

# The Blaze

Fall / Winter 2017



# from the director



Well, we've come to the end of yet another wonderful summer here at the Byron Forest Preserve, full of programs, golf, beautiful wildflowers, birds, summer campers, museum tours, and so many other outdoor activities.

As nature stays its steady course of slow adaptations over time, we humans seem to evolve quickly with changing technologies and social advances. Because of this

everchanging technology and rising printing and paper costs, we have decided to discontinue the Blaze. The information published in the Blaze is duplicated on the Forest Preserve's website and that's where most of our patrons are finding us these days. You can register for programs, reserve a facility, or just check out the latest news at the Forest Preserve at [www.byronforestpreserve.com](http://www.byronforestpreserve.com).

We apologize to those who may enjoy the actual paper copy but our feedback indicates that the service is not warranting the costs involved to continue. If you are not an internet user, please feel free to call or stop by to speak with someone about any area of interest, the staff would love to explain or educate you in their area of expertise.

The newly renovated natural history museum at the Jarrett Prairie Center has won a national award and is quite amazing, please come out and bring the family to see all we have to offer. The museum is also complimented by a new 2600 sq. ft. deck that overlooks the Jarrett Prairie and the Rock River Corridor. It is a wonderful spot to enjoy the grandeur from one of the highest points in Ogle County. The deck seats up to 150 people and, along with the new museum, is available for rental for your next event.



I just returned from Bar Harbor, Maine. My three daughters, Avery, Ruby, and Tuscan and I camped at Acadia National Park. We really enjoyed the hiking and scenic views from atop Cadillac Mountain (pictured left).

Remember to get out and enjoy the natural beauty of our world. No matter where you may be, there are so many places to visit locally and afar.

Todd Tucker,  
Executive Director

## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

### President

Trevor Hogan

### Vice President

Frank Conry

### Treasurer

Aaron Vincer

### Secretary

Jeff Ludwig

### Commissioner

Steve Patterson

## BOARD MEETINGS

Held on the third Monday of each month at 7pm at the Jarrett Prairie Center.



## THE MISSION

*Preservation ~ Education*

*Recreation*

To provide for Preservation of openspace/natural resources, to provide Education concerning our natural environment/heritage, and to provide Recreation opportunities and enterprise operations that are consistent with our District goals.

## THE BLAZE

Issue #43

Fall/Winter 2017

Please keep this issue thru December 2017.

## Editor, Design, & Layout

Michelle Gerke, CPRP

## Cover Photo:

*Newly renovated Jarrett Prairie Center Museum with a newly constructed deck. Available for banquets and events.*

# contents



Annual Holiday Gift Sale - Page 5



Winter Lecture Series - Page 7



Halloween on the Prairie - Page 4

2	from the director
4-5	special events
6-9	programs
10	homeschool programs
10	scout badges
11	preschool
12	museum wins award
13	prairieview golf club
14	birdsfoot trefoil
15	six-lined racerunner
16-17	good stuff
18	volunteers
19	directory

**Byron Forest Preserve District**

**7993 North River Road, P O Box 1075, Byron IL 61010 ~ P-815-234-8535 ~ F-815-234-8635**

Connect with us!



Register online at [www.byronforestpreserve.com](http://www.byronforestpreserve.com)



# halloween on the prairie

Relax and enjoy this returning favorite!

**Sunday, October 29 ~ Noon - 4 pm**

**Free admission ~ Fee for games**

Co-sponsored by the Byron Park District.

Family Friendly Hayrides ~ Weiskopf Observatory Tours ~ Bounce House

Face Painting ~ Kids Crafts ~ Games ~ New Observation Deck

Tour the National Award Winning Jarrett Prairie Center Museum!

Free Customer Appreciation Lunch All Day

Native American Hands-On Activities

Fun for kids of ALL ages!!



## Live Birds of Prey!

Featuring live owls, hawks,  
and falcons presented by  
Northern Illinois Raptor Rehab  
and Education.





