



NOURISH YOUR NEED FOR

NATURE™

SPRING/SUMMER 2024



HOW DO YOU

Dodge?

DODGE NATURE CENTER AND PRESCHOOL



Bottom left: Veronica Brickweg climbing a tree.

Bottom middle: Mary Brickweg birding at 'Wonder Pond' with her youngest, Edith Brickweg, on her back.

Bottom right: Damien and Gianna Brickweg digging around in sand on the banks of 'Wonder Pond'.

Wonder AND Curiosity on the Trails

"Let's go to Wonder Pond, team!"

Mary Brickweg gathers her group and heads through the prairie towards 'Wonder Pond', a favorite destination at the Main Property affectionately named by her kids. A gaggle of children, including six of her own, and three other moms are at Dodge for their routine walk. Mary has been bringing her family to hike at the nature center for years.

"We stumbled upon it one day. My oldest at the time was three and I'd just let her roam and follow along behind. I loved that I could give her that freedom to just go."

Hiking at Dodge offers children (and adults) a choose-your-own-adventure experience. Mary, who homeschools her children, visits twice a week for nature walks as part of their curriculum.

What's a typical hike like with her family?

"Lots of chaos and some observing here or there. I bring the crazy, but otherwise it's not crazy!"

The group arrives at 'Wonder Pond'. While the kids are exploring the edges of the pond, peering into the water, and tromping up and down the dock, the adults have their binoculars up searching for birds—they're learning alongside their children.

Mary spent her life camping and being outdoors but didn't know much about the plants and animals around her. Walks at Dodge sparked her desire to become a better teacher for her children.

"I started getting nature study guides. One year I'd focus on trees, the next on wildflowers, then on birds—it just kind of snowballed."

Varied biomes of hardwood forests, prairie, and wetlands within the Main Property's 110 acres offer the perfect environment for observation and learning. As the seasons change, so does the experience—wildlife come and go, different plants emerge. "You get to know the area which makes it fun," says Mary. "We kind of feel like it's our adopted backyard."

For those who are interested in hiking at Dodge (with kids or not), Mary lends her advice: "Set low expectations—try it as a routine. Even if it feels overwhelming to leave the house, I am never bummed to be here."

She promises the effort is worth it. "Being here has enhanced our wonder and curiosity about the world," Mary shares. "It's been super life-giving and we are so grateful."

Did you know? Hiking at Dodge is **always free!**

Trails are open from sunrise to sunset every day of the year. Plan your visit at DodgeNatureCenter.org/Visit





From Campers to Contributors

Ella and Savannah Carr practically grew up at Dodge. They attended the Preschool, returned for field trips throughout elementary and middle school, and spent their free time helping their mom, Preschool teacher Kristin Carr, in her classroom.

Now as young adults, the sisters are giving back to Dodge by volunteering at summer camps.

Ella started volunteering in 2018 when she reached high school. "I loved camp at Dodge, but I aged out of attending," Ella says. "I wanted to share my love of nature in a new way."

Savannah eagerly joined Ella three years later. She especially loves introducing kids to the outdoors. "Seeing campers become fascinated with nature—like I did when I was their age—is my favorite experience."

Summer camps at Dodge are hands-on, sometimes dirty, and always filled with fun. Over seven weeks, naturalists

and camp volunteers welcome 400+ campers ages 6 to 14 years old for outdoor learning in woods, wetlands, farms, and fields.

For a sophomore in college and a senior in high school, summers are busy with seasonal jobs, prep for the next school year, and enjoying time with family and friends. Volunteering is hard to fit in, but Ella and Savannah make time for it every year.

"It's what I love to do," Savannah says. "I love the feeling of giving back to my community."

Interested in volunteering?

