

Jay C. Hormel Nature Center News

Fall & Winter 2021-2022
Volume 40, Issue 2



Contents

Notes from Director & President	2
Friends Membership Information	2
Thanksgiving Feast Fundraiser Info	3
New Intern Highlight	4
Mentees & Volunteer Highlight	4
Event Calendar	5-6
XC Ski & Snowshoe Rental	7
Ski Club Information	7
Injured or Orphaned Raptors	8
Facility Rental & Sola Fide Observatory	8

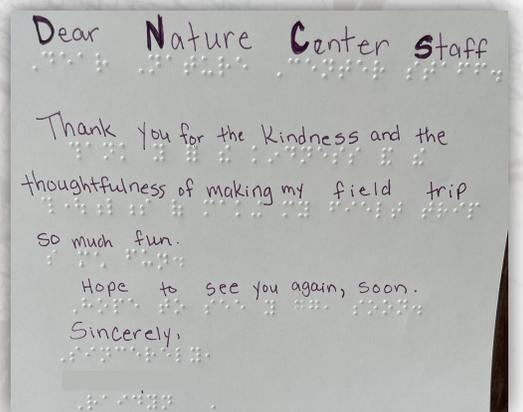


Director and President's Letter

Luke Reese, Jay C. Hormel Nature Center Director/Naturalist

Tim Ruzek, Friends of the Hormel Nature Center President

In June 2021, the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center received a thank you letter from a student. Every year, we receive many of these letters. This one was special, it was written in braille. A student with vision impairments visited with his class. Our staff paid special attention to the student allowing him to handle and feel more of the critters and props than most. They helped him get down and explore the soil for live critters. The student had an outstanding experience and our staff's hearts felt warmed by the student's thank you.



We have spent much of 2021 celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center. From the beginning, the purpose has been to get more people out into nature. We have done that by providing an outstanding place to experience forests, wetlands, prairies, and their wildlife. We have provided trails to access these areas. Some of those trails were paved to ease use for visitors. For over 35 years, volunteers have taken people on tours with trail access vehicles.

We continue to make the nature center accessible to more people. As a pandemic project in the spring of 2020, staff worked with Friends board members Lee Bjorndal and Dr. Jeff Anderson to develop a new trail map and trail signs so that visitors would feel more comfortable on the trails. The goal was to always point back to the parking lot, use more symbols than words to help people for whom English is not the primary language, and use colors to designate trails (paying attention to color combinations that might pose a problem for people with color blindness.)

Recently, we received some shocked inquiries about our post seeking bids to purchase the sugar shack. We intend to haul away the old shed and build a bigger one that is more easily accessed. It will be built on a slab and a wheel chair will be able to roll right in. There will be more space to fit more people.



This fall, thanks to the support from the Austin Eagles, the Mayo Clinic, Freeborn-Mower Coop Operation Round-Up, the Friends of the Hormel Nature Center, and private donations, the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center will be acquiring tracked powerchairs that people with mobility challenges will be able to use during all 4 seasons to explore all of our trails.

As we look to our 51st year and beyond, we continue to work to improve access to all while improving education, interpretation, and management of natural spaces. In the near term, we are working on acquiring funding to pave additional trails and replace creek crossings that need replacing. If you value the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center and wish for it to continue to serve as regional draw for environmental education and the enjoyment of nature in Southeast Minnesota, please continue to support the Friends of the Hormel Nature Center.

Become a Friends Member

If you love the Nature Center, help sustain all the programs you enjoy with a Friends of the Hormel Nature Center Membership! Becoming a Friends Member is a great way to support and promote environmental education programming in our community. Become a member for a full year with a contribution of \$30 or higher. **Join or renew online at www.hormelnaturecenter.org/friends-of-the-hormel-nature-center**

Membership Benefits:

- **\$5.00 off** each child's fee for all Summer Adventure Programs (*parent must be a member*)
- **Access** to members-only events and classes
- **An invitation** to the annual members-only bus day trip
- **An invitation** to the Friends Annual Meeting
- **An opportunity** to give a one-year gift membership to a non-member if renewed by Jan. 25th.
- **A subscription** to *Nature Center News*, to stay up-to-date on all that's going on at the Nature Center!



Mission Statement: *To enhance and encourage environmental education, scientific opportunities, and the enjoyment of nature at the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center*

You are cordially invited to attend

"A Feast for Fifty"

Friends of the Hormel Nature Center 18th Annual Thanksgiving Feast Fundraiser

Holiday Inn Conference Center • Sunday, November 21, 2021 • 4:00 p.m.