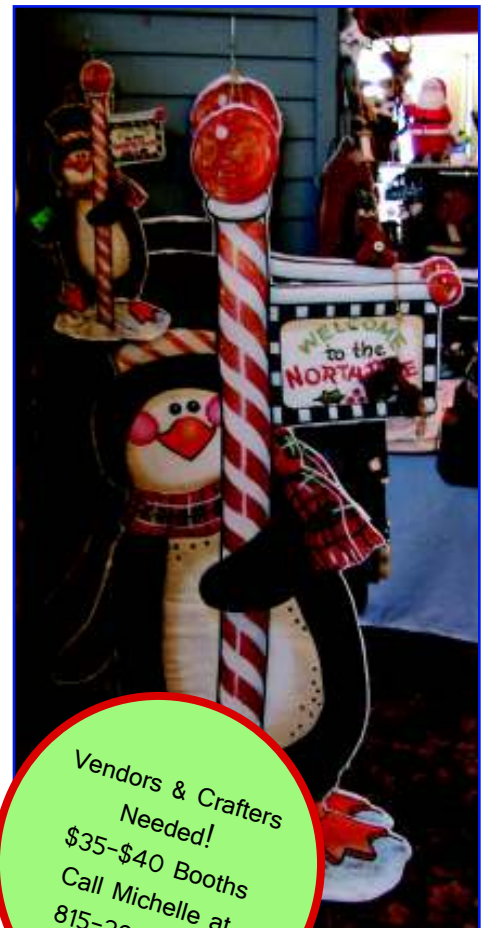
# 26th annual holiday gift sale

**Saturday, November 4, 2017**

**9 am-4 pm**

You'll find that great one-of-a-kind gift for that special person in your life at this year's Annual Holiday Gift Sale. With over 30 crafters and vendors, there's a wide variety of unique crafts such as quilts, clothing, jewelry, candles, flower arrangements, ceramics, decorations, baskets, birdhouses, furniture, and much more! Along with crafters, vendors will also offer items such as Tupperware, Gold Canyon Candles, Paparazzi Jewelry, and many more!

There is no admission fee for the event. The Jarrett Prairie Center is accessible to the physically challenged. An affordable concession stand will be open all day. Parents can shop while the youngsters learn about their heritage in the national award winning natural history museum at the Jarrett Prairie Center located at 7993 North River Road in Byron. For more information, please call or email Michelle at 1-815-234-8535 x224 or michellegerke@byronforestpreserve.com.



Vendors & Crafters  
Needed!  
\$35-\$40 Booths  
Call Michelle at  
815-234-8535  
x224

Connect with us!



Register online at [www.byronforestpreserve.com](http://www.byronforestpreserve.com)

# programs



Beekeeper Jeff Ludwig with hives at the Jarrett Prairie Preserve



## Beekeeping Workshops

Did you hear the buzz? These workshops are the place to bee!! You will learn techniques and tools of the trade. \*Bring your bee suits!!

Where: Jarrett Prairie Center

When: Sundays  
Sept. 10\*, Oct. 8\*  
Nov. 12, Dec. 10

Time: 2 - 4 pm

Cost: \$2 / person

Ages: 3 and up

Min./Max.: 5 / 25

**No registration required.**

## Evening Wildflower Walk

Join us for a special evening wildflower walk at the Jarrett Prairie Nature Preserve when a wide variety of asters, goldenrod, sunflowers and other fall prairie flowers will be in bloom and the prairie big bluestem and Indian grasses will be at their tallest.

Where: Meet at Jarrett Center

When: Wed., September 20

Time: 5:30 - 7 pm

Cost: Free

Ages: All

Min./Max.: 5 / 20

**Register by noon on 9/18.**

## Guided Fall Foliage Canoe Tours of the Rock River

Take a scenic two-hour guided canoe tour down the Rock River from just below the dam in Oregon to Castle Rock State Park and from Castle Rock State Park to Grand Detour. View the area's many unique St. Peter sandstone rock formations and miles of hardwood forest along one of the most scenic stretches of the Rock River. Must have at least one adult per canoe and no more than three people per canoe.

Where/When:

**Oregon Dam to Castle Rock State Park**

Saturday, September 23

**Castle Rock State Park to Grand Detour**

Saturday, October 14

Time: 8:30 am - 12 Noon

Cost: \$10 / person

Ages: 12 and up

Min./Max.: 3 / 10 canoes

**Register by noon on 9/20 & 10/11**

## Evening Oak Savanna Tour

Join us as we celebrate oak trees and oak ecosystems during the month of "Oaktober," October is Oak Awareness Month in Illinois. Take a guided tour of our oak savannas and learn about the many plants, birds, mammals and insects that make these vanishing Illinois ecosystems their home. Learn more about how our northern Illinois woodlands are changing due to being over-run by invasive species that are killing our native oak trees.

Where: Jarrett Prairie Center

When: Wed., October 25

Time: 4 pm

Cost: FREE

Ages: 6 & up

Min/Max: 5 / 25

**Register by noon on October 23.**



# programs



## Bald Eagle Program

Come meet "Captain Jack" an American bald eagle (pictured above). Hoo Haven is much honored to have the American Symbol for their educational outreach programs. He stands over 36 inches high and has a wing span of 8 feet!

Where: Jarrett Prairie Center  
When: Sat., November 11  
Time: 1 pm  
Cost: FREE  
Ages: All

**No registration required.**

~~~~~  
*Trees save US communities  
\$400 billion dollars in storm  
water rention.*

---American Forests, 2015

~~~~~



## Winter Lecture Series 2018

Back for its fourth season! The Byron Forest Preserve's 2018 Winter Lecture Series will be held on five consecutive Sunday afternoons from February 11 to March 11, 2018. Lecture topics will include *Coal Swamps, Coral Reefs, and Continental Glaciers: A Look at Prairie-State Geology* by Raymond Wiggers; *Archaeology of Man's Best Friend: Recent Studies of Prehistoric Dogs in Illinois* by Steven Kuehn, Zooarchaeologist with the Illinois State Archaeology Survey; *Northern Illinois' Rare Blanding's Turtles: There's Nothing Bland About Them* by Callie Klatt Golba, and more! Look for a detailed schedule with more information later in December.