Learn more about opportunities for ages 15+ at

DodgeNatureCenter.org/Get-Involved/Volunteer

Nature Activities

MAY - AUGUST 2024

For activity details and registration, visit DodgeNatureCenter.org/Activities

MAY

1, 8, 15	Girls Explore Science	Grades 5-8
4-13	Storytime on the Trails*	All ages
9	Pride Outside	Grades 5-12
17	Foraged Foods	Adults
18	Rock the Barn	All ages
21	Here a Chick, There a Chick*	All ages
22	Here a Chick, There a Chick	All ages
23, 30	Blacksmithing Basics (Series)*	Adults 16+

JUNE

6, 13, 20, 27	Blacksmithing Basics (Series)*	Adults 16+
7	Discover the Night Science Festival*	All ages
13	Morning at Shepard Farm*	All ages
19	ROCC the City Juneteenth Celebration	All ages

JULY

11	Guided Spanish-Language Trail Hike	All ages
11, 18	Blacksmithing Basics (Series)*	Adults 16+
20	Blacksmithing Project Shop: Bottle Opener*	Adults 16+
24	Blacksmithing Date Night*	Adults 16+
26	Universe in the Park	All ages

AUGUST

10	Turtle Expedition	All ages
16	Universe in the Park*	All ages
21	Morning at Shepard Farm*	All ages
21	Blacksmithing Date Night*	Adults 16+
24	Blacksmithing Project Shop: Bottle Opener*	Adults 16+

*Located at our Shepard Farm Property in Cottage Grove



SAVE THE DATE

Night for Nature

THE ANNUAL BENEFIT FOR DODGE NATURE CENTER & PRESCHOOL

SEPTEMBER 19, 2024





NATURE THROUGH A NEW LENS

Springtime at Dodge is full of seasonal sights and sounds. Trails crunch with frozen mud underfoot, red-winged blackbirds trill from cattail perches, and ducks putter around an ice-free pond. Among the sounds of nature awakening after the long winter months are the small clicks of a camera shutter.

Every morning, nature photographer Jim Kammerer starts his day with the same question: which lens should he put on his camera? “Every day is a different walk,” Jim says. “It changes daily.”

Jim started walking regularly and photographing at Dodge when he retired, but his relationship with the nature center spans many years. He grew up in West St. Paul, planted roots and raised his family a few blocks away, and frequently brought his two daughters to explore the Main Property. “My girls told me they always felt cheated when they’d go on a school field trip to Dodge—they’d say, ‘We go here all the time!’”

In his retirement, Jim (and his wife) found that he needed a hobby. He had been a casual photographer years before kids and family but never ventured outdoors with his camera. Living within walking distance to Dodge, nature photography became a natural fit. “Now, I can’t stop!”

His photos capture a wide variety of wildlife activity around the nature center: white-tailed deer prancing through the prairie, a mother wood duck on the pond with 18 ducklings in tow, and a watchful coyote observing him through tangled tree branches.

His favorite subject to capture?

“Birds have become a recent favorite. I took an eagle photo last fall that was a highlight—it just happened to fly in front of me, and I remember standing there thinking, ‘Don’t mess this up!’”

Folks often visit Dodge to disconnect from technology and ground themselves in nature. For Jim, having his camera in hand helps him tune in to his surroundings. “You become much more observant. Everything is pretty, even light through the trees shining on a flower.”

Teachers at Dodge Nature Preschool are seeing the same behavior from their students. With miniature digital kid cameras, teacher Katie McCreary says her students are stopping to observe things they might have otherwise missed, like cracked ice on a frozen puddle. A whole new perspective is discovered.

Nature photography has a significant following in Minnesota, but it can be as simple as heading outdoors and snapping photos with your phone camera. Even an experienced photographer like Jim says he’s still developing his skills: “I’m self-taught. I still struggle with it—you always try to get the perfect picture, but I don’t know that it exists.”

Jim’s advice for the camera-curious? “I take pictures of everything, because I find it all cool; the sun on the curve of a dried leaf—that’s cool to me! Be more observant of what’s around you and see where it leads you.”

See Jim’s photography on Instagram @JimKammererPhotography

Did you know? Nature photography is always free at Dodge. Posed and commercial photography requires a media permit—learn more at DodgeNatureCenter.org/Media

Above: Jim Kammerer with camera in hand on the Farm Pond boardwalk at the Main Property.

Below: A Preschool student capturing a photo with their digital kid camera.



THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING DODGE!

651-455-4531 | DodgeNatureCenter.org

