

## Wildlife Monitoring: a Key to Conservation

Getting outdoors on a beautiful spring day and watching squirrels, listening to frogs, counting fireflies and peeking in on nesting baby birds doesn't sound like the tedious grunt work of scientific research. Believe it or not, these activities yield all the right data for ecologists to do their best work, and they encourage everyone to help out!

Wildlife Monitoring is the observation, recording and reporting of specific information about different types of wild animals. Wildlife monitoring by volunteers is referred to as "Citizen Science", because all interested people are invited to participate in gathering, recording and reporting data for use in studies aimed at conserving the health of wildlife populations.



An Eastern Bluebird chick ready to fledge.  
 Photo: Connie Etter [www.flickr.com/photos/connieetter/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/connieetter/)

Wildlife monitoring volunteers record and report the date, time, weather conditions, location, behavior of animals, and other specific information related to the subject of the study. This data yields useful information about the health, geographical distribution, population size, reproduction rates, behaviors and migrations of wild animals. As more volunteers participate, wildlife scientists acquire more information on animals across an expanding geographical area.

As populations of wild animals are tracked from year to year, new information is revealed about how animals are affected by large-scale environmental changes such as urbanization, land use changes, invasive species, and climate change. This information is used in studies to shed light on methods of environmental management designed to benefit wildlife.

This spring Genesee County Parks volunteers are busy getting ready for the arrival of new and returning visitors to the park: Eastern Bluebirds and Wood Ducks! Park volunteers monitor nest boxes and report their data to [NestWatch](#), a Citizen Science program run by the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#) and the [Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center](#). Volunteers head out on warm, dry days and carefully check Eastern Bluebird and Wood Duck nest boxes. Data is recorded on the type of nesting bird, number of eggs, and number of nestlings hatched and fledged. Fledging of Wood Ducklings is especially phenomenal. Wood Duck babies climb out of the hole in front of the nest box, and jump to the ground. They do not get hurt when they land, but follow the sound of their mother's quacking to the water. Scientists use NestWatch data to track the breeding success of birds across North America, which helps them keep tabs on bird populations. Studies of Eastern Bluebirds have shown that vineyards, gardens, crop fields and orchards with bluebirds nesting nearby have fewer insect pests than those without!



A young Wood Duck has made it from the nest to the water.  
 Photo:Kevin Cole [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aw\\_sponza#/media/File:Aw\\_sponza](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aw_sponza#/media/File:Aw_sponza)

Conservation studies continue to reveal the many ways in which the smallest animals impact entire ecosystems, and how everything in nature is connected. Biologists are using the work of citizen scientists to study the spread of invasive earthworms in the great lakes area, the effects of Spanish slugs in the UK, and the health of frog populations across the US. Pick your favorite animal or flowering plant, and there is most likely a research project that you can participate in! Research teams can't possibly monitor every region, area and habitat effectively over a period of time. Monitoring volunteers empower them with the information essential for long-range conservation studies and management. The task of conservation is huge. We can all help out, and have a blast sharing the world with wildlife!

To volunteer for wildlife monitoring with Genesee County Parks, please contact Shannon Morley at 585-344-1122 or email [Shannon.Morley@co.genesee.ny.us](mailto:Shannon.Morley@co.genesee.ny.us).  
 For a list of Wildlife Monitoring and Citizen Science projects across New York State visit:  
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/78429.html>



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### Welcome New ACORNS:

- Mallory Broda
- Brandi Giambrone
- Lynn Glarner
- Terri & Michael Muehlig
- Kathy Owen
- Jim and Laurie Taille
- Pam Zola

### Interpretive Nature Center Hours:

Thursday—Friday:  
 10 am—4 pm  
 Saturday—Sunday:  
 12—4 pm



# Welcome Spring!

## Spring Pools

By Robert Frost

These pools that, though in forests, still reflect  
The total sky almost without defect,  
And like the flowers beside them, chill and shiver,  
Will like the flowers beside them soon be gone,  
And yet not out by any brook or river,  
But up by roots to bring dark foliage on.

The trees that have it in their pent-up buds  
To darken nature and be summer woods -  
Let them think twice before they use their powers  
To blot out and drink up and sweep away  
These flowery waters and these watery flowers  
From snow that melted only yesterday.