Connect with us!



Register online at [www.byronforestpreserve.com](http://www.byronforestpreserve.com)

# programs



Swallowtail



## Oak Savanna and Prairie Hike

It's the month of "Oaktober!" Celebrate by learning about the history of these ecosystems while enjoying an intermediate hike in one of the prettiest areas on the preserve, including our lone oaks, the trails along the river, and a few special sandy spots where the only cactus native to Illinois grows. We'll pass by habitats belonging to badgers, box turtles, and coyotes, and are likely to see deer and birds. Learn why these areas are so rare and what's being done to preserve them. Dress for the weather.

Where: Meet at Jarrett Center  
When: Saturday, October 21  
Time: 9:30 - 11 am  
Cost: Free  
Ages: All ages  
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

**Register by noon on October 17.**



## Evening Hike

We'll head into the forest to listen for the sounds of the changing season and the last of the evening insects. We'll learn about night vision and discover some of the ways that our eyes can play tricks on us in the dark. Bring a sense of adventure (and a flashlight if you must). We'll finish up with enough time to visit our observatory and see the night sky with one of our telescopes.

Where: Meet at Jarrett Center  
When: Saturday, November 4  
Time: 7 - 8:30 pm  
Cost: Free  
Ages: 6 and up,  
families welcome  
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

**Register by noon on September 27.**

## Fossil Hunt

Join us at the quarry any time; stay for a half hour or for the whole event! We'll be digging through piles to see what we can find. Bring a hammer to crack open the bigger ones and a bucket to cart away your finds. Fossil identification and guides provided.

Where: The quarry near the Land Management Center located at 6845 German Church Road, Byron

When: Saturday, October 7  
Time: 10 am - 2 pm  
Cost: \$2 / person  
Ages: All  
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

**Register by noon on October 3.**

## Ogle County Solid Waste Management's Annual Rock River Sweep

With all of the flooding this year, there will be plenty of interesting "treasures" to be found!

Where: Meet at River Park Parking Lot across from Heritage Farm at 8059 North River Road, Byron.  
When: Saturday, September 9  
Time: 8 am



# programs



## Early Morning Planets

See three planets (Mercury, Mars, and Venus), Regulus (the brightest star in the constellation Leo), and the Moon together just before dawn. This will be an excellent time to view Mercury.

Where: Weiskopf Observatory  
When: Mon., September 18  
Time: 5:30 – 6:45 am  
Cost: FREE  
Ages: All  
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

**Register by noon on 9/15.**

## Observe the Moon Night

We will observe the Moon, make moon-related crafts, and do some experiments!

Where: Weiskopf Observatory  
When: Sat., October 28  
Time: 7 – 9 pm  
Cost: FREE  
Ages: All  
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

**Register by noon on October 26.**

## Geminid Meteor Watch

Let's watch for meteors under a moonless sky. Geminids are bright, colorful, and can be seen at a rate of 100 meteors per hour. Dress for the weather. Bring lawn chairs, blankets, or sleeping bags.

Where: Weiskopf Observatory  
When: Thurs., December 14  
Time: 7 – 10 pm  
Cost: FREE  
Ages: All  
Min./Max.: 5 / 100

**Register by noon on December 12.**

## Hunter Education

This 3-day class covers ethics, firearms, and archery and is required by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Please note that this class fills up quickly!

Where: Jarrett Prairie Center  
When: MWF, Nov. TBA  
Time: MW-6-9pm, F-6-10pm  
Cost: FREE  
Ages: All

(Must be able to pass written test)

Min./Max.: 5 / 60

**Registration is required.**

## Beginning Fly Fishing

Bob Piro, a fifty-year-plus student of the art and science of fly fishing will teach a two-day class at the Jarrett Prairie Center. He has caught everything from cats to catfish on a fly rod, including trout, large and small mouth bass, sunfish, walleye, northern pike, salmon and salt water fish. The first class session will cover basic understanding of the rod, reel, line, leader and fly. Everyone will be practicing casting by the end of this session. In the second class, you will put your knowledge to work by fly fishing for pan fish and bass in forest preserve waters. Both top-water and sub-surface fishing methods will be demonstrated and practiced. Because the ponds are catch and release only, efficient fish release methods will be demonstrated and practiced. All equipment will be provided. If you have your own fly fishing equipment, please bring it to the class. We will need to know if you are right- or left-handed and get your contact information so that you can view some basic instruction videos prior to the first class.

Where: Jarrett Prairie Center  
Cost: \$10 / person  
When: Tues., Sept. 26  
and Thurs., Sept. 28  
Ages: 12 and up  
Time: 6 – 8 pm  
Min./Max.: 4 / 8

**Register by noon on September 22.**

# homeschool & scouts



## Prairies and People

Illinois is a unique place! We'll explore how the natural history of our area has influenced the plants and animals that live here, including humans. We'll see what has changed in the last few hundred years and discuss what might change in the future.

