the flowers.

Goldenrod isn't just great for insects, it has many other uses! Gardening enthusiasts and herbal practitioners worship this



golden goddess for its medicinal purposes. Native Americans and people around the world have used goldenrod as dyes, teas, diuretics, and treatments of fever, chest pain, insect bites, inflammation, and sore throat! The versatility and beauty of goldenrod has even been quoted by John Muir who says, "The fragrance, color, and form of the whole spiritual expression of goldenrod are hope and strength-giving beyond any others I know. A single spike is sufficient to heal unbelief and melancholy."

So the next time you're here on your autumn hike, pay attention to the striking plant radiating golden petals, who houses a variety of insects, and could hold remedy to your ailments.