



View Hill from the Hill

Our Mission:

The Friends of Mosquito Hill support, promote and enhance Mosquito Hill Nature Center. We realize this mission through volunteerism, fundraising and our shared passion for nature.

**Winter 2010-2011 • A newsletter for friends and members
of Friends of Mosquito Hill, Inc.**

26th Annual Snowshoe Race Held in Conjunction with Winter Family Fun Day



Photo by S. Radant

Winter Family Fun Day Features Dog Sled Demonstrations

Mike Hibbard, Director/Naturalist

Don't let cabin fever set in this January. Join us from noon until 3:00 PM on Saturday, January 22 for a host of family-oriented activities at the annual *Mosquito Hill Winter Family Fun Day*.

Enjoy a leisurely snowshoe hike with your family. When you return, warm yourself by the crackling campfire as you roast marshmallows and share stories. Try your hand at ice bowling on Frog Pond Lanes, slide down the otter slide or launch some snowballs from the snowball slingshot. Young children are sure to enjoy making a winter craft and who can resist the ever-popular Eskimo Pie-eating contest.

— *Continued on Page 2*

Midwest's Longest Running Snowshoe Race

Jessica Miller, Assistant Naturalist

Rumor has it that the Mosquito Hill Snowshoe Race is the longest running snowshoe race in the state of Wisconsin. What started as just a local event featuring one-mile and four-mile routes and facilitated by volunteers has now turned into a well known annual sporting event. Now part of the *Braveheart Snowshoe Racing Series*, the world's second largest snowshoe racing series taking place in the Midwest, participants come from all over Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota.

Last year, on the race's 25th anniversary, nature center staff took the reins. Changing the routes to follow the existing snowshoe trails, we offered a one-mile and three-mile course as well as an 800-meter children's race in our lowland forest. To entice more participants to register, the race was scheduled on the same day as *Winter Family Fun Day*. Each racer gained free access into the event and was given a chili lunch in addition to a few other cool gifts. All top race finishers also received prizes. To make registration



Photo by Fay Campbell

easier, we added the registration form to our website.

We have a few more changes in store for this year's race. We are adding a five-mile course. Prizes will be bigger and better thanks to a donation by volunteer extraordinaire, Don Baumgartner, New London. Finally, snow conditions will be the best they've ever been (or so I've been told). Last year we had a bit of melting snow prior to race day and participants had to contend with brief patches of ice. This year I put my request in early for perfect snow conditions and I think we just might get it! ❖

This year's event will also feature a dog sled presentation and demonstration by Jim Feyen, owner of Siberian Outpost Dog Sled Demonstrations, Malone, WI. You won't want to miss this exciting opportunity to meet the owner and his dogs, and see them in action.

Concessions will be available, so bring your entire family for lunch. The cost for the afternoon is \$8.00 per carload, which includes snowshoe rental for everyone. Don't be left out in the cold; join us for this "hot" event. ❖

Do your holiday shopping at MHNC; keep seven plastic bottles out of the landfill!



Our new reusable ChicoBag shopping bag is now on sale at MHNC for \$10. Sporting the FOMH logo in trendy colors, and made from used plastic bottles and other recycled materials, this bag stuffs into its own built-in pouch and holds up to 25 pounds of groceries (or Godiva truffles, for that extra special person in your life). Not only will you save hundreds of single-use plastic or paper bags over the life of this bag, you can feel good knowing you're doing a small part in lessening our dependence on raw materials. If you're looking for something to fill up your new FOMH shopping bag, why not pick up some fresh bird seed for the winter feeding season. We'll gladly carry your order to your car. ❖

WELCOME!

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome these newest members to
Friends of Mosquito Hill:

- Valerie Cleveland
- Stan and Joanne Heinemeyer
- Patricia Kolbeck
- Chad & Tricia VanLanen

Why join? Although MHNC is operated by Outagamie County, funding from tax dollars only goes so far. Friends of Mosquito Hill, through your membership contribution, supports environmental education programs and activities, volunteer efforts, and special exhibits and projects that the county is unable to fund.

