

Elkhart Environmental Center Volunteer Newsletter

Winter 2021 / Issue 29

December

Holiday Hoorah!

Saturday, Dec. 11th 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
12:00 PM - 2:00 PM

Winter Birding Event

Saturday, Dec. 18th 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Styrofoam & Electronic Recycling Day

Thursday, Dec. 16th 8:00 AM - 3:00 PM
at Recycling Works

EEC Closed for City Holiday

Friday, Dec. 24th Christmas
Friday, Dec. 31st New Year's Day

January

EnviroFest Committee Meeting

Monday, Jan. 3rd 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Zero Waste: Kickoff Event

Wednesday, Jan. 5th 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM

EEC Closed for City Holiday

Monday, Jan. 17th Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Zero Waste: Getting Started, Kitchen & Cooking

Wednesday, Jan. 19th 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM

Snow Days & Frozen Sun Catchers

Date/Time weather dependent, please stay tuned to our [Facebook](#)/[website](#) for updates.

February

Zero Waste: Bathroom Products, Personal Care, & Cleaning

Wednesday, Feb. 2nd 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM

EnviroFest Committee Meeting

Monday, Feb. 7th 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Eco Friendly Valentine's Day

Saturday, Feb. 12th 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Zero Waste: Buying Habits & Zero Waste on-the-go

Wednesday, Feb. 16th 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM

EEC Closed for City Holiday

Monday, Feb. 21st Presidents' Day

Trails Open Everyday

Dawn - Dusk

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ELKHART
Environmental
CENTER

FEATURED UPDATE

**Don't forget to look for our 2021 Annual Report for details about our programs, events, and partners--and the amazing work of our volunteers!*

Looking Forward to 2022!

We are very pleased to announce that many of our budgetary requests for 2022 were approved! We are looking forward to getting some new land management equipment (such as a tractor and mower, mainly for our prairies--though due to the current status of the supply chain, this equipment may not arrive until late 2022), additional part-time staff (including a year-round return of our wonderful intern, Emma!), as well as some additions for the site, such as native seeds and a brand new gazebo!

We've been emphasizing land management over the past few years and are excited to see the site and ecosystems developing with more focused care. If you would like to help out, we are always looking for volunteers. In any case, we hope you get the opportunity to periodically visit the site and watch the improvements develop!

WHAT'S NEW

TERRACE GARDEN

This year, EEC staff and volunteers worked on restoring our terrace garden. The terrace garden is located on the north side of the cabin and is one of the first things that visitors see when they arrive. The terrace garden walls (behind the stones) had rotted out, so we removed the boards. Volunteers and heavy machinery added in several large boulders and additional rocks to rebuild the rock wall. We also added in a stone staircase in the middle of the garden to allow volunteers working in the garden to move from one tier to the next without walking all the way around.

We've begun replanting the terrace garden with native and annual flowers. Thank you to Lippert volunteers for helping us get all our spring bulbs planted (several hundred all planted in an hour) and adding mulch (over 300 bags in 40 minutes)! Our goal is to create a four season garden that will provide color year round. We look forward to enjoying the new garden as it blooms next year! If you enjoy gardening and would like to help us take care of our new terrace garden, please EECmail@coei.org.



PRAIRIE UPDATES: Eastern Prairie

Our eastern prairie has been under restoration for about a year. Due to multiple failed attempts to burn the prairie, we had to mow it and apply herbicide to kill off the invasive species. The prairie was planted this spring with all native seeds and a cover crop (to provide cover for areas with seeds that won't come up until the second year). The prairie was mowed again in the fall to prevent invasive seeds from spreading. We will continue to regularly mow the prairie for at least the first 3 years, as recommended by the DNR. Afterwards, we will reinstitute regular prairie burning to maintain the health of the prairie. If you would like to help with future prairie burns, please email EECmail@coei.org.

PRAIRIE UPDATES: SOUTHERN PRAIRIE

The southern part of our property was previously used as a composting site for the City's leaf collection. After Public Works closed this operation, we began transitioning this area into a new prairie. Public Works spread compost and new soil on the site and will provide native seeds (with lots of prairie flowers) in the spring for the next phase of the transition. Regular mowing will follow until the prairie can be started on a burn cycle.

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN: UPDATES

EEC staff have continued work on developing a Climate Action Plan for the City of Elkhart. This year, we once again partnered with IU's Environmental Resilience Institute (ERI) to tackle topics such as transition to electric vehicles, solar readiness, and reducing emissions from wastewater treatment.

We worked with our Central Garage Department and ERI to analyze the City's fleet and identify possibilities for transitioning to electric vehicles. We also evaluated possibilities to create and expand electric vehicle infrastructure (such as charging stations) for both City vehicles and the general public. Two public charging stations will be installed in Downtown Elkhart by the end of 2022.

We also worked with Solar United Neighbors to help promote a local solar co-op, in which a group of residents can leverage bulk purchasing power to get discounted pricing. For more information on our local co-op, visit www.solarunitedneighbors.org. We have also worked with our Building and Code Enforcement Department to make Elkhart a solar-ready community. For more information, visit www.elkhartindiana.org/solar.

We are currently working with our Public Works & Utilities Department to finish up the last module, which is focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from our wastewater treatment plant.

As we wrap up the year and look towards future projects, we will continue to work towards becoming a more sustainable community. If you have any questions, please email EECmail@coei.org.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

DECEMBER

Holiday Hoorah

Join us once again for our annual Holiday Hoorah! on Saturday, December 11. We'll be hosting two separate sessions (10 AM - 12 PM & 12 PM - 2 PM). This year, we'll be making edible decorations for the trees (and wildlife) around the EEC. Come make bird feeders from sunflower butter, pinecones, and oranges, make popcorn and cranberry garlands, and more! We'll decorate trees around our trail camera, so we can share photos of the wildlife enjoying their holiday treats. Afterwards, grab some hot chocolate and snacks in the cabin. Space is limited, so registration is required. Reserve your spot at www.elkhart-environmental-center.ticketleap.com/holiday-hoorah.



Winter Birding Event

Come birding on our trails, create a tasty holiday tree for the birds, and learn how you can help our feathered friends through the harsh winter months! All ages welcome. Registration is limited and required. Register at www.elkhart-environmental-center.ticketleap.com/winter-birding-event.

JANUARY

Snow Days



We're hoping for snow this winter! If the weather cooperates, we will host a snow maze and obstacle course. Kids can come try out a maze and obstacle course created by EEC staff or make their own! These activities are obviously weather-dependent, so please stay tuned for dates

and times as we wait to see what the weather brings. If you'd like to receive an email when we select a date/time for this program, email EECmail@coei.org with the title "Snow Days Updates."

Frozen Sun Catchers

Snow or not, if the weather is cold enough, you can join us for a fun nature craft: frozen sun catchers! We'll collect items from our trails and freeze them in ice. Families can hang their frozen sun catchers along our trails or take them home.



Zero Waste

Looking for ways to reduce your impact? We've got you covered! Join us for a variety of Zero Waste events at 5:30 PM on:

Jan. 5 - Kick Off

make your own reusable bag from a t-shirt

Jan. 19 - Getting Started, Kitchen & Cooking

make your own reusable beeswax wrap

..and more in February and March!



ECO-FRIENDLY VALENTINE'S DAY

Celebrate Valentine's Day with nature on Saturday, February 12 from 10 AM - 12 PM! Start out with a scavenger hunt to find heart shapes in the wild and collect items from the trails. Back in the Visitor's Cabin, make Valentine's Day cards from natural materials or paint rocks to decorate our trails. The program will end with a winter hike.

Hot chocolate and treats will be provided. This is a great program for the whole family! Indoor space is limited, so registration is required. Please dress for the weather. Waterproof boots and gloves are recommended. Register at www.elkhart-environmental-center.ticketleap.com/eco-friendly-valentines-day.

**Stay tuned for more events
in February!**

PAST EVENTS & PROGRAMS

FALL RIVER CLEANUP

Our annual fall Elkhart River Cleanup took place on Saturday, September 19. This year, we hosted a canoe ride/casual cleanup from the EEC to American Park from 8:30 AM - 11:30 AM, where canoe-riders met up with additional volunteers to clean up the river and shore around the park until 1 PM.

In total, 14 volunteers gave over 46 hours to collect almost 1,000 lbs of trash. Items removed from the river and shore included 11 tires, 3 barrels, 1 grocery cart, and various bottles, Styrofoam, etc.

We are thankful for our volunteers who generously donated their Saturday to make the community a better place, along with other City departments, such as Public Works & Utilities, Parks & Recreation, Buildings & Grounds, and Streets, who supported the event.

WAGGIN' IN THE WOODS

We are so excited that we were finally able to host our first Waggin' in the Woods event! Thanks to our 2020 Leadership Academy team from the Chamber of Commerce (the same one that helped get our new pavilion last year), we were able to collaborate with a local pet rescue, Tracking in the Shadows, to create this family- and pet-friendly event.

On Sunday, September 26, we had over 260 visitors and their dogs come out to the EEC from 11 AM - 4 PM for a fun-filled day. Food vendors included Biebs & Ash Smashburgers, Ruli's Pizza, and Cooper Kettle Popcorn. Vendors sold dog treats, collars, bowls, decor, and more. Dogs could run around a fenced-in agility course, get their nails trimmed, get microchipped, ask a vet anything, and enjoy our trails. At 2 PM, we hosted a Pooch Parade, costumes encouraged.

Waggin' in the Woods also helped support Tracking in the Shadows by collecting donations of high-quality dog food, toys, leashes, collars, bowls, and more. By the end of the event, visitors had filled an entire truck with donations! We look forward to hosting this event next year, so mark your (and your dog's) calendars!



Our annual Elkhart River clean up usually takes place in mid-September, when the water level, current, and temperatures are all amenable. If you would like to be added to our email list to receive updates about future river cleanup events, please email EECmail@coei.org with the title "River Cleanup Updates."

FALL PROGRAMS

DOCUMENTARY PREMIERE

We partnered with the Elkhart Public Library to host a local premiere of the WNIT documentary: *Then, Now and Always: The St. Joseph River Story*. If you missed it, or would like to watch it again, the video is available online at www.wnit.org/celebratethestjoe.

MANHATTAN SHORT FILM FESTIVAL

We also partnered with the Elkhart Public Library to host a free outdoor movie night! As part of a worldwide film festival, visitors watched several short films and then voted for their favorites. The Dutch Kernel and Kona Ice provided treats.

AN EVENING WITH OWLS

We partnered with Foxwood Wildlife Rehab and Elkhart County Parks to host an owl appreciation night! Visitors learned about local owls, saw live owls, dissected owl pellets, and went on a night hike.

SOLAR UNITED NEIGHBORS (S.U.N.)

S.U.N. gave another presentation on the latest local solar co-op, introducing attendees to solar purchasing opportunities. For more info, check out www.solarunitedneighbors.com.

HAUNTED WALK THROUGH THE WOODS

Our new annual Halloween event returned this year and, in addition to our holiday-decorated trails, featured an arts and crafts station, a Green Your Halloween station with tips on how to enjoy a more sustainable holiday, fun games, and hot apple cider, hot chocolate, and cookies. More than 100 visitors came out, despite the intermittent rain. If you missed the event this year, don't worry: we plan to grow the event next year, as well!

OPPORTUNITIES

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Interested in volunteering? We'd love to work with you!

Email Annie.Klehfoth@coei.org or call (574) 293-5070.

You can also sign up to volunteer online at <http://signup.com/go/CbUzCsH>.

