

Enjoy the wonders of the season at Lake Forest Open Lands

Look for these seasonal nature discoveries as you explore our preserves.



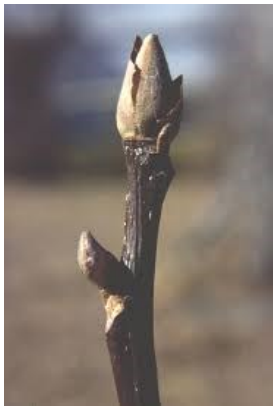
Chickadees calling



Praying Mantis Egg Case



Deer Tracks



Shagbark Hickory Buds



Great Horned Owl
Nest



Mountain Mint



Rabbit Tracks



Vole Tunnels



Goldfinch in Winter
Plumage

Seasonal Nature Discoveries

The winter season is a busy time in our preserves. Come walk our trails and discover the magic of the natural world.

Notice winter birds calling and foraging along the trails. Find animal tracks and vole tunnels in the snow, and discover the wonders of the season as you explore woodlands, prairies and savannas.

- Chickadees are some of the most active winter birds. Look for flocks of chickadees foraging for insect eggs and larvae along branches of trees and shrubs.
 - *Listen for the familiar “chick-a-dee-dee-dee” call made to warn other birds of predators in the area. The more “dees” in the call, the greater the perceived threat. In late winter, listen for the chickadees’ phoe-bee” mating call as they establish territory and look for mates.*
 - *Bring your binoculars and see what birds you can spot. You can download a guide to common birds found in our preserves [here](#).*
- Praying mantises lay their eggs in the late fall, forming egg cases, called oothecae. These light tan, rounded cases resemble Styrofoam and can be found on upright vegetation and pine branches.
 - *Look for the elongated, rounded egg cases of the native Carolina mantis, as well as the shorter, flat-bottomed egg cases of the non-native Chinese mantis.*
 - *Search along plant stems and under loose bark to find insects, cocoons and galls and other egg cases. Bring along a magnifying glass to get a closer look.*
- Great Horned Owls establish territory and begin nesting in January and February. This early nesting season allows time for the chicks to mature and learn to hunt before the next winter season.
 - *Listen for owls hooting at dawn and dusk. Most pairs mate for life, and hooting is part of their courtship ritual before they begin setting up their nests. If you hear crows cawing loudly, it may warn of a nearby owl.*
 - *Spot great horned owl nests along the edges of woodlands and open fields. Look for nests in large-limbed trees like pines or cottonwoods, or in cavities of dead trees. Owls often use old hawk nests or squirrel nests but will also use nesting platforms or nest boxes.*