Please log on to www.mosquitohill.org/membership.html to download a membership form or to join and pay securely online. Or use the new member form on the back page of this issue.

Thanks for being our Friend!

Wish List

- Clipboards (12)
- Tape measurers, 25 ft. minimum (12)
- Stopwatches (12)
- Compact digital camera cases (12)
- Small cones: tamarack, cedar and/or hemlock
- Gallon-size Ziploc-type bags
- Baby food jars, any size
- Rubbermaid tubs, various sizes
- Wooden shelving for CBM supplies
- Cash sponsor for *Monarch Way Station*
- Leftover Christmas wrapping paper, gift tags and ribbon

We welcome financial contributions, or the purchase of specific items. For more information, call the center at 920-779-6433 or e-mail Mary at swifkamd@co.outagamie.wi.us.

WINTER 2010-2011

View
from the Hill

VOL XXXVI • NO 4

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four times per year by
Friends of Mosquito Hill, Inc.*

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ADDRESS CORRESPONDENCE TO:

Friends of Mosquito Hill
N3880 Rogers Road • New London WI 54961
(920) 779-6433 • www.mosquitohill.org

Interpretive Building Hours:

Tuesday-Friday: 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday: 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

STAFF:

Mike Hibbard, Director/Naturalist
Steve Petznick, Assistant Naturalist
Jessica Miller, Assistant Naturalist
Mary Swifka, Staff Assistant
Chris Brandt, Outagamie County Parks Director
Pat Lund-Moe, Volunteer Coordinator

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Ask the Naturalist!

Jessica Miller, Assistant Naturalist



Wintergreen, a splash of red and green under the snow. Photo by Mike Serfas, Wikipedia

'Tis the Season for a Little Wintergreen...and Berry

"Ugh! I hate winter because it is so dreary. Is there anything I can do to change my mindset?" a friend asks. I have to wonder if the reason winter is so disliked in Wisconsin is because of the lack of vibrant color in the outdoors. The jewel tone birds have long gone to warmer locations, deciduous trees have shed their leafy vibrancy and showy nectar-bearing flowers have taken a winter siesta. Living in a world of black and white is surely to produce a temporary melancholy response from even the most diehard winter fan. I, however, have the cure. Dare I say, a little wintergreen goes a long way!

Wintergreen, *Gaultheria procumbens*, sometimes referred to as teaberry, is a diminutive creeping shrub with thick, elliptical or circular leaves of dark green that grows in areas with meager soil, most commonly found on forest floors. Able to withstand the effects of winter, this hearty

The first fall of snow is not only an event, it is a magical event. You go to bed in one kind of a world and wake up in another quite different, and if this is not enchantment then where is it to be found?

~ Joseph Priestley

perennial has a colorful surprise in store when excavated from the snow — tiny, red pea-shaped berries. Appropriately named because of its aromatic leaves and berries, it provides a tasty meal (and minty clean breath!) for many wild animals including grouse, pheasant, bobwhite and deer. For us less-than-wild animals, the leaves may be boiled to make a refreshing tea, which is said to relieve aches and pains.

A much larger shrub, winterberry, *Ilex verticillata*, also glistens with bright red berries. A native to swamps and wet areas, winterberry is a member of the holly family but lacks the familiar spiny leaves that its cousin, the American holly sports. Its berries mature in the fall, providing an essential food source for migrating birds, before they depart in fall, and when they return in spring, provided the human competition hasn't robbed too many. ❖



Festival Photos



Barb Schneider helped a young visitor with her art project.



John Shaw and his antique tractor gave plenty of hayrides. All photos by Joan Petznick



Rebecca, our youngest volunteer, stole our hearts.



PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL!



