

Farms, flowers and backyard fauna

By Lem Meiso
staff writer

Maybury State Park lets you look forward to the past this spring. It's offering two special farm demonstration programs 1-5 p.m. April 25 and May 2. Included are demonstrations of traditional wool processing from sheep to sweater, park manager Tony Klein announced. The demonstrations will be at the living farm area of the park. Entrance is on Eight Mile about six miles west of I-275, between Beck and Napier in Northville Township. You need a state park permit to get in, \$2 daily or \$10 annual.

SCHOOLCRAFT COLLEGE will host a wildflower talk May 8 and follow it with its wildflower walk May 10. The talk is 7:30 p.m. in the Liberal Arts theater, where Michigan Botanical Club members Margaret Converse of Livonia and Kay White of Farmington will speak on "Michigan Wildflowers: Monroe to Mackinac, Muskegon to Marine City." The college is on Haggerty Road south of Seven Mile. The walk is 1-3 p.m. in the nature trails of Livonia Bicentennial Park, on Seven Mile west of Farmington Road. There's no charge for either event. Call Schoolcraft biology instructor Roger Sutherland at 591-6400 for more information.

ONE OF THE regulars at a bar in the Upper

outdoors

Peninsula town of Paradise walked out one winter about a few years back, bumped into a bear between the tavern door and his snowmobile, and promptly shot it. Or so they tell the summer tourists. But you don't have to drive to the UP to encounter wildlife. In bars around here, I've seen guys who look like grizzlies.

You can attract desirable wildlife to your own homestead by planning what you plant, the U.S. Humane Society reminds us. You won't get ocelots even if you hang dead sheep in your trees, of course, but you can expect to attract whatever creatures call your immediate habitat home. Even in the suburbs, that can mean birds, squirrels, raccoons, chipmunks, possum, rabbits, toads — even deer.

In my yard, a rabbit seems to have taken up semi-permanent residence. We're getting comfortable with each other — although that may change after I plant the spinach patch. Anyway, for now the rabbit no longer is paralyzed with rabbit terror when I appear in the yard on my way to work in the morning.

The rabbit also has either improbably bad luck or a good sense of humor. It apparently loves to lure big, sloppy dogs — German shepherds, mainly — into my yard before leaving them in tongue-lolling frustration after a long chase around and around the garage.

LOW BRUSH is the ticket for cardinals. They're attracted by rhododendrons and laurels and such because they build nests close to the ground. And woodthrushes crave the dense cover of low bushes. Hardwoods like oak, chestnut, hazelnut and walnut will attract squirrels. Fruit-bearing brush like blackberry or gooseberry tends to attract birds, rabbits and — far enough out — even deer. Deer are also drawn by fruit trees.

Flowering dogwoods draw birds and a variety of small mammals, sunflowers are good for squirrels, chipmunks and birds, and bright red flowers will attract hummingbirds.

Not to mention that giving these kinds of plants a home means that much lawn you don't have to maintain anymore. THE METROPARKS have a plethora of programs on tap. Kensington Metropark near Milford will have an Easter bird walk 10 a.m. April 19. Beginners are welcome for the two-hour walk. Bring binoculars and register in advance by calling the Milford nature center at 685-1561.

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