

Variety of wildlife seen in preserve

By James Radebaugh
staff writer

The West Bloomfield Woods Nature Preserve contains one of the most varied collections of wildlife in the area, according to preliminary reports from a naturalist who has been hired to study the preserve.

"There are some areas where you think you could be up north," said naturalist Jonathan Schechter. "You can't believe we have something like this in West Bloomfield."

Schechter began a four-season study of the plant and animal life of the 160-acre preserve in October. The study was commissioned by the township's Parks and Recreation Commission to determine what plants and animals exist in the park before any decisions are made about the use of the preserve, commissioner Andrew Bergstrom said.

The study will be completed late in the spring.

The preserve, which the township purchased in 1987 with state and local money, is south of Pontiac Trail near Arrowhead Road. It drew attention recently when hunting blinds were discovered there.

Schechter, who holds a master's in forest resources and is employed as a paramedic in Bloomfield township, recently presented the parks and recreation commission with a report of his findings to date.

Having visited the preserve frequently and camped out there for a night in October, Schechter said that the varied landscape of the preserve enables a great variety of plant and animal life to live there. Much of the preserve is hilly and wooded and it contains significant marshlands, wooded wetlands, and grass areas.

One of the most important finds has been a group of Great Blue Herons that nest in a cluster of dead

trees in a wooded wetland.

The long-necked, long-legged birds only nest in trees surrounded by water, and though they aren't endangered, they are rare in Oakland County, Schechter said. There are only two or three other Great Blue Heron nesting sites in West Bloomfield and surrounding communities, according to Schechter.

Once the study is complete, the commission hopes to build and reroute trails so that people can get close enough to the herons to see them without getting so close as to frighten the shy birds away.

"The big challenge is that we can't have a bus pull up, all the kids get

out and say, 'go see the birds' because they'll be gone," Schechter said.

The preserve is also ripe with deer, red fox, blue spotted salamanders, raccoons, owls, and a variety of woodland ducks and other birds. It also contains a variety of plant life and includes more than 25 edible wild plants, such as wild asparagus, grapes, highbush cranberries, mint, sassafras and watercress.

The commission wants to promote the preserve as a learning resource for use by the schools and citizens at large, Bergstrom said. He asks the public to be patient while the commission plans uses for the preserve and he cautions residents who visit to be careful. At least one visitor was injured when he tripped over a log, Bergstrom said.

Schechter said that dead trees and logs serve a purpose — they're often homes for the salamanders — and that they probably won't be removed. Trails can be moved to avoid them, he said.

He also said he's counting on the prevalence of mosquitoes and poison ivy near the heron nesting area to keep people from getting too close.

"There are some areas where you think you could be up north. You can't believe we have something like this in West Bloomfield."

— Jonathan Schechter
naturalist

Hills' Sarah Fisher Center receives grant

The St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center of Farmington Hills has received a grant from the Skillman Foundation in the amount of \$75,000.

The Skillman Foundation, founded in 1950 by Rose Skillman, makes grants in the areas of Children, Youth and Young Persons, Basic Human Needs, Community-Wide

Collaborative Efforts, Culture and Arts and Education.

The grant will continue to fund an Adolescent Pregnancy Outreach and In-Home Care Program for the center in 1990.

The program, which began earlier this year, serves high-risk pregnant and parenting teens in their own

home and prevents the need for out-of-home placement. More than 500 young women have been served in 1989.

Providing services such as counseling, referral assistance and information, the program continues the center's commitment to the needs of young, single mothers and their chil-

dren.

The St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center provides services to 200 children, adolescents and their families in need through its six different programs. Administered by the Daughters of Charity, the center is celebrating its 60th year of service to the community.



RAY/OD BOST/15111 photography

Lacing up

With a little help from his dad, Dennis, 4-year-old Robert Wagner of Brighton tries out a pair of ice skates at the winter sports used equipment sale sponsored by the Farmington Hills Department of Special Services Recreation Division Dec. 2 at East Middle School. The fare included skates, skis, ski clothing and toboggans.

Priority mail offers fast delivery

There is a fast way to mail Christmas packages — that many last minute shoppers may have overlooked, according to Farmington Postmaster Kenneth H. Harris.

Priority mail affords first-class handling for packages weighing more than 12 ounces and up to 70 pounds. It's fast and consistent, offering next-day delivery up to 150 miles from the originating post office and delivery in three days anywhere in the United States.

"It's the ideal service for people

who want prompt package delivery yet would like to avoid the higher cost of express mail next day service," said postmaster Harris.

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