If you received a hard copy of this newsletter in the mail, please take a moment to check your address label. We recently transferred all our mailing lists to one large database, and discovered a few typos along the way. We would appreciate it very much if you could contact us with any corrections by calling 920-779-6433 or e-mailing Mary Swifka at swifkamk@co.outagamie.wi.us.

We apologize for any errors and appreciate your patience as we work out the bugs.



Mosquito Hill Nature Center

CALENDAR OF EVENTS WINTER 2010-2011

Unless otherwise noted, advance registration and payment are required.

Call 920.779.6433 or e-mail swifkank@co.outagamie.wi.us

Website: www.mosquithill.com • Find us on Facebook: Mosquito Hill Nature Center



Watch for this icon in our calendar of events. It denotes upcoming **Citizen Based Monitoring** opportunities.



Full Moon Series Planned in 2011: Look for the image of a full moon next to titles in this calendar in 2011. It denotes our yearlong series of naturalist-led programs that will explore different nature-related seasonal topics during the time of each of the full moons in 2011. Activities may include night hikes, learning sessions around the campfire, stargazing or storytelling. Most events will be outdoors, so dress for the weather. Light refreshments will be provided.

Winter Bird Feeding

Sunday, December 5, 1:00-3:00 PM



Learn how to prepare for the cold weather bird feeding season from naturalist Steve Petznick. Tips for selecting proper seed, keeping feeders clean, the importance of water and bird-friendly landscaping are included.

\$5/person, \$3/students, seniors, FOMH
Registration and payment due ASAP.

Leave No Family Inside: Basic Outdoor Winter Survival

Saturday, December 11, 12:30-3:30 PM

Be prepared for your outdoor adventures this winter by learning handy skills such as fire starting and shelter building. Learn about adaptations that allow animals to survive winter in Wisconsin.

\$6/person, \$10/family
Registration and payment due ASAP.

Christmas Bird Count

Friday, December 17, 8:00 AM-4:30 PM



Take a break from the holiday hustle and join nature center staff and volunteers for a day in the field counting birds. We'll break for a potluck

lunch. Call ahead if you would like to take part.

No Charge

1 2 3 4 5 6

Candlelight Snowshoe Walk

Friday, December 17, 7:00-9:00 PM

Saturday, January 15, 6:30-9:00 PM

Enjoy this self-led excursion through the nature center's lowland forest. Refreshments will be served and all snowshoe equipment will be provided. A \$2 discount is available if you bring your own snowshoes.

\$8/adults, \$5/students, seniors, FOMH or \$25/family. Registration and payment due 1 week prior to each event.

Snowshoe Trails Open and Rentals Available (when conditions permit)

Saturdays & Sundays, 9:30 AM-2:00 PM



Please call ahead to check on snow conditions and availability of rentals during the week. Families with young children: try out our smaller shoes for age four and older, or bring a sled to pull your toddlers.

\$3/adults, \$2/students & seniors; FOMH: no charge. Trail Use: no charge.

Leave No Family Inside: Hunting for Hoots

Saturday, January 8, 6:00-8:00 PM

Listening to the hooting of owls has to be one of life's most special pleasures. Learning more about Wisconsin's owls gives those hoot calls even more meaning. Join naturalist Jessica Miller as she takes you on an outdoor journey in search of these elusive nocturnal wonders.
\$6/person, \$10/family. Registration and payment due December 30.

Snowshoe Lacing Workshop

Saturday & Sunday, Jan 8/9, 8:30-4:00

Lace your own 10" x 56" Alaskan-style snowshoes. All materials are provided, including easy to use rubber bindings. The white ash frames are pre-bent, drilled, varnished and ready for lacing. Makes a great holiday gift.

\$200/person
Registration and payment due December 30.

Serious Snowshoe Sundays

Sundays, Jan 9 & 23, Feb. 6 & 20, March 6, 12:00 Noon-3:00 PM



After an indoor program on health, nutrition or safety, by naturalist Jessica Miller, we'll

hit the trails, not for a leisurely hike but for a bout of invigorating exercise, increasing our speed and distance as the weeks progress.