Where: Meet at Jarrett Center  
When: Wed., September 27  
or Thurs., September 28  
Time: 10 am - 2 pm  
Cost: \$5 / person  
Ages: 6 and up  
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

**Register by noon on September 22.**

## The Record in the Rocks

Our area has an interesting geological history. We'll investigate the different types of rocks and minerals found in Illinois, and find some samples of our own. We're likely to find minerals like quartz and jasper that were left by glaciers, and we might find fossils in our local limestone. Start a rock collection, or expand one you already have.

Where: Meet at Jarrett Center  
When: Thurs., October 26  
or Friday, October 27  
Time: 10 am - 2 pm  
Cost: \$5 / person  
Ages: 6 and up  
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

**Register by noon on October 20.**



## Archaeology and Artifacts

We'll start with an archaeological "dig" and learn how artifacts can tell us about how people used to live. Then you'll get a chance to make up your own artifact for a temporary museum exhibit! Make something based on real history or invent a story of your own.

Where: Meet at Jarrett Center  
When: Thursday, November 16  
or Friday, November 17  
Time: 10 am - 2 pm  
Cost: \$5 / person  
Ages: 6 and up  
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

**Register by noon on November 10.**

## Makerspace

Makerspace is a place to explore and invent...we'll have all kinds of interesting materials to work with, including canvasses and paints, electronics, K'Nex building sets, blueprints and materials to make mini-catapults, and lots of new projects. Staff will guide, answer questions, and help with projects, but this day is all about invention and innovation and making things you want to make!

Where: Meet at Jarrett Center  
When: Thursday, December 7  
or Friday, December 8  
Time: 10 am - 2 pm  
Cost: \$10 / person  
Ages: 6 and up  
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

**Register by noon on December 1.**

## Boy Scout: Geocaching

Learn how to use a GPS unit to mark waypoints and find caches; see how a map and compass can be used for the sport; learn about the history and how-tos of geocaching; head out to find some of the caches hidden at the preserve; and hide a cache of your own! This workshop fulfills all requirements of the badge except for leading an event for your peers...but you'll be well prepared by the end of the session.

Where: Jarrett Prairie Center  
When: Sat., September 9  
Time: 12 Noon - 5 pm  
Cost: \$5 / scout  
Ages: Boy Scouts  
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

**Register by noon on September 6.**

## Boy Scout: Wilderness Survival

Build a shelter, start fires, and learn how to survive being stranded in the wilderness. We'll cover basic safety and first aid, finding and treating water, useful plants, and how to signal for help. This workshop will cover all of the badge requirements except for sleeping in the shelter, but you will learn to make one that will keep you dry and warm.

Where: Meet at Jarrett Center  
When: Sat., September 30  
Time: 12 Noon - 5 pm  
Cost: \$5 / scout  
Ages: Boy Scouts  
Min./Max.: 5 / 20

**Register by noon on September 22.**

# preschool



*Give your kids a jumpstart* to kindergarten by enrolling them in our preschool programs! We offer opportunities for three and four year olds, as well as four and five year olds to successfully prepare for a school setting. Our Preschool is geared for a first-year experience away from home and our Prekindergarten is geared for the year just before entering Kindergarten. Both programs offer ample opportunities for learning and are aligned with the Illinois Early Learning Standards to include all aspects on Early Childhood Education. These include cognitive, physical, emotional and social development.

Children must be potty trained. Immunization records are required. You may register your child at anytime throughout the year if your child's birthday is later in the year. Please call 815-234-8535 ext. 200 for more information. **First days of school will be August 28th and 29th.**

Where: Keller Education Center  
Ages: 3-5 years  
When: Mon/Wed/Fri or Tues/Thurs  
Time: 8:30-11 am or 12:30-3 pm  
Min/Max: 6/25-Mon/Wed/Fri  
6/18-Tues/Thurs  
Cost: \$110/month-Mon/Wed/Fri  
\$90/month-Tues/Thurs  
Registration is ongoing throughout the year.

**Meet the teachers  
night will be  
August 24th!**

**5-6 pm for  
Tues/Thurs classes**

**6-7 pm for  
Mon/Wed/Fri classes**

## Free Kids Concert

### Balloon Magic

December 2nd  
1 pm

Join local magician and "Balloon Master," Brett Belleque (above), for a special balloon and magic show. Balloon fun for the whole family. Every child will have a balloon creation to take home.

**Check us out on Facebook and our website at [www.byronpreschool.com/](http://www.byronpreschool.com/)!**

Connect with us!



Register online at [www.byronforestpreserve.com](http://www.byronforestpreserve.com)



## New Museum Wins National Award

The Byron Forest Preserve District is now home to a national award winning museum! The American Association for State and Local History named the Jarrett Prairie Center Museum renovation as a recipient of a 2017 Award of Merit. The American Association for State and Local History Leadership in History award now in its 72nd year, is the most prestigious recognition for achievement in the preservation and interpretation of state and local history.

In fall 2016, the Jarrett Prairie Center Museum opened their totally renovated 4,000 square foot museum with new permanent exhibits that focused on interpreting the relationship of people with the surrounding prairie. The new exhibits tell the story of northern Illinois' vanishing local heritage resource...the tallgrass prairie ecosystem...and the complexity of people's interactions with it in the past, present and future. Corporate sponsors were Byron Bank, Prairie Forge Group and OSF St. Anthony Medical Group.

This year, AASLH will confer forty-eight national awards honoring people, projects, exhibits, and publications for organizations and individuals from twenty-one states. The winners represent the best in the field and provide leadership

for the future of state and local history. Presentation of the awards will be made at a special banquet during the 2017 AASLH Annual Meeting in Austin, Texas, on Friday, September 8. The banquet is supported by a generous contribution from the History Channel.

The AASLH awards program was initiated in 1945 to establish and encourage standards of excellence in the collection, preservation, and interpretation of state and local history throughout the United States. The AASLH Leadership in History Awards not only honor significant achievement in the field of state and local history, but also bring public recognition of the opportunities for small and large organizations, institutions, and programs to make contributions in this arena.

The American Association for State and Local History is a not-for-profit professional organization of individuals and institutions working to preserve and promote history. From its headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee, AASLH provides leadership, service, and support for its members who preserve and interpret state and local history in order to make the past more meaningful in American society.

# prairieview golf club



## Turf Notes

from the Turf Care Center

*A Quick Nine  
with PrairieView  
Superintendent  
Matt Henkel*

### #1 How did you get into the turfgrass profession?

*A combination of a love for the outdoors and also growing up working on the farm is what led me to the turfgrass industry. I also played quite a bit of golf throughout middle and high school. The fact that I could combine a little bit of everything that I enjoyed and turn it into a career is what led me down this path.*

### #2 How long have you been working at PrairieView?

*I worked under Certified Golf Course Superintendent, Steve Storz, as an intern in 2001 after graduating college. The following year I accepted an Assistant Superintendent position, and in 2011, I was promoted to my current position as Superintendent.*

### #3 What do you feel is the best part about your job?

*I get to be the first one on the golf course in the morning just as the sun is coming up. It is something that is very rewarding and energizing to me, that can't be replicated in most other professions.*

### #4 What do you feel is the worst part about your job?

*It definitely has to be the stress that it puts on family life during the summer months. I typically put in about 350-450 overtime hours from April through November and that leads to me missing out on some baseball and softball games and other family events during those times. Luckily, I have been fortunate to have some really great crews over the years that have made it possible for me to step away from the course from time to time and keep my sanity.*

### #5 What is the best piece of advice you give to your new crew members?

*I tell them that they are going to make mistakes out there on the course. Learn from those and try to not to repeat them. If they can do that, they'll become a valuable part of the team.*

### #6 How many golf courses have you worked at in your career?

*PrairieView is it as far as getting paid to do so. I was fortunate to be able to volunteer and work alongside the agronomy team in prepping Bethpage Black for the 2009 U.S Open Championship on Long Island in New York.*

### #7 What is something that non golfers often seemed surprised to learn about golf course maintenance?

*A lot of people that I talk to that do not play golf are often times very surprised to learn that we actually can move the hole location on the greens.*

### #8 What is the biggest agronomic challenge you face in managing PrairieView?

*PrairieView's greens were constructed based upon USGA specs for sand based greens. Maintaining bentgrass on what equates to a beach, all the while cutting the grass at less than an eighth of an inch provides a constant challenge throughout the season. An aging irrigation system makes it that much trickier.*

### #9 What do you do in the winter months when the course is closed?

*The offseason is spent prepping for the next golf season. All of the mowers, tractors, aerators, and other equipment has to get serviced and ready to start the year in working condition. Course work involves tree trimming and removing any dead or diseased trees as well. I also spend a considerable amount of time meeting with vendors, attending seminars, and putting together the next season's agronomic program. Finally, winter time is when I get to spend a little bit more time with family and friends and to get rested up for another golf season.*



By Lauren Marks,  
Restoration Technician

# ***Birdsfoot Trefoil***

***(Lotus corniculatus-Fabaceae)***

The summer weed season is winding down for the Byron Forest Preserve District restoration crew. One of the several different invasive species that we concentrated on this summer was the removal of Birdsfoot Trefoil from our prairies. It is commonly seen in northern and central Illinois along our highways.

Birdsfoot Trefoil is an invasive species that was introduced into the United States from Europe. It came to the United States to be used to rejuvenate agricultural lands. It was also used to prevent soil erosion along banks near highways and ditches. This aggressive pest forms dense colonies that tend to exclude other plants. The foliage of this species is mildly toxic to livestock.

This herbaceous perennial plant has round stems that are slightly pubescent (covered with short soft hairs) or hairless. Birdsfoot Trefoil has alternate compound leaves that are trifoliate (a leaf divided into 3 leaflets). Each leaflet grows up to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches long and about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch across (pictured right). The margins are smooth and the veins are faint and irregular. Its root system consists of a taproot.

