Hawthorn Hollow Newsletter

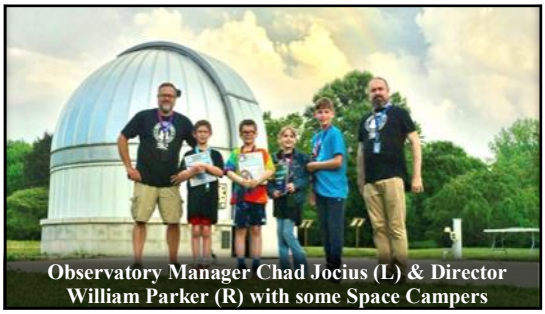
Fall 2026

www.hawthornhollow.org

TEN YEARS OF THE HEIDE OBSERVATORY

By Dr. William Parker, Observatory Director

In the fall of 2016, Charles and Kathryn Heide gave Hawthorn Hollow the gift that built a dome at the edge of the arboretum, with a purpose: southeastern Wisconsin should have a place where anyone could look through a serious telescope and understand what they were seeing. Ten years on, the Charles and Kathryn Heide Observatory remains true to that purpose.



Observatory Manager Chad Jocius (L) & Director William Parker (R) with some Space Campers



Gala Under the Stars

The early seasons were modest, with a used 16-inch telescope, a handful of open nights, and a small group of volunteers. In 2022, supporters at that year's gala and the Brookwood Foundation funded its replacement with a 17-inch PlaneWave CDK 400. The twenty-foot dome opens and rotates automatically, allowing one operator to run an evening of viewing.

Programs grew even faster than the equipment. In 2019, the observatory offered about ten events; by 2024, nearly seventy, welcoming approximately 1,200 visitors. UW-Parkside students have designed exhibits and analyzed data here, an Eagle Scout and his troop built a human sundial beside the dome, and an intern recently completed an indoor scale model of the solar system for cloudy nights. In September, nearly fifty guests celebrated the Observatory's tenth anniversary at the Gala Under the Stars.

The Observatory doesn't close for winter. December and January's nights are often the clearest of the year, and weekly programs continue: Wednesday Under the Stars from a zero-gravity chair, Through the Lens on Thursdays at the 17-inch telescope, and Small Eyes Under the Sky on Fridays for young astronomers. The season's highlight is the Gemini Meteor Mash, featuring the year's richest meteor shower, on Saturday, December 12, at 5:00 and 7:15 pm.



Small Eyes Under the Skies

As we look to the next ten years, we remain committed to keeping the sky open to everyone. That takes dedicated volunteers, partners such as UW Parkside, and sponsors who make experiences like Space Camp possible through scholarships. We welcome you to join us in this mission. Thank you for your support, and here's to another decade of exploration!

A Year of Growth in Nature Education



Growing Healthy Field Trip

2026 has been an amazing year for education at Hawthorn Hollow! From record maple sugaring field trips in the spring and a sold-out summer camp to the new Pollywog Pond pier and a successful fall season, it has been an exciting year of growth. Thank you to our educators, volunteers, supporters, schools, students, and families for making it possible. Together, we are creating opportunities for people of all ages to learn, explore, and build lasting connections with the natural world!

Since October 1, nearly 800 people, from toddlers to seniors, have participated in educational programs at Hawthorn Hollow. Tree-Mendous Adventures, Growing Healthy, Pollywog Pond, Cornucopia of Fall, and Little Hollow Hikers gave students and families opportunities to discover trees, wildlife, and seasonal changes while connecting with nature.

Designed for children ages 2–5 and their caregivers, Little Hollow Hikers featured stories, crafts, snacks, and hands-on activities. Another exciting addition was Tree-Mendous Adventures, a two-hour program introducing 3–4K students to trees through songs, movement, crafts and more. The program helps complement classroom learning while giving young students a chance to experience nature firsthand.



Tossing Seeds in the Prairie

Behind this busy season's success was our growing education team. With some school groups bringing as many as 100 students, multiple educators were needed to ensure meaningful experiences for everyone. We were fortunate to hire five part-time educators this season, helping support our growing program demandswhile Ryan welcomed his second little one into the world. Congratulations Ryan, and thank you educators!

We are incredibly grateful to the **Kenosha Women's Network, Brewers Community Foundation, John J. and Ruth F. Kloss Charitable Trust, Racine Community Foundation, and SC Johnson Giving** for helping fund our educational programs. Thank you for your generous support!

Citizen Science: Making a Difference for Wildlife

Every season, Hawthorn Hollow staff and volunteers participate in citizen science programs that help us better understand and protect local wildlife. From tracking monarch migrations to monitoring nesting birds and capturing wildlife on trail cameras, these projects contribute valuable information to conservation efforts locally and across the country.