## I Have A Bird In Spring

By Emily Dickenson

I have a Bird in spring  
Which for myself doth  
sing—  
The spring decoys.  
And as the summer nears—  
And as the Rose appears,  
Robin is gone.

Yet do I not repine  
Knowing that Bird of mine  
Though flown—  
Learneth beyond the sea  
Melody new for me  
And will return.

Fast is a safer hand  
Held in a truer Land  
Are mine—  
And though they now de-  
part,  
Tell I my doubting heart  
They're thine.

In a serener Bright,  
In a more golden light  
I see  
Each little doubt and fear,  
Each little discord here  
Removed.

Then will I not repine,  
Knowing that Bird of mine  
Though flown  
Shall in a distant tree  
Bright melody for me  
Return.

# Saturday Snowshoeing FUN!

Guided winter hikes every Saturday, exploring and learning!



Exploring with George during "The Forest Then and Now"



Discovering squirrel tracks during "Winter's End Spring Signs"



Learning about signs of insects with Charlie during the "Nappers and Snackers" snowshoe hike



Taking a snowball break on the Creek Trail

## On the Road and in The Field

Science Education with Genesee County Park & Forest ACORNS and Staff



Amy shares the amazing adaptations of local owls with residents at LeRoy Village Green



Pembroke 4th graders explore winter ecology with a hike and wildlife adaptations lesson

# If You Care Leave Them There! Spring Babies. — By Amy Jessmer

Spring is a magical time, flowers in bloom, the air smells of pollen and new life surrounds us! Just walking into your backyard you may encounter all species of newborn friends: ducklings, rabbits, squirrels, and maybe even fawns. Watching these youngsters learn and grow can be a wonderful process, but what happens if you find one of them all alone?! Is she abandoned? Is she orphaned? How should we help?!



Mother Squirrel retrieving baby.

We should always act appropriately when it comes to wild animals, and usually this means "If you care, leave them there". Wildlife parents provide highly variable and specialized amounts of care to their young, so it is important to know if you are helping or harming the animal by intervening. Some parents are very attentive and intense in their care giving, some are much more casual, and others provide no care at all.

What should you do if you find a baby bird? First ask yourself "Is this bird old enough to be on it's own?", "Does he have adult feathers?". If this bird is not completely covered in feathers, you can see skin, put it back into its nest safely if it is still being cared for by parents. BEWARE sometimes recently fledged birds appear that they have fallen from the nest, if you return them to the nest they will jump back out. Yes you may touch the bird, parents will NOT reject the baby if it smells like humans. If the bird has most of its adult feathers (know these feathers may not look pretty at first!) then leave the bird alone, he or she may be a poor flier but its parents are near by still caring for it. You may keep an eye on it, if it has not left the ground after several days contact DEC for a local rehabilitator.

If there are cats in the area keep them inside until the young bird is a strong flier and can escape predation. Cats kill 3.7 billion birds annually. The cats are not at fault, they are hunters by nature! But placing a bell on your cat's collar can help warn birds of an incoming ambush. The only way to guarantee newly a flying song bird's safety is to keep cats inside.

Young rabbits can often look abandoned when they are seen alone in the yard. If you find a rabbit den and think it is abandoned because the mother is not around, it is likely not! Mother rabbits often only visit the den 2 times a day to keep predators from noticing her offspring. If this animal has fur and opened eyes leave it be. Young rabbits venture away from their mothers but will return to her or the den to suckle milk. If the rabbit is hairless with eyes still closed it is possible that it was pulled out of the den by a predator. Place it back inside the den if possible. If this is not possible, call DEC (the Department of Conservation) to find a local Animal Rehabilitator.

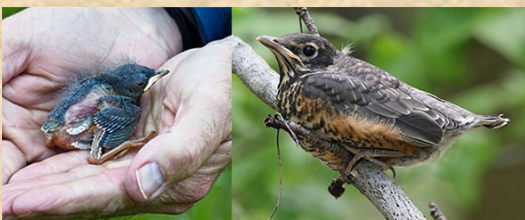
Squirrels usually have litters of 3-5 babies. If you find only one, take the time to look for its siblings. When young, they generally do not crawl too far from where they have fallen, and may take shelter under grasses or leaves. Unless she has been killed or injured, mom will come looking for her babies. Place the babies in a lined, open box at the base of the tree they fell from. Depending on the weather, provide a towed hot water bottle for heat. Mom should retrieve each baby within 1-2 hours. If the nest was damaged, mom will first build a new one, then carry her babies to it. Mom will not retrieve the babies if they are too cold, there is too much pet or human activity near the babies, or if they are too far from their original nest location. If a re-nest has been unsuccessful or the baby's condition deteriorates, contact a Wildlife Rehabilitator immediately by phone. Medical intervention will most likely be needed.



Can you spot the fawn?! Fawns use their spots as camouflage against predators.

Many people come across fawns curled up in meadows or lawns sleeping. These beautiful babies aren't orphaned! Mother deer require high amounts of nutrients and these young ones do not have the strength to travel the distances needed for their mothers to obtain this food. Does place their fawns in hidden locations tucked away from predators detection. Does will then go forage for food and return when they are done. Fawns will lay safely motionless and scentless for hours. If you move them their mothers will no longer be able to find them and this will likely result in them being orphaned. The best thing you can do when you find a fawn is to leave it be, mothers will not return if humans linger around. If you find a fawn and the mother is confirmed dead, call a wildlife rehabilitator. If you have already moved the fawn, return it to the EXACT location that you found it. Does WILL still accept their fawn if you have touched it.

It is important that you do not try to rehabilitate wild animals yourself. YES, they are SUPER cute! But these are wild animals, and they will NOT make good pets! Wildlife Rehabilitators have special training and often specify in a particular species. This provides our unfortunate friends with the best care available! Wildlife Rehabilitators are responsible for nursing animals back to health, and then releasing them back into the wild if it is determined that they will survive. If you are interested in helping wildlife learn how to become a licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator!



Left: baby bird with skin showing, return to nest. Right: Post fledging, will still receiving parental care, Leave Alone!



Left to right: Newborn wild rabbit, Rabbit nest lined with fur, Juvenile wild rabbit away from his mother.

To find a Wildlife Rehabilitator near you, or how to become a licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator go to:

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/83977.html>

# Frogs are Croaking, Why Should You Care?! — By Amy Jessmer

Its spring time and many things are reminding us that summer is quickly approaching! The sweet smell in the air, snow melting, and one of my favorite signs, the sounds of spring frogs! The Western Chorus Frog (*Pseudacris triseriata*) is one of our first to promote him self in spring. Although they are not often seen they are not shy when it comes to their voices! Following the Western Chorus Frog in late spring is the Spring Peeper (*Pseudacris crucifer*). But this amazing sensation of approaching spring may not return in future years.

Well, it is not just frogs that are in trouble, but amphibians as a whole! As of 2012 2,030 species of amphibians are threatened or extinct. This is ONE THIRD of the 6,260 documented amphibian species on earth! Besides the fact that frogs sound beautiful, and are a fun animal that we learn about in grade school, why should we care if they stick around?!

Amphibians are very important because they are Indicator species. An indicator species is an organism that is very sensitive to one particular, or multiple environmental factors. Because amphibians live in both aquatic and terrestrial habitats, at some point in their lives they serve as indicators for the health of both environments! Also due to their porous skin they are highly sensitive to any changes in their surroundings. These changes include pollutants, pesticides, water level changes, population changes, and predator changes. Because they are so sensitive to a multitude of different things they can often show signs of environmental strain in an ecosystem early on. This early alarm can make pollutant detection and removal possible in areas where humans live and enjoy. Early indication is very important in keeping our water safe and healthy not only for consumption, but also recreation! It is possible that an amphibian has helped you without you knowing! Maybe an amphibian has helped you and you didn't even know!

Frogs, salamanders and toads are valuable members of the food chain as predators of invertebrates and even vertebrates. We've all seen the cartoons of frogs eating flies, but amphibians eat large portions of insects. Bull frogs have even been known to eat their body weight in insects daily. If it weren't for them we'd likely live in something looking similar to a Sci-fi-movie "Attack of the bugs!" (coming to theaters soon!) They also make up large portions of the ecosystem's biomass, roughly twice as much as birds do and only slightly less than small mammals make up. This means that they account for a large proportion of the total physical mass of ALL the organisms (big and small) in a certain area. These little guys take up such a large proportion of the living mass of the ecosystem that without them we'd experience population declines of a multitude of species in a single area. This would be due to lack of food for larger species and an increase in insect populations which over time would throw off the food chain.