Birdsfoot Trefoil can be found in full bloom from May through August. These yellow flowers remain in flower for 1-2 months with a cluster of 3-12 pea like yellow flowers that are produced on long stalks. These flowers are a half-inch long and have 5 petals. At the end of the flowering season, these flowers are replaced by linear seedpods.

The seedpods of the Birdsfoot Trefoil grow up to 1 inch long and are divided into 2 halves. The plant produces 3-5 seedpods that are attached to the end of the seed stalk. Each pod is brown to black in color and contain up to 49 seeds. It reproduces by reseeding itself.

This 6-inch to 2-foot tall plant grows well in full and/or partial sun with average levels of moisture. Birdsfoot Trefoil also prefers loamy soil (a soil with roughly equal proportions of sand, silt, and clay). This invasive species is known for attacking our prairies because of these soil conditions. This plant can also be seen in fields, pastures, roadsides, slopes of drainage ditches, weedy corners of parks, and waste areas.

The restoration staff at Byron Forest Preserve District is managing the areas where Birdsfoot Trefoil is located to eradicate it and, in doing so, provide a region for native species to survive and thrive. We are managing it by controlling and removing this invasive species, whether it is performing a prescribed burn and/or spraying herbicide. Our crew is working diligently to prevent this species, among others, from invading our natural areas.



# six-lined racerunner



By Austin Webb,  
Assistant Superintendent  
of Restoration

In early June of this year, a good friend of mine and I went kayak fishing on a lake a few miles south of Sterling, IL. It was a typical outing, although temperatures that day were predicted in the 90's, so we were glad to have hit the water early. As the morning passed, we had little luck and decided to rethink our tactics on shore. While rigging our lines, I noticed a small animal scurrying into some brush near the water's edge. My friend questioned what it was that caught my attention, and I bewilderingly responded that I thought it had been a lizard. He was as surprised by my response as I was, so we left our tackle to see if we could actually verify my testimony. In fact, it didn't take long before my friend called me to his location, proclaiming that he had spotted a lizard. Quietly, I crept over to join him with his outstretched finger pointing to an opening between some shrubs. There, in between the bushes near the water of this lake near Sterling, was a lizard, sitting perfectly still, like a statue. It was surprisingly colorful with a gleaming lime-green head that faded to brown near its haunches, yellow stripes running the length of its back, and light underside with a vibrant blue under the throat, extending onto its jaw. For someone who spends a lot of time outdoors, I'll admit that I was shocked by what I saw. I'll also admit I immediately knew what kind of lizard it was from thumbing through various field guides over the years, and only needed an LTE signal on my phone for verification. The lizard that my friend and I saw that June day, less than an hour's drive from Byron, was indeed a six-lined racerunner.

So, if you're wondering if I counted the lines, rest assured that I did not. There were six lines on its back because no other lizards range this far North in the Central United States, except for the slender glass lizard, which is legless. Had I been in Southern Illinois, I would have needed to count the lines, just to be sure that it wasn't a common five-lined skink. A skink might have let me count them, whereas a racerunner apparently does its best roadrunner impression the moment you more than glance in its direction. We came across several racerunners that day, and we would have had more luck squeezing water out

of a rock than catching one barehanded. They ran across open ground extremely fast, hovering like a plastic puck shot across an air-hockey table. For short-winded spurts it seemed as though they were moving faster than most people on a dead sprint, giving obvious backing to the name of six-lined racerunner. As it turns out, these little 6-10 inch lizards, can reach speeds up to 18 mph, whereas your neighborhood squirrel tops out at around 12 mph. Seeing, or barely seeing, an animal of that size moving at such speeds is actually pretty incredible, and an experience I won't soon forget.



The six-lined racerunner is considered a species of whiptail lizard, with a tail nearly twice the length of its body. It has adapted a tail which can break off, and later regrow, to help in evading predators. The racerunner is a supremely energetic and alert day-time hunter, feeding primarily on insects, while attempting to avoid predators such as hawks and other birds, snakes, and small mammals. They are found in a wide variety of habitats throughout their range, although in Illinois and Southern Wisconsin the racerunner seems to prefer open woodlands with well-drained sandy or rocky ground. Males tend to have blueish undersides, while females may just be white. They breed in early summer, with each active female laying no more than a half dozen eggs in her nest. The young emerge ready to hunt from birth, but lacking fully developed muscles makes them more vulnerable prey. With a cold-blooded metabolism, the racerunner must regulate its body temperature, seeking warm places to bask and shaded areas to cool. In order to survive the winter, the racerunner usually tunnels below the frost line, into the loose soil of a South-facing slope. Although there is habitat suitable for the six-lined racerunner at the Forest Preserve, no specimens have been recorded to date.

# good stuff

## Junior Girl Scouts Learn Woodworking

Earlier this summer, the Byron Forest Preserve's Wednesday Woodshop Volunteers worked for two days with Junior Girl Scout Troop 1859 from Davis Junction/Rockford on a special Girl Scout Bronze Award project. Our woodshop volunteers spent six hours teaching the Girl Scouts how to use proper personal safety equipment in the District's woodshop and operate power woodworking equipment that included saws, sanders, a drill press and other hand tools. The troop made and put together over twenty wooden bluebird nesting boxes. The project showed the girls how to learn from and work with adults of an older generation. The scouts also raised the money to purchase the wood and supplies needed to complete the project.

The new reusable nesting boxes will be placed in our preserves to be used by such beneficial birds as Eastern bluebirds, tree swallows, chickadees and wrens. The positive work experience benefitted our volunteers, the Girl Scouts and our preserve's wildlife for years to come. Members from Troop 1859 have also become volunteer monitors for one of the Jarrett Prairie Nature Preserve bluebird trails. They will be keeping track of which species of birds use the boxes, clean out old nests and keep the boxes in good working order for the remainder of 2017.

If your scout group needs to complete a project with which we can assist, call Mark at 815-234-8535 x217.



## Attention...

### Teachers, Scout Leaders, & Senior Groups

The Byron Forest Preserve District offers free guided tours of our preserve trails and museums. Custom education programs on a variety of topics are available for groups of all ages free of charge. The District also offers a variety of scout badge programs to area boy and girl scouts for a small fee (per person). Special evening use of the Weiskopf Observatory can also be scheduled for a small fee (per person) outside of our regular free public viewing times. Regular hours are year-round Saturday evenings and June, July & August, Tuesday and Saturday evenings. Call Superintendent of Education, Mark Herman at 815 234-8535 ext. 217 for additional information.

## Canoe Rentals

We rent canoes! Please call **at least one week in advance to schedule** a date and time for your canoe trip. Canoes are \$25 each with a 3-canoe minimum per rental. Paddles and life jackets are included. Call Mark at 815-234-8535 ext. 217 for this unique and fun outing.

## Let Us Come To You For FREE!

We offer FREE educational programs for any group including retirement homes and nursing facilities. Using our nature staff and nature stuff, we can come to you and deliver exciting and educational programs. Call 815-234-8535 ext. 217 to schedule a program for your group. You can choose from a variety of topics including Birds of a Feather and Animal Encounter (with live animals). Call today to book your next on-site program!

## Recycling Station

The Byron Forest Preserve, in conjunction with the Ogle County Solid Waste Management Department, has established a recycling station at the Forest Preserve.

The station accepts glass, aluminum, plastic #1-#5, & #7, tin, steel, mixed paper, cardboard, and newspaper. The bin has been relocated to the Forest Preserve's Land Management Center located at 6845 German Church Road in Byron. The station is open during daylight hours seven days per week. Please recycle responsibly by leaving the area cleaner than when you arrived. **You no longer need to separate the items in each bin.**

We are also offering a USAgain recycling bin for clean, used clothing and shoes. The bin is located next to the other recycling bin mentioned above. This bin helps keep textiles out of the landfills.

The Electronics Recycling bin has been removed. Ogle County Solid Waste Management will host an electronics recycling day on the last Friday of each month at 909 West Pines Road in Oregon, from 9am-4pm. Please call or visit the Ogle County website at [www.oglecounty.org](http://www.oglecounty.org) for more information.

## Did you know?

- Within one year, an acre of trees can absorb the amount of carbon dioxide produced by driving a car 11,000 miles (*Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension, 2006*).
- For every dollar we spend on a tree, we get a \$4 return on investment (*Trust for Public Land, 2010*).
- Trees are filters for water pollution. Trees also absorb nutrients created by human activity, such as nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, which otherwise pollute streams and lakes (*American Forests, 2015*).

# volunteers

## Tuesday Morning Group

Come join us for a time of visiting, refreshments, and fun indoor projects including sorting, collating, preparing preschool crafts and items for graduation, cutting, labeling, and many other projects. To volunteer, call 1-815-234-8535 x217.

Where: Jarrett Prairie Center  
When: First Tuesday of each month  
(September thru April)  
Time: 8:30-11am  
Cost: Free

## Individuals and Organized Groups

The Byron Forest Preserve has service and volunteer opportunities at our golf course, prairie/woodland restoration, and special events. We can arrange times and specific interest projects for you and your group. These areas can be related to awards, badges, or just for the benefit of learning to serve your community and others. For info, call 1-815-234-8535 ext. 217.

## Wednesday Woodshop Group

Come join the area men for coffee, donuts, and the opportunity to use your skills in carpentry and woodworking. New woodshop volunteers check in at the Jarrett Prairie Center before going to the Woodshop. To volunteer, call 1-815-234-8535 x217.

Where: Expo Building Woodshop  
Enter at Heritage Farm  
When: Wednesdays  
Time: 9-11 am  
Cost: Free

## Volunteer Opportunities Abound!!

If you or your group are looking for ways to help in the community, then the Byron Forest Preserve may be the place for you.

We offer many year-round opportunities to help outdoors both managing our natural landscapes with our Restoration Department and at PrairieView Golf Club with golf course operations. We also need help with behind the scenes operations by helping with administrative jobs such as preparing bulk mailings and material support for our preschool programs and special events. If you are handy with tools, our Wednesday morning woodshop volunteers are always looking for extra help. Operating the telescopes at the Weiskopf Observatory is another opportunity to help out on public viewing nights all year round. Want to learn more about bluebirds and their nesting patterns? You can keep records on how many bluebird nesting boxes are being used. We need help monitoring the dozens of nesting boxes at several of our preserves that are used to increase the populations of eastern bluebirds, tree swallows and other songbirds. Help is needed with many other projects. Call Volunteer Coordinator Mark Herman at 815-234-8535 for additional details on how to get started.

### ***This is it!***

*This is the final issue of The Blaze. I addressed the readers in the summer issue stating that we are discontinuing this publication unless enough people responded justifying the cost and need to continue it. Unfortunately, very few responded expressing interest in receiving it. Fortunately, all of the information that is found in this publication can be found on our website, [www.byronforestpreserve.com](http://www.byronforestpreserve.com). The programs and special events are under the calendar tab. The articles can be read by clicking on "Get the latest news about the Byron Forest Preserve" on the home page. Thanks again to those faithful readers!*

*--Michelle Gerke, Designer & Editor*

# directory



## General Contacts

### Jarrett Prairie Center

(Headquarters)

The headquarters office is open Monday through Friday, 8am-4:30pm. The office is closed Saturday, Sunday, and select holidays.

#### Street Address

7993 North River Road  
Byron IL 61010

#### Mailing Address

P O Box 1075  
Byron IL 61010

#### Website

[www.byronforestpreserve.com](http://www.byronforestpreserve.com)

#### Email

[raul@byronforestpreserve.com](mailto:raul@byronforestpreserve.com)

#### Main Phone Number

815-234-8535 x200

#### Main Fax Number

815-234-8635

## Golf Club

### PrairieView Golf Club

6734 German Church Road  
Byron IL 61010  
815-234-4653 (GOLF)

## Education Centers

### Jarrett Prairie Center Museum

7993 North River Road  
Byron IL 61010

815-234-8535 x200

The museum hours are:

Mon., Wed., Fri.-8am-4:30pm

Tues., Thurs.-8am-8pm

Saturday and Sunday-9am-4pm

Closed select holidays.

### Keller Education Center

7993 North River Road  
Byron IL 61010

815-234-8535 x200

Preschool is held in this building.

### Weiskopf Observatory

7993 North River Road  
Byron IL 61010

815-234-8535 x200

#### Viewing Conditions-815-234-8535 x216

Open for free public viewing every Saturday night from dark until three hours after dark. Also open on Tuesday nights in June, July, and August.

### Heritage Farm Museum

8059 North River Road  
Byron IL 61010

815-234-8535 x200

Open daily April-October. Open upon request November-March. Self-guided tours are free.

## Preserves

### Jarrett Prairie Preserve

7993 North River Road, Byron IL 61010

815-234-8535 x200

Open from dawn to dusk for walking, jogging, and nature exploration. Trail system.

### Nardi Equine Prairie Preserve

6651 North River Road, Byron IL 61010

815-234-8535 x200

Open for horseback riding, walking, jogging, and nature exploration. Trail system.

### Howard Colman

#### Hall Creek Preserve

12749 North Weldon Road, Rockford IL

815-234-8535 x200

Open for walking, jogging, and nature exploration. Trail system.

### Ripplinger/Gouker/Etnyre

#### Preserve

1753 East Townline Road

Byron IL 61010

815-234-8535 x200

Open for walking, jogging, leashed dog walking, and nature exploration. Trail system.

### He-Leo Two Rivers Preserve

6065 North Illinois Route 2, Oregon IL 61061

815-234-8535 x200

Boater's rest area with docks, picnic shelter, sand volleyball, and restrooms. Trail system being developed. No motorized boat launch.

NOTE: Some of these addresses are new so they may not show correctly on GPS devices. Please call 815-234-8535 to confirm directions.

The Barrick Oaks Homestead Preserve is not yet open to the public but will be opening soon.



BYRON FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT  
P O BOX 1075  
7993 NORTH RIVER ROAD  
BYRON IL 61010

PRESORT STANDARD  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
BYRON IL 61010  
PERMIT NO. 4



Brent Baker  
NMLS #482530  
Byron 815-234-6118



Cathy Crain  
NMLS #509210  
Byron 815-234-6055



Leah Blaze  
NMLS #482532  
Poplar Grove 815-323-1452



Kris Proudfoot  
NMLS #482527  
Byron 815-234-6115



Brian Strohberg  
NMLS #482523  
Byron 815-234-6102

# BEING A HOMEOWNER IS POSSIBLE WITH BYRON BANK!

- Get pre-qualified for FREE
- FHA/VA/USDA and more
- Best rates in the area
- Apply online and still receive the benefit of Byron Bank's local experience

Apply online - [www.byronbank.com](http://www.byronbank.com)



**Byron Bank**  
*The Community Bank for you.*