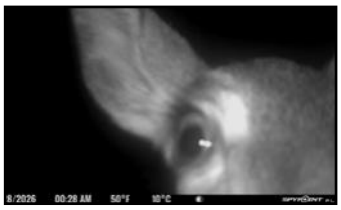
Monarch Watch

Each year, Hawthorn Hollow participates in Monarch Watch, helping researchers study monarch migration and survival. In addition to raising caterpillars, we capture and tag wild butterflies to track migration patterns. This year, monarch tagging was incorporated into the *Pollinators of the Prairie* field trip, where participants helped tag 20 wild and reared monarchs. We also successfully raised and released an impressive 48 monarch butterflies this season!

Nest Box Monitoring

Through Hoy Audubon's nest box monitoring program, we support Eastern Bluebirds and other cavity-nesting birds, including Tree Swallows and Black-capped Chickadees. Our resident bluebird expert, Ron, checks nest boxes weekly throughout the summer, monitoring eggs and growing nestlings. This year, our boxes produced **12 Eastern Bluebirds, 24 Tree Swallows, and three Black-capped Chickadees!** Thank you, Ron and Hoy Audubon, for helping support our local bird populations.





Trail Cameras

Three trail cameras across the property help us discover which animals call Hawthorn Hollow home. Two belong to Hawthorn Hollow, while a third participates in the Wisconsin DNR's **Snapshot Wisconsin** program. Recent camera highlights include wild turkey poults, mink, fawns, and many other wildlife visitors!

Consistent observations help researchers and staff understand wildlife populations, identify ecosystem changes, and make informed land management decisions. Every butterfly tagged, nest box checked, and animal photographed adds to our understanding of the natural world.

We're proud to contribute to these efforts and grateful to the volunteers and partners who make them possible! **Interested in getting involved in a citizen science project at Hawthorn Hollow?** Contact Ryan Retzke at ryan@hawthornhollow.org or Nicole Zeisler at nicole@hawthornhollow.org!

Another Successful Event Season

2026 has been another outstanding year for fundraising at Hawthorn Hollow! Our events have brought the community together in support of Hawthorn Hollow's mission while creating memorable experiences for visitors of all ages.



Concert at the Observatory

The **Pike River Benefit Concert Series** enjoyed another fantastic season, featuring TRiP, Empty Bottle Boys & One-Shot Jane, and Ben Mulwana & the Village, along with a special bonus show by One Way Out at the Heide Observatory. Our new sponsors Third Coast Retina and Crane Plumbing helped make this one of the best seasons in the series' history. We also extend a special thank-you to Maria Caravati of Equinox Botanical Boutique for an incredible 10 years of support!

September brought our biggest event, the 2026 **Walk in the Woods Art Fair**. With more than 80 talented artists, over 2,000 visitors, and exciting new attractions, including a tintype photographer, a demonstration with Overocker Woodworking, and a costumed teacher bringing our 1906 one-room schoolhouse to life, the Art Fair was a tremendous success. As Hawthorn Hollow's largest annual fundraiser, this event plays an important role in supporting our programs, facilities, and conservation efforts.



Story Tellers at Spooky Hollow

Just a few weeks ago, **Spooky Hollow** delivered its most successful year ever! With a new format featuring two consecutive evenings over one weekend, more than 1,000 visitors explored our spooky trails and enjoyed scary stories, eerie music, creepy crafts, silent movies, and freaky face painting. It was a fantastic weekend of Halloween fun and support.

We aren't quite finished yet! Our **Holiday Boutique** takes place Saturday, December 5, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Shop handmade wreaths, centerpieces, garlands, and more, many crafted with fresh-cut greens from Hawthorn Hollow. Interested in volunteering or creating items for the Boutique? Contact jhaag@hawthornhollow.org for more information. Thank you to our sponsors, volunteers, performers, vendors, and everyone who attended an event this year. Your generosity and enthusiasm make these events possible and help us continue to grow. We couldn't do it without you!

Volunteer Spotlight: Durward Bevis


Durward Bevis

Sometimes, finding the right place to volunteer is about more than giving back. It's about finding a place where you feel connected, productive, and at peace. For Durward Bevis, Hawthorn Hollow has become just that.

Introduced to Hawthorn Hollow by his friend, Hyslop Board President Dan Lyons, Durward first got involved through the annual buckthorn removal workday. With a background in chemistry, he may not consider himself a plant expert, but he has quickly found his niche helping protect the preserve's native habitats and biodiversity.

For Durward, volunteering offers a welcome break from everyday stresses. "I get a place away from all the life stressors" he said. "For me being able to come out and just focus on cutting buckthorn for a day is an almost perfect way to unwind."

While much of his volunteer work takes place in the prairie removing invasive species, his favorite spot is the wetlands, especially the peaceful area near the observation blind.

Durward has also found creative ways to contribute, including photographing plants and collecting potentially beneficial native seeds for the education and conservation team to identify. He even helps with event parking and setup/cleanup!

When asked what he would tell someone considering volunteering, Durward points out that there is always plenty to do. From removing invasive plants and collecting native seeds to helping with concerts, Spooky Hollow, and community events, there are opportunities for all interests and abilities.