\$5/session or \$20 for the entire series; includes snowshoe rental, if needed.
Registration and payment due December 30.

Snowshoeing Under the Stars

Wednesday, Jan. 19, 7:00-9:00 PM



Participants will enjoy snowshoeing in the center's lowland forest during the quiet of nightfall and under the full moon. Snowshoes will be provided or you may bring your own.

\$6/person, \$4/students, seniors, FOMH or \$12/family. Registration and payment due Jan. 15.



Winter Family Fun Day & Mosquito Hill Snowshoe Race

Saturday, Jan. 22, 12 Noon-3:00 PM

WINTER

Come out and play in the snow with us. See front page article and visit www.mosquitohill.com for details.
\$8/car.

Campfire Astronomy

Saturday, Jan. 29, 6:30-8:30 PM



Naturalist Steve Petznick will help you enjoy the beauty of the winter sky. Then warm up by the campfire with cocoa and snacks. In the event of cloudy skies, this program will still be held.
\$6/person, \$4/students, seniors, FOMH
Registration and payment due January 22.

Winter Walk with a Naturalist

Saturday, Feb. 5, 9:00-11:00 AM



Join naturalist Mike Hibbard on the trails leading through the lowland forest to learn about winter ecology and our resident winter wildlife. The hike will take place with or without snow.
\$6/person, \$4/students, seniors, FOMH
Registration and payment due January 29.

Evening for Sweethearts

Saturday, Feb. 12, 7:00-10:00 PM

valentine

Celebrate Valentine's Day with your sweetheart and be treated to a reception with appetizers (you can skip dinner), beverages and soft music. Enjoy a quiet snowshoe walk and campfire. Take home a small gift as a memento.
\$40/couple
Reservations and payment due February 4.



Cross-country Skiing Under the Full Moon

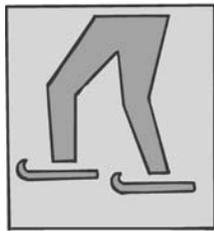
Friday, Feb. 18, 7:00-9:00 PM



Enjoy the excitement of cross country skiing by moonlight on our un-groomed ski trail. Fields and forest, hills up and down, all are delightful in the evening. Participants provide their own ski equipment.
\$6/person, \$4/students, seniors, FOMH or \$12/family
Registration and payment due February 15.

Leave No Family Inside: Snowshoeing for Families

Saturday, Feb. 19, 10:00 AM-12:00 Noon



It's easy for any age to learn how to snowshoe. A guided hike around the nature center property will give you some practice with the new footgear and a chance to learn about our winter world.
\$6/person or \$10/family
Registration and payment due February 11.

Tree Care Basics

Saturday, Feb. 26, 10:30 AM - 4 PM



Naturalist Steve Petznick will present an indoor session addressing proper tree pruning, root health and general troubleshooting. The afternoon will be devoted to outside practice of what was learned indoors. For advice on your problem trees, bring clear photographs of leafless trees taken from several angles.
\$20/adults, \$17/students, seniors, FOMH
Registration and payment due February 19.

Willow Basketry

Saturday, Feb. 26, 8:30 AM - 4:00 PM

Create your own rustic, rib-style basket in this class taught. Locally collected willow will be used to create an attractive and functional basket.
\$39/adults, \$34/students, seniors, FOMH
Registration and payment due February 18.

Leopold Education Project

Saturday, March 5, 9:00AM-4:00 PM



Learn how to use this curriculum based on Aldo Leopold's classic, *A Sand County Almanac*. This class is perfect for teachers, naturalists, group leaders, and others interested in fostering a relationship between children and the natural world.
\$20/person
Registration and payment due February 22.