Heron catches a frog as a meal.  
Photo: Jeremy Woodhouse <http://www.gettyimages.com>

Amphibians are key to the health of an ecosystem, but what direct role do they play in human health? Scientists have found that the way tungara frogs (*Physalaemus pustulosus*) process sound is similar to humans and there is may be potential to help people with hearing disorders. Another study on eye regeneration in Japanese firebelly newts (*Cynops pyrrhogaster*) that may help humans re-grow damaged tissues. In addition frogs have the ability to freeze solid and thaw out, using glucose as an anti-freeze in their bodies. Scientists have studied this ability to use for cryogenics in medicine

So it is apparent that amphibians help us, BUT how can WE help THEM?! One of the easiest ways is by doing nothing at all! Sounds weird I know, but what I really mean is do not increase the transport of amphibians. Amphibians are the third most imported animals to the United States, and as a result are one of the most traded animals in the world to support this demand. This trade not only depletes the wild populations, but is also linked to the spread of fungal diseases that are decimating amphibians of all types around the world. Other major threats to our slippery friends include habitat loss, invasive species, and climate change.

Small changes you make can have significant impacts for these little guys (and gals). Creating an amphibian pond can increase their populations by providing habitat and serve as a learning experience for all ages. Not only will you get to observe all the life stages of amphibians, but also predator/prey relationships at work! Decreasing your carbon foot print (the amount of carbon you emit to the environment), recycling, reusing, and reducing your consumption of valuable resources are all ways that we can mitigate climate change.

Frogs and salamanders may not be considered fuzzy and cute, but they are important to our ecosystem, and help us in more ways than meets the eye. Get involved and keep our amphibian populations healthy! After all, What is spring without the "rabbiting" and "croaking" of frogs and toads!? How will we know it's spring?



Spring Peeper calling for a mate.  
Photo credit: Paul Sattler

"Reptiles and amphibians are sometimes thought of as primitive, dull and dimwitted. In fact, of course, they can be lethally fast, spectacularly beautiful, surprisingly affectionate and very sophisticated." David Attenborough

For more information on how to help amphibians, or how to make a frog pond please visit:  
<http://www.savethefrogs.com/ponds/index.html> And  
<https://www.aza.org/frogwatch/>

# The Tree of Peace — A Haudenosaunee Story

## Shared by Charlie Augrom

As you hike through the Genesee County Park and Forest have you looked at the plants and trees? Many have stories or legends attributed to them. In this issue we will look at White Pine of Great Tree of Peace.

The White Pine is a national symbol to the Haudenosaunee, or "People of the Longhouse". The tree plays a major role in the story of how five separate, warring nations, the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga and Seneca became united under one law. A "Great White Pine" is mentioned several times in most versions of the story and are still recited in Haudenosaunee communities today. Thousands of years ago, the people were at war with each other. It was amidst all this chaos that the creator sent a messenger of peace to be born amongst his people. He was called the "Peacemaker". His mission was to restore love, peace and harmony back to the people. He met with the Seneca, Oneida, Mohawk and Cayuga. With his powers of persuasion he won them over. Then he went to the Onondaga's house where he met with a lot of resistance. The Peacemaker worked very long and hard to convince them to accept the Great Law of Peace. The Peacemaker offered them a



White Pine encircles Turtle Pond



White Pine branch

special position in the confederacy. That was to watch over the fire on behalf of all five nations. The Peacemaker then looked upon the men and saw they still carried their weapons. He then said that they needed a symbol that would remind them of the promise they made to each other, the promise of peace. As he looked around he saw this very large tree, the needles were in clusters of five. He used this as a symbol of the five nations being bound together as one. He took some needles off the branch and told them that even with the changes of the seasons, the tree stays green for all time. So shall the Great Peace stay among the Five Nations for all time. He then uprooted the tree and it created a cavity. He instructed the men to cast down their weapons of war into the cavity to bury their greed, hatred and jealousy. The tree was then replaced. The roots spread in four directions: North, South, East and West. On the top of this great tree was placed an eagle which symbolizes keeping a watchful eye. If any evil or danger approaches, he will scream loudly, sounding the alarm and everyone will at once come to the defense and rescue. This symbolizes that everyone has the responsibility to protect the peace.