This past year has been relentless in so many ways, but despite the challenges there's a lot to get excited about for the future and the next 50 years for Austin's nature center with the Friend's of the Hormel Nature Center 50th Anniversary Fundraiser. "A Feast for Fifty", our banquet and auction, will be held on Sunday, November 21, at the Holiday Inn Conference Center in the Grand Ballroom. The celebration of the 50 year old Jay C. Hormel Nature Center this year is very special as we prepare to further enrich the lives of our community with new environmental classes and programs by providing a place to experience, learn, and be inspired by the natural world on our 530 plus acres.

The nature center during the last year has become an extremely popular place for people of all ages to "get out of the house" and walk, run, ski, snowshoe, and just relax in a safe environment away from life's stressors. Our 2021 summer adventure classes, senior specials, school field trips, nature play days, special events, and programs have swelled in attendance as more and more people have enjoyed their nature experiences here.

Sincerely,

Duane Champlin
Feast Committee Chairman



We are seeking your support for this year's event. Please consider making a donation for the 50th Anniversary Fundraiser. Your donation will help us to continue to grow in the next 50 years.

Monetary donations with various levels of giving are available:

Golden Anniversary Co-Sponsor: \$1000 or more

Ruby Anniversary Sponsor: \$500 to \$999

Silver Anniversary Sponsor: \$200 to \$499

Crystal Anniversary Sponsor: \$1.00 to \$199

Donations of auction items of good or services will be accepted—handcrafted or new items only.



Dazzling Diamond Necklace Raffle



\$20.00 per ticket

Retail Value: \$1110.00
Bendixen Jewelry

— Tickets available —
at the Nature Center or from a
Friends/Committee member

*Drawing will be held at the Thanksgiving Feast.
Need not be present to win.*

Everyone is Invited to The Feast!

Tickets are \$40 per person and can be purchased on our website or by mailing a check to the Friends of the Nature Center at 1519 5th Ave NW, Austin, MN. Any questions, please call 507-437-7519.

We are a 501-3c organization Federal Identification Number- 41-1628298. To make arrangements to have your donation picked up, please contact Duane Champlin 507-438-6862 or Gary Zimmerman 507-440-3983

2021 Intern Zone: Greta Wilkening



Hello everyone, I am so excited to become a part of the Austin community and join the amazing team of naturalists at the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center!

I am a recent graduate from Lawrence University in Appleton, WI, where I studied environmental studies and minored in French. I had the chance to study abroad in Dakar, Senegal during my time at Lawrence, a place that I now hold very close to my heart. During my time abroad, I got the opportunity to do a research project in which I was able to go to the Senegalese Ministry of the Environment (like the Senegalese EPA) and talk with government officials about their current projects and concerns, which led to a final project addressing the sustainability of the waste management system in Dakar.

During my undergrad, I worked as a land management intern for a nature reserve in Wisconsin, where I fell in love with the passionate, devoted, tight-knit community that comes with working at a nature center. There is never a boring day when working at a nature center, and there is always great company to share your adventures with! After graduating, I worked as a program assistant for a local wetland reserve where I had the chance to get more experience in environmental education, helping plan, create, and teach various educational programs and camps throughout the summer. While it went by quickly, I am very grateful for that experience as it has now led me here, to Austin!

I grew up around the Twin Cities area, so I am very excited to be moving back to Minnesota, but also am excited to explore a new area and become a part of a new community. I am looking forward to seeing you all around at the center, so don't be afraid to say hi and introduce yourself!

2021 Summer Mentees

Thank you to all of our mentees who helped over the action-packed summer months:

- Namo Afanou
- Mackenzie Andrews
- Cooper Haynes
- Rebeka Yunker
- Kaleb Yunker
- Reilly Downey
- Owen Davis
- Lillian Holl
- Henry Andersen
- Lois Adjowui
- Sydney Rupe
- Isaiah Cabeen
- Josef Riskedah
- Carys Clinefelter
- Lincoln Bunnell
- Ellen Ekins

Without these participants in the Kevin Dammen Memorial Mentorship Program, the Nature Center wouldn't be able to offer all of its fantastic summer programming. All together, these mentees put in over 850 hours of work!



Special Award Recipients

2020 Nature Center Volunteer of the Year: Harold Langton helped with landscape and mowing in the summer of 2020.

2019 Nature Center Volunteer of the Year: Terry Taylor assisted with teaching APS and led birding education at the Nature Center.

2020 Sigurd Olson Leadership Award: Terry Dorsey has been a long time Friends of the Nature Center board member, has assisted with multiple APS field trips, and led birding education.

2019 Sigurd Olson Leadership Award: Kurt Mueller has been a long time Friends of the Nature Center board member and Feast Chairman in 2019.



Thank you to all of our hardworking volunteers who have donated their time to help the Nature Center put on quality events and programs throughout the year!

Fall & Winter Event Schedule 2021-2022



Please RSVP for any event at least one full day ahead of the scheduled time.
Please check our website for current guidelines on masks during our programs.

September

- 20 (Mon)
9 am **Registration for Christmas Crafts starts online** - links on our website
- 21 (Tue)
7-8 pm **Audubon Program: Birds of New Zealand with Meredith Maloney**
Interpretive Center • Free
- 25 (Sat)
8-10pm **Last Day of Canoe & Kayak Rental**
Sola Fide Observatory

October

- 02 (Sat)
12-4:30 pm **Austin Audubon Bird Festival**
Interpretive Center • Free
- 04 (Mon)
7-8 pm **Ike's Program: Tom Trow Archeologist at the Grand Meadow Chert Quarry**
Interpretive Center • Free
- 06 (Wed)
4-4:30 pm **Live Bird Program**
Interpretive Center • Free
- 09 (Sat)
8-10 pm **Sola Fide Observatory**
- 15 & 16 (Fri & Sat)
6:30-8:50 pm **38th Annual Halloween Warm-Up**
\$10.00 per person: Purchase at Jim's Super Fresh

Want to help guide visitors
Email: angeladonovan280@hotmail.com

— Interpretive Center closed Oct. 15 & 16 —

- 16 (Sat)
Archery Deer Hunt Begins
- 19 (Tue)
7-8 pm **Audubon Program: Tropical Biodiversity: Why Should We Care with Dr. Jim Pease**
Interpretive Center • Free
- 23 (Sat)
8-10 pm **Sola Fide Observatory**
- 30 (Sat)
1-3 pm **Jewels of Southern Minnesota Art Program** • Paul & Rita LeDuc
Interpretive Center • Free

November

- 06 (Sat)
8-10 pm **Sola Fide Observatory**
- 10 (Wed)
4-4:30 pm **Live Bird Program**
Interpretive Center • Free
- 13 (Sat)
8-10pm **Sola Fide Observatory**
- 16 (Tue)
7-8 pm **Audubon Program: "A Bird Bander's Digest: Lessons from the Birds" with Margaret Menzies**
Interpretive Center • Free
- 18 (Thurs)
Give to the Max Day—Online
- 21 (Sun)
4-8 pm **18th Annual Thanksgiving Feast**
Holiday Inn Conference Center
Tickets: \$40.00
For more information, see page 3.
— Interpretive Center closed Nov. 21—
- 25 & 26 (Thur & Fri)
—Interpretive Center closed for Thanksgiving—
- 29 (Mon)
9 am **Registration for Winter Activities starts online** - links on our website
- 30 (Tue)
6-8 pm **Christmas Crafts class**
Session 1 • \$35 per person

December

- TBD: Cross country ski and snowshoe rental begins**
(visit our website for trail conditions)
- 01 (Wed)
1-3 pm **Christmas Crafts Class**
Session 2 • \$35 per person
- 02 (Thurs)
6-8 pm **Christmas Crafts Class**
Session 3 • \$35 per person
- 04 (Sat)
9-11 am **Christmas Crafts Class**
Session 4 • \$35 per person
- 1-3 pm **Christmas Crafts Class**
Session 5 • \$35 per person

For more information or to RSVP, visit our website at www.hormelnaturecenter.org, contact the Nature Center directly by phone (507-437-7519) or email (info@hormelnaturecenter.org), or stop by in person.



Fall & Winter Event Schedule 2019-2020

Please RSVP for any event at least one full day ahead of the scheduled time.
Please check our website for current guidelines on masks during our programs.

December

- 08 (Wed)**
4-4:30 pm **Live Bird Program**
Interpretive Center • Free
- 20 (Mon)**
12-6 pm **American Red Cross Blood Drive**
Ruby Rupner Auditorium
- 24 & 25 (Fri & Sat)**
—Interpretive Center closed for Christmas—
- 31 (Fri)**
Archery Deer Hunt Ends
—Interpretive Center closed for New Year's—

January

- 1 (Sat)**
—Interpretive Center closed for New Year's Day—
- 12 (Wed)**
4-4:30 pm **Live Bird Program**
Interpretive Center • Free
- 17 (Mon)**
—Interpretive Center closed for MLK Day—
- 22 (Sat)**
8:30-10:30 am **Family Cross Country Ski Lessons**
\$25 per family (includes ski rental)
- 28-30 (Fri-Sun)**
Friends of the Austin Public Library Book Sale • Ruby Rupner Auditorium
- 29 (Sat)**
8:30-10:30 am **Friends Members Only:**
Free Cross Country Ski Lessons
- 1:30-3:30 pm **Friends Annual Meeting**
Interpretive Center Classroom

February

- 05 (Sat)**
8:30-10:30 am **Adult Cross Country Ski Lessons (16+)**
\$10 per person (includes ski rental)
- 09 (Wed)**
4-4:30 pm **Live Bird Program**
Interpretive Center • Free
- 19 (Sat)**
5:30-8 pm **Candle-Lit Free Ski**
Ski rental not included
- 21 (Mon)**
—Interpretive Center closed for President's Day—

March

- 05 (Sat)**
1-2:30 pm **Family Maple Syruping Class**
Session 1 • \$15 per family
- 8-10 pm** **Sola Fide Observatory**
- 08 (Tue)**
6-7:30 pm **Friends Members Only:**
Free Maple Syruping Class
- 09 (Wed)**
4-4:30 pm **Live Bird Program**
Interpretive Center • Free
- 19 (Sat)**
1-2:30 pm **Family Maple Syruping Class**
Session 2 • \$15 per family
- 8-10 pm** **Sola Fide Observatory**

.....
Live Bird Programs: Naturalist will be taking either Guka, our barred owl, or Wiyaka, our red-tailed hawk, out for people to see and ask questions about. This will be held in our classroom one Wednesday a month from 4:00-4:30 p.m.

Bird Festival: Austin Audubon and Al Batt will be out at the Nature Center educating participants on owl calls and how to feed the birds. There will also be a self-guided hike with 6 stops along the way where Audubon and Nature Center staff members will educate you on birds and bird watching techniques.

Dr. Jim Pease will highlight birds and he will also introduce you to a variety of other critters, including amazing mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. His presentation will include critters from Costa Rica, Brazil's Pantanal, and Ecuador.

Tom Trow will offer details regarding the full significance of the Grand Meadow chert quarry, the upcoming effort to trade buckthorn for an appropriate savanna understory, the plans for using the prairie plantings for education, and some of the more recent discoveries that are intriguing researchers.

Margie Menzies is a bird bander who describes banding as a fascinating adventure in direct observation of birds in the hand. She will talk about how she gains a direct sense of place measured in the numbers of species, individuals, and passing of seasons.

Ski Lessons: Never skied before but interested in learning how? We will provide all the equipment and give you a lesson on how to cross-country ski. We will then go out on the trails with you to give you some hands on experience and show you the best starter trails at the Nature Center.

Maple Syrup Class: Are you interested in learning how to make maple syrup or where maple syrup comes from? Learn while also helping Nature Center staff collect sap from the trees to put in the evaporator.

.....
Check our website for event descriptions and registration links.

For more information or to RSVP, visit our website at www.hormelnaturecenter.org, contact the Nature Center directly by phone (507-437-7519) or email (info@hormelnaturecenter.org), or stop by in person.

Cross Country Skiing and Snowshoeing

Let it snow! Skiing and snowshoeing are wonderful ways to experience the outdoors during the winter season and get the benefits of fresh air and exercise. Enjoy the Nature Center's groomed trails, then relax with hot chocolate, tea, or coffee inside the Interpretive Center.

- Please note that we do not start renting skis until the trails are groomed. We need at least 8 inches of snow to groom the trails. It is free to use your own skis on the trails, we do not require a Minnesota Ski Pass.
- Trail condition updates are regularly posted on skinnyski.com, with links on our website.

Hours

- Monday-Thursday & Saturday: 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.*
- Friday: 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.*
- Sunday: 1:00-5:00 p.m.*

*Skis need to be returned 15 minutes before closing time.

Ski & Snowshoe Rental Fees (3 hours)

Adults—Cross Country Ski Rental: \$6.00
Snowshoe Rental: \$5.00

Children 18 & Under—Ski or Snowshoe Rental: \$1.00

Free Rental Fridays—For Everyone: 3-6 p.m.

Coffee, Tea, or Hot Chocolate—\$0.50 Donation



Walkers, PLEASE...

Do not walk on the groomed ski tracks or in the middle of the skate ski area.

Walk **ONLY** on the edge of the trail.



THANK YOU to Belita Schindler for the generous donation in memory of Dr. Richard Schindler. This keeps the rental cost for children's skis and snowshoes at \$1.

New: Cross-Country Ski Club for Grades 7 - 12

Calling all athletes and winter buffs! Looking for something fast paced and fun to do during your off-season to keep in shape? Cross-country skiing is a great winter sport for all athletic abilities. Cross-country skiing is especially beneficial for cross-country and track runners as a winter training sport.

- You do not need to know how to ski.
- You do not need any of your own skiing equipment.
- Boots, skis, and poles will be provided.
- \$40 per participant for the ski season.
- Register online starting Monday, Nov. 29.

Dates & Times

- Practice Tuesday and Thursday, 4:00—5:30 p.m.
- Jan. 10 through Feb. 23.—start and end dates are dependent on snow conditions. Ski season will run for 6 weeks with an extra week on the front or back end of the season depending on snow conditions.
- 5K fun race on Feb. 12 (dependent on snow conditions).

Coach Sydney:



Sydney Weisinger is a Naturalist at the Hormel Nature Center. She has been skiing since she was 3 years old! Skiing has been a huge part of her life, including being on the twin cities ski club, high school ski team, and skiing the Kortelopet in the American Birkebeiner for the last 3 years. Sydney has 7 years of coaching experience and is currently coaching swimming at the Austin YMCA.

Any questions email Sydney@hormelnaturecenter.org

Friends of the Nature Center Board Members

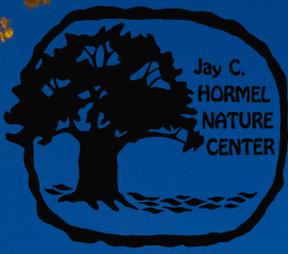
- Tim Ruzek, *President*
Michelle Meiergerd, *Vice President*
Merrilyn Berg, *Treasurer*
Rhonda Alberts, *Secretary*
Dr. Jeff Anderson
Lee Bjorndal
Diane Petrik
Mike Skiba
Terry Dorsey



Jay C. Hormel Nature Center Staff

- Luke Reese, *Director/Naturalist*
Julie Champlin, *Office Manager*
Sydney Weisinger, *Naturalist/Teacher*
Kelly Bahl, *Outreach Naturalist/Teacher*
Meredith Maloney, *Naturalist/Teacher Intern*
Greta Wilkening, *Naturalist/Teacher Intern*
Jill DeMoss, *Custodian & Event Staff*
Sue Crabtree, *Custodian*





Jay C. Hormel Nature Center
PO Box 673
1304 21st St NE
Austin, MN 55912
507-437-7519
www.hormelnaturecenter.org

Follow, Like, Review



Facility Rental

The Hormel Nature Center offers a number of spaces to rent for your next event!

- **Ruby Rupner Auditorium:** great for graduation parties, weddings, and other events
- **Gordon Lonning Resource Room:** perfect for small meetings and conferences
- **Interpretive Center Classrooms:** suitable for medium-sized events (limited availability)

For complete facility rental details, visit our website: hormelnaturecenter.org/facility-rental, or call the Nature Center. We schedule events one year in advance.



Astronomical Viewing: Sola Fide Observatory

Come out and discover fascinating facts about the night sky during our **free** observatory open house hours! Sola Fide Observatory is open to the public on specified Saturdays throughout the year (*see event schedule on pages 5 & 6*). On these select evenings, Nature Center staff and volunteers are available to assist the public in viewing the night sky (dependent on clear skies).

Address: 53680 180th St., Austin, MN 55912
(GPS Coordinates: N43° 37.000', W092° 58.550')

For more info, call the Nature Center or visit: hormelnaturecenter.org/sola-fide-observatory.



Injured or Orphaned Birds of Prey

The Hormel Nature Center takes in only injured or orphaned birds of prey, such as hawks, falcons, eagles, or owls, in Mower County. Give us a call and Nature Center staff will drive within Mower County limits to get the injured/orphaned bird.

If you find an injured mammal or bird *other than a raptor*, the closest free Wildlife Rehabilitation Center is in Roseville, Minnesota. You can transport the injured animal to 2530 Dale Street North, Roseville, MN, or contact them at 651-486-9453.