As Durward puts it, "There's a lot to help out with." Whether you're passionate about conservation & working outdoors, or simply want to lend a hand at an event, there's a place for you at Hawthorn Hollow. Thank you for being a vital part of the Hollow volunteer community!

Join the Friends of Hawthorn Hollow Today!

FRIENDS OF HAWTHORN HOLLOW

HAWTHORN HOLLOW WISH LIST

Here's a few items, both large and little,
that we could use down at the Hollow.
Good condition only, please

- HEAVY-DUTY EXTENSION CORDS 5-20 FT LONG
- TWO SHURE 58 MICROPHONES
- TWO 25 FT QUARTER-INCH SPEAKER CAPLES
- THREE 50 FT LED FEIT ELECTRIC STRING LIGHTS
- TWO IPADS/TABLETS
- BIRD SEED
- DUCT TAPE
- PARSNIP PREDATORS
- HAND PRUNERS
- FLAGGING TAPE
- HAND TOWELS
- HAND SAWS (MULTIPLE)
- LARGE PLASTIC STORAGE BINS W LIDS
- METAL DESKTOP FILE ORGANIZERS

Please contact us for further details.
Thank you for your support!

Shanty Project Complete!


Gateway's Landscape Construction class working on the Shanty

Hawthorn Hollow recently completed our Shanty project in the amphitheater, building an almost 200 sq ft storage facility that will double as a concession stand during events. This will reduce setup & cleanup time for events, allowing us to hold even more! Thank you to the Friends of Hawthorn Hollow and everyone who supported this long-awaited project!

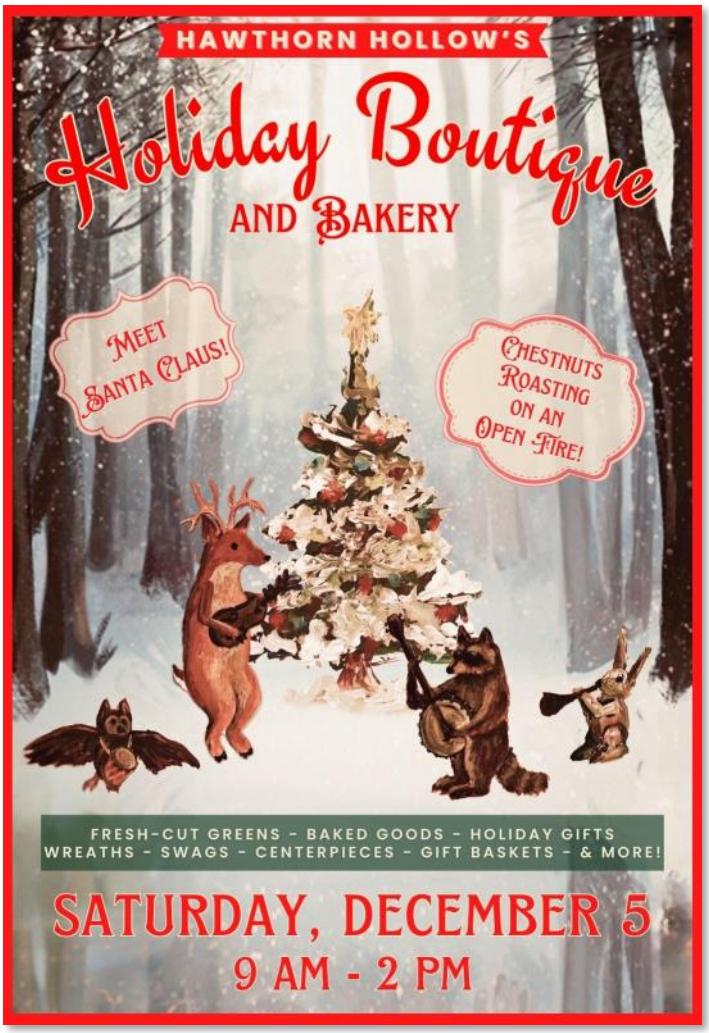
New Storywalk for Fall


Fall Storywalk

There are still a few weeks of fall left to explore our StoryWalk® at Hawthorn Hollow! Our newest story is **Hello, Fall!** by Deborah Diesen with pictures by Lucy Fleming. In it, a Grandfather and Granddaughter welcome fall in all kinds of ways as they notice the signs of the changing seasons.

The StoryWalk® Project was originally created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, Vermont, in collaboration with the Kellogg-Hubbard Library. Today, StoryWalks® can be found in all 50 states and 13 countries around the world!





HAWTHORN HOLLOW
NATURE SANCTUARY AND ARBORETUM

LATE FALL EVENTS

December

12/5 Holiday Boutique.....9 am
12/12 Wreath Workshop*.....9 am

Hawthorn Hollow is Closed Dec 23rd to Feb 28th.

The Heide Observatory will still be open for programs & special events!

Maple Sugarin' Time is Coming Soon!

Stay Tuned for Volunteