

Nature In Suburbia

Kids Flock To Nankin Mills Displays Of Native Animals

Squatting lazily in the sun, the white building, once a Civil War grist mill, sits inconspicuously off Edward Hines Drive south of Ann Arbor Trail.

Only the extra-observant passersby can spot the small sign: "Nankin Mills Nature Center."

As you approach the grounds up the winding gravel drive, a crow named Charlie caws, "Hello." Roosters crow, ducks quack, and raccoons run up to the fence to beg for a piece of popcorn.

Then bus loads of Girl Scouts and second graders pull up for their tours, and the animals are sure to be tossed a corner of a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

MRS. MARY ELLSWORTH, park naturalist, says the center gets 30,000 visitors every year. Most of the people are from local groups — school classes, Scout troops and summer day camps — but each year the guest register shows that visitors come from farther and farther away.

Occasionally a group will come from out of state, stopping while they tour the Detroit area. The register even shows a number of Europeans who dropped into the center while visiting American families in the area.

In a large pen outside the center, several types of animals are on display. A bobcat, which tries to nab the black rabbit by sticking its paw through the cage bars, is the largest animal at the center. A rare albino raccoon, a skunk, a red fox, and several water fowl are among the many other animals which welcome the Nankin Mills visitor.

Mrs. Ellsworth said that most of the animals are brought to them by school children, area police departments, the State Natural Resources Department, the humane society or by neighborhood residents.

The greatest share of the animals are found injured or orphaned and brought to the center for care. They are treated and kept until it is safe to release them. However, some of the creatures, like the bobcat, are brought in by families that have found their "noisy" house pets a little too overgrown or unusual to handle.

"The Detroit Zoo has large exotic animals, and we have a collection of the smaller mammals and animals native to the area," Mrs. Ellsworth said.

Used by Ford Motor Co. during the 1920s as a parts plant, the museum now houses several nature exhibits and live specimens. Mrs. Ellsworth conducts free guided tours through the building each day, explaining each of the exhibits to the children.

THE WAYNE COUNTY Road Commission's Parks and Forestry division developed the center and opened its doors in 1958 on a year-around basis.

A Wayne County Road Commission spokesman estimates the annual cost of operations at \$25,000. This covers three full time employees and maintenance.

During the summer months, bicycles overflow the racks out in front as neighborhood children spend a recreational, yet educational, day feeding the animals and dangling fishing rods from the river banks, while they sit on tree stumps eating the sack lunches their mothers packed for them.



OLD MILL — Nankin Mills Nature Center was once a grist mill



SOUNDS FISHY — Scott Penington and Barry

Raftery, of Westland, compare fishing tales on the Center's front porch.

STORY: Ed Wendover

PICTURES: Harry Mauthe



LIVE ANIMAL DISPLAY — Two youngsters inspect one of the birds in the center's display of live animals.

At Orchard Ridge

Pop And Rock Under Stars

By SUE SHAUGHNESSY

FARMINGTON The setting reminds one of olden days because it's an amphitheater in the strictest sense of the term. The entertainment is as up-to-date as the current trends. The entertainment in this case is the summer program currently underway on the Farmington Township campus of Oakland Community College.

POP CONCERTS are in order on Wednesday and this week's featured a rock trio. From the schedule we suspect that the musical offerings might be of the same type for the rest of the series.

On Thursday nights a series

of films are scheduled and these range in content. Two of the leading men are Jeff Chandler and Van Heflin so that should give you an idea about the subject matter.

Friday and Saturday nights the college stages a production of the Neil Simon musical comedy "You Gotta Have, I Gotta Have Love."

There's one exception in this schedule and that's this weekend (Aug. 2) when the play closes down for one night to clear the stage for a general Pops Festival featuring all kinds of musical groups.

On Sundays the college sponsors a series of musical programs — with the musical content being somewhat in the more traditional mold. (I guess that means that it's palatable if you are the parents of teenagers).

An example — this Sunday (Aug. 3) the Prime Family moves to the center of the stage to entertain.

ALL THE programs start at 8:30 p.m. in the amphitheater.

The cost ranges from nothing (Thursdays and Sundays) to 50 cents (Wednesdays) to \$2 for adults and \$1 for students (Friday and Saturday).

In case you aren't certain just how Webster defines an amphitheater, the book says: "An oval or circular building with rising tiers of seats about an open space."

The description fits the OCC setting perfectly. The tiers are built-in steps or terraces in the grass. It somehow reminded this reviewer of the type of setting that is perfect for Greek tragedy.

It's a pleasant spot to spend an evening and the entertainment content is varied to provide something for every age group from grade schooler to grandma.

A WORD of caution however. This is Michigan and there's been much rain this summer. Because of this insect repellent would be a handy item to pack before leaving for the program.

If you don't like the thought of sitting on the ground for an evening a blanket or cushion is recommended. Pack up your gear and go — just go and swat the mosquitoes, but GO to at least one of the programs. It's something that's deserving of your support and you'll enjoy the program.



LUNCH BREAK — Nature provides the setting for the lunch of this young Nature Center visitor

Bass Hit At Night

Night fishing is most productive for bass in summer's hot weather, officers of the Natural Resources Department's Pontiac district office report. Some bass are being taken from Pontiac Lake, the usual hot spot, and Lake Orion. Casting with surface lures or night crawlers are bringing the only results.

In general, bass fishing has slowed, but bluegills are hitting in the deeper waters of all Oakland County lakes.

Perch are hitting worms and minnows in the early morning hours in 8-10 feet of water in Lake St. Clair off Huron Point. Smallmouth bass fishing is good on Lake St. Clair from the mouth of the Clinton River to Huron Point, drifting or trolling with minnows and night crawlers has been the best method.

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