EnviroFest Planning

First Monday of the month 6 PM - 7 PM at EEC
Starting January 2022

Enjoy event planning? Help us plan our 25th EnviroFest! We'd love to hear your ideas for our Kids Area, music, food, raffle/silent auction, and more. Email EECmail@coei.org for more info/to be included on our email list.

Adopt-A-Trail

Starting Monday, January 3

Enjoy spending time on our trails? Adopt one! Adopt-A-Trail volunteers help keep our trails in good shape for visitors and wildlife for the year. Trails are available for adoption by groups AND individuals! Check out more details on our website at elkhartindiana.org/eec.

Program Help

Dates/Times vary

We could use extra help with some of our upcoming programs. If you are interested in assisting, please [contact EEC staff](#) for details about upcoming programs! You can also check our [group SignUp.com page](#) for updates on volunteer needs for upcoming programs/events.

Invasive Species Removal

Anytime

Learn about plant ID and land management through training with EEC staff to identify and remove invasive plants from the EEC! Invasive plants are a constant threat to our local wildlife and an ongoing project for us. If you're interested in helping out, [email EECmail@coei.org](mailto:EECmail@coei.org). Groups welcome.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Webinar: Biocontrol Misconceptions and Untapped Opportunities

December 15 from 2 PM - 2 PM

Online

This seminar is hosted by the North American Invasive Species Management Association. Urs Schaffner (Head of the 'Ecosystems Management' section at the CABI Switzerland Centre and affiliate assistant professor at the University of Idaho, USA) will be presenting. Learn about some of the misconceptions of biocontrol, key questions that should be raised in public and scientific debates on the potential risks and benefits of releasing exotic organisms to control exotic invasive weeds, and a path forward to further increase efficacy and safety in future projects. More info and registration at <https://naisma.org/event/webinar-biocontrol-misconceptions-and-untapped-opportunities/>

Virtual Certified Interpretive Guide Courses

January 11 - February 20, 2022 Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6 PM - 9 PM

Online

The nationally recognized Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) program is designed for anyone in the interpretive field. Whether you're a new hire, a professional looking to refresh your skills, or beginning a second career, this course will aid you in improving your presentation techniques. The course combines the theoretical foundations of the profession with practical strategies in delivering quality interpretive programming to visitors. Registration is \$235, certification is an additional \$150. For more information or to register, go to www.interpnet.com/.

Virtual Purdue Extension Master Gardener Basic Training

February 1 - May 3 Tuesdays from 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM

Online

The Purdue Extension Master Gardener Program provides a learning framework for participants to increase their knowledge on a wide variety of horticultural subjects. In turn, participants volunteer and help others grow by sharing knowledge while providing leadership and service in educational gardening activities within their communities. Final exam given after May 3. There will also be a weekly local connection hour with your county's Extension Master Gardener coordinator. For more information or to register, go to www.purdue.edu/hla/sites/master-gardener/events/.

ABOUT THE EEC

The Elkhart Environmental Center is an environmental education facility that opened in 1991 on a remediated city dump. We have over 33 acres of dedicated trails, prairies, wetlands, and river access. Trails are open to the public dawn through dusk; please feel free to park at the black gate (if it is closed) and walk in to enjoy the trails. The Center offers educational programs, events, and volunteer opportunities for the public. Information about the Center's programs and events can be found online at www.elkhartindiana.org/eec or on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/ElkhartEnvironmentalCenter. Feel free to also stop by and say hi!



CONTACT INFO



(574) 293-5070



www.elkhartindiana.org/eec



www.Facebook.com/ElkhartEnvironmentalCenter



Annie Klehfoth

Environmental Programs Coordinator

Annie.Klehfoth@coei.org



Jeff Zavatsky

EEC Supervisor

Jeff.Zavatsky@coei.org

PROJECT & PROGRAM PHOTOS



Haunted Walk Through the Woods

Owl Appreciation Night
Displays & Treats



Waggin' in the Woods
Pooch Parade