The Eastern White Pine, (*Pinus strobus*) is generally considered to be the "Great White Pine" in this formative story. Eastern White Pine is the largest native conifer in the Haudenosaunee territory. White pine is also the only five-needled tree in New York State.

The Hiawatha Belt, which records the formation of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, is a purple and white belt. The belt features four rectangles representing, (from left to right) the Seneca, Cayuga, Oneida and Mohawk, united by a line with an elongated triangle in the center representing the Great White Pine. The tree symbol also represents the Onondaga Nation in whose territory the Confederacy was formed and the central fire of the Confederacy government is kept.

In 1722, after being driven from North Carolina, the Tuscarora Nation followed the roots of the metaphorical tree back to the Confederacy. The Haudenosaunee Confederacy is often referred to as the "Six Nations", or "Iroquois Confederacy".

# Meet the ACORNS

(Association for the Conservation of Recreational and Natural Spaces)

The ACORNS is the volunteer group formed to support the Genesee County Parks by assisting with environmental programs and park maintenance, offering recreational opportunities and promoting the parks.



## ACORNS Board of Directors:

Julia Garver, President  
Mary Yunker, Vice-President  
Barbara Easton, Treasurer  
Jim Schmitt, Secretary  
Charlie Augrom  
Daisy Klein  
George Squires

## Members:

Norm Argulsky  
Charlie Augrom  
Sarah Balduf  
Josh Bachorski  
Nancy Baker  
Mallory Broda  
Barbara & Mike Easton  
David & Marcia Gann  
Julia Garver & Joe Ruh  
The Gentry Family  
Nancy Gerspacher  
Brandi Giambrone  
Lynn Glarner  
Peggy Grayson  
Janis & Stuart Hempel

Sheila & Paul Hess & Family  
Hans Kunze  
Sam & Esther Leadley  
Tami & Pete Loftus  
Gordon Meek  
Bill & Connie Moon  
Terri & Michael Muehlig  
Paul and Emma Osborn  
Kathy Owen  
Dave & Val Patten  
Mary Jane Pearce  
Jim Schmitt  
The Scott Family  
Clare & Ron Sloat  
George Squires  
Sandy & Dave Steele

Jim & Laurie Taille  
Kathie Woika  
Mary Yunker  
Pam Zola

If your name is not on this list, it may be time to renew your membership!

Join us for ACORNS Volunteer Days on the 3rd Tuesday of every month from 10 am-1 pm. ACORNS meetings are held every 4th Tuesday evening of the month at 5 pm. Check the ACORNS website for location.

ACORNS website: <http://acorns.shutterfly.com>



## RUN FOR THE ACORNS 2016

Sunday, October 2nd

ACORNS is looking for a few great volunteers to help out and have fun! Contact us at

<https://runfortheacorns.shutterfly.com>



## Coming This Spring!

### ***Earth: The Wild Blue Planet***

**Saturday, April 23rd 9 am - 2 pm**  
**DeWitt Recreation Area, 115 Cedar St. Batavia, NY 14020**

Earth is a Wild Blue Planet! Celebrate Earth Day by helping with habitat cleanup, making awesome crafts out of recycled materials, and taking home your own live tree seedling! Sign up for helping hands for wildlife, the naturalist-guided blue planet hike, habitat checkup, and catching clean water critters by calling 585-344-1122. Grab a friend or sign up as a group!! Celebration is FREE!

#### ***Schedule of Activities:***

**9:00 – 11:00 Park Cleanup Projects: Helping Hands for Wildlife**

**11:00 – 12:00 Wildlife and Water: A Blue Planet Hike**

**12:00 – 1:00 Habitat Checkup: Water Monitoring**

**1:00 – 2:00 Clean Water Critters**

**Ongoing: 9:00 – 2:00 Special Guests, "The Incredible Journey" game and Earth-Friendly Crafts!**

Please pre-register by calling 585-344-1122  
or send an email to [Shannon.Morley@co.genesee.ny.us](mailto:Shannon.Morley@co.genesee.ny.us)

## GCC Photo Exhibit

**Come see through the eyes of another with a thought-provoking and creative photography show by GCC photo club and Photography coursework students! This spring's photo show will have an open topic, you never know what you will see! Students will host the opening gala on Friday, May 20th from 6 to 8 pm, and share their experiences with this intriguing art form.**

## Stream Safari

**Saturday, May 14th**  
**1:30–2:45 pm**

Streams are full of tiny, weird-looking animals!! Come capture and meet some overlooked and underappreciated wildlife, up close and personal. Dress for the weather and wear waterproof boots and clothes that can get dirty. We will learn about unique stream animals, and what they tell us about the water they live in!

\$5/person, \$10/family  
Registration required, call 585-344-1122!





## Volunteering for the County Parks

### RSVP Open House May 17th 2016

The Genesee County Park has been partnering with the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) since 2002, where interested volunteers 55 and older have found meaningful volunteer activities close to nature and to their hearts. In Genesee County, over 325 older adults serve our community as RSVP members. Their volunteer experiences range from one-time events to weekly placements in one or more of our 20+ partner agencies.

Join us for an open house at the Interpretive Nature Center on May 17th, 2016 to find out more about volunteer opportunities with Genesee County Parks. Park staff will give a brief tour and description of ways to help out and support the parks.

Contact Courtney Iburi, RSVP Volunteer Coordinator at 585-343-1611 ext. 5933 or stop in Monday—Thursday at the Office for the Aging, 2 Bank Street in Batavia.



Genesee County AmeriCorps provides support to Environmental Education at the parks through the Environmental Stewardship position with Genesee County Park & Forest. Thank you to our AmeriCorps volunteers for making so many fun and interesting events and programs possible!! For more information and to become a volunteer contact Kathy Frank, Program Director of the Genesee County AmeriCorps at (585) 344-3960 <http://www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/youthbureau/amicorp.html>

### Genesee County Park & Forest Welcomes Back Envirothon! 15 teams from 5 different schools to participate in 2016

**Envirothon** is a hands-on environmental science competition where teams of five high school students work together to win scholarships and awards. Teams are tested in the field on practical knowledge of wildlife, soils, forestry, aquatics, and a special topic that is selected each year. Team members expand their knowledge and experience with environmental science through trainings, public speaking, studying and working together.

To learn more about Envirothon or become a team member, volunteer, or team advisor contact

Jodi Chamberlin or Molly Stetz  
Genesee County Soil and Water Conservation District.  
585-343-2362  
[Jodi.Chamberlain@ny.nacdnet.net](mailto:Jodi.Chamberlain@ny.nacdnet.net)



**Welcome SPRING! Keep your eyes peeled for Ephemeral flowers! What is that you ask?? Ephemeral flowers are flowers that emerge first in the spring. They are not light limited because they flower before trees grow their leaves. They grow very quickly, and some even release a chemical that melts snow so they bloom before all the snow melts.**

**Skunk cabbage emerging from the forest floor. Known for its stinky leaves and smelly nature that attracts flies and bees for pollination. Photo: Fritzlohrreynolds**

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Symplocarpus\\_foetidus\\_-\\_Skunk\\_Cabbage.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Symplocarpus_foetidus_-_Skunk_Cabbage.jpg)

**Genesee County Park & Forest  
Interpretive Nature Center**

11095 Bethany Center Rd.  
East Bethany, NY 14054

Phone: 585-344-1122  
Fax: 585-343-6611

**Visit**

[www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/parks/](http://www.co.genesee.ny.us/departments/parks/)



*Earth: The Wild Blue Planet*

Sat. April 23rd

9:00 am - 2:00 pm

FREE

Please register for activities! Call 585-344-1122

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to help us earn...**



***Make a Difference!***

*We are helping to keep the earth clean while earning new equipment and cash. You can help by saving used cartridges and cell phones! Just come by the Genesee County Park Interpretive Center and drop them off!*



**Do you have nature-related books you would like to donate? We have a lending library for adults to sign out books, take home and read. When you're done, bring them back and sign out more!**  
**To donate books please call the Interpretive Center at 585-344--1122 or send an email to Shannon.Morley@co.genesee.ny.us. (Magazines and encyclopedias not needed)**



Genesee County Parks,  
Recreation & Forestry

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