Leopold Bench Building Workshop

Sunday, March 6, 1:00-3:00 PM



Build your own rustic wooden bench designed and made popular by noted Wisconsin conservationist Aldo Leopold. Naturalist Mike Hibbard will lead you through the steps to create an attractive bench to grace your patio or back yard.
\$50/adult, \$45/students, seniors, FOMH
Registration and payment due February 22.

CANCELLATION POLICY

Unfortunately, MHNC is not immune from the current economic challenges. Therefore, we find it necessary to adhere fully to the following policy:

MHNC staff reserves the right to cancel a program if minimum enrollment has not been met by the registration deadline. If we need to cancel a program, your payment will be refunded in full. If you need to cancel, please notify us at least 48 hours before the class. If we are able to fill your spot, you will be refunded in full; if not, we will refund 50% of your fee. If you cancel less than 48 hours before the class, your entire registration fee will be forfeited.

Please help us ensure the success of our programs by registering and paying before the deadline. We cannot guarantee your place in a class unless payment has been received. Thank you for understanding.

Naturalist's Corner

Who's That Calling?

Mary Swifka, Staff Assistant



The great horned owl, fetching in his white bib (throat feathers). Photo from Microsoft clip art

The great horned owl has been hooting in my yard the past few weeks. My son and I hear it when we're reading at bedtime.

Although this large bird of prey, *Bubo virginianus*, has been calling frequently since mid-October, he'll really pick up the pace

in December and January, when the courting season begins. Although I would have liked to have taken the credit for impeccable timing when our neighborhood owl commenced his hooting during our New Year's Eve campfire a few years ago, I had to 'fess up to my guests that we had been hearing him for almost two months prior.

Once eggs are laid in late January or early February, the birds quiet down for the month-long incubation period. That means owls are hatching in late February and early March, well before spring migrants have even returned to Wisconsin. The owlets leave the nest about 60 to 70 days after hatching, but are still dependent on their parents for food well into autumn.

The row of tall Norway spruce that delineates the west side of our lot in partnership with the mature oaks and maples along our street provide an ideal perching and nesting spot

for this bird, which we often hear but rarely see. Pretty tricky, you might think, for a large bird that is the most common and widespread owl in North America to hide so well! But its preference for nesting in mature wooded areas and nocturnal hunting habits make it difficult to see. The irony is that with the proper habitat and a ready food source (mice, rabbits and skunk, just to name a few), great horned owls (or GHOs, as bird watchers call them) can be found nesting in my New London neighborhood, the Fox Cities, western deserts and even as far south as Tierra del Fuego.

Wait a minute, skunk, you say? I did. Great horned owls are one of the few predators that don't mind tussling with that potentially stinky, but tasty, dish. For all the adaptations that make the GHO such a skillful hunter, a keen sense of smell is not one of them. And although you might think their powerful vision is used exclusively to find prey, it is an owl's acute hearing that most researchers agree is the key to its after-dark hunting success.

Laura Erickson explains it well in her book, *Sharing the Wonder of Birds with Kids*: "Owl ears are positioned asymmetrically on their heads, one higher and one further forward than the other. This helps owls to precisely locate prey in the dark because sounds reach one ear microseconds before the other. The feathers around an owl's eyes (called the facial disk) grow in a circular pattern, hiding the ears and focusing sound waves like a satellite dish."

The great horned owl's precise hearing and vision combine with its ability to fly silently, producing the triple threat to potential prey. Leading edges of the wing feathers are serrated, effectively muffling any sound.

Um, about those "horns" — they're really tufts of longer feathers sticking up on the top of the GHO's head. Long-eared owls, short-eared owls and screech-owls also sport feather tufts, an adaptation that allows these species to blend into their surroundings.

It never ceases to amaze me the myriad of skills, instincts, and physical and behavioral adaptations possessed by one species, a number of which I could have included in this article. But you have more to read in this newsletter (don't miss the calendar) and I have to lay my New Year's Eve campfire. I hope our feathered neighbor makes his presence known again this year. ❖

The nature center interpretive building and office will be closed on the following holidays:

December 24, 25, 31 and January 1.

Hiking trails will remain open during daylight hours on each of those days.

The nature center staff sends warmest wishes for a peaceful holiday season.

Thrivent
Financial
ART GALLERY

Please visit www.mosquitohill.com
for our gallery schedule.

The Volunteer Voice

You make a living by what you get, but you make a life by what you give. – Winston Churchill

I Have an Idea

Pat Lund-Moe, Volunteer Coordinator

We have a wonderful team of volunteers at Mosquito Hill. Almost everything that happens here involves volunteer efforts in many different capacities. But there are always more opportunities!

Do you feel your talents and abilities are being utilized to the fullest? Do you have a desire to try something different, challenge yourself? Are your creative juices flowing, just waiting to be tapped?

Every event held throughout the year involves planning and organization. We try to make our annual events, such as Harvest Moon Festival, Honey Sunday, Winter Family Fun Day and Spring Fever Fundraiser a little bit different each year in the hope that more people make it a tradition. As a volunteer, you have probably assisted at one or all of these. Think about your experience and the experiences of our guests. What could make the event even better? Do you have an idea to share? Are you just itching to put it into action? If so, join us in planning an event. New ideas keep us all excited, so don't be shy. Let us know what interests you, and then jump in. It will be fun! ❖



With the year coming to a close, and a new one nearing, we wish you a wonderful holiday season. Enjoy special moments with friends and family. Treasure your time together. We feel especially blessed that you have chosen Mosquito Hill to volunteer your time. Thank you for all you do!
SAVE THE DATE, APRIL 3, 2011, for our annual VOLUNTEER SOCIAL!



MHNC VOLUNTEERS
LOGGED

2870.5 HOURS
JULY-OCT., 2010!

*You are an awesome
group of volunteers!!
Thank You!!*

Welcome New Volunteers

Harley, Jan, Nick, Deb, Brooke, Jeff, Cheryl, Ella, and Nathan. Thank you for joining our team!

Volunteer Opportunities

Contact Volunteer Coordinator Pat Lund-Moe

email: fomh.vc@focol.org Phone: 920-779-6433

(Grab your volunteer slot while there's still room!)

Snowshoe Rental: They're saying it will be a snowy winter, so we'll have the trails and snowshoes ready and waiting for all who venture out. We'll be looking for volunteers for all weekend shifts. And remember, for every shift you volunteer you earn free snowshoe rental for yourself.

Candlelight Snowshoe Walks: There are two special nights scheduled, December 17 and January 15. Volunteers work at registration, rent snowshoes, keep the trail torches lit and assist with food service. Here's a chance to see the nature center in the winter moonlight—join us!

Evening for Sweethearts: Help make the Valentine's weekend special for the couples that attend on February 12. The same opportunities are available as for candlelight snowshoe nights, with the addition of special food and activities.

Winter Family Fun Day: This has been quite the experience for our visitors, no matter what the weather! You can help with snowshoe races, concessions, admissions, parking, outside games or inside crafts. Come on out and spend the afternoon with us!

Did you know? There are employers who match the hours an employee volunteers with a donation to the place the volunteer hours are given. Check it out! If your employer offers this matching plan, we'll gladly forward the hours to them. It's a great way to give twice — time and money!

Are you a volunteer, age 55 or over? There are free benefits (i.e. mileage reimbursement) available for you through the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). Don't miss out! Please see Pat for more information.



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Enjoy these benefits:

- ✓ Receive our quarterly newsletter called *View from the Hill*.
- ✓ 10% discount at our bookstore.
- ✓ Discount on programs.
- ✓ Complimentary snowshoe use on our trails.
- ✓ Knowing you make a difference!

Join Friends of Mosquito Hill!

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES:

(please check one)

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- Individual—\$20
- Family—\$35
- Business/Organization—\$50
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- Supporting—\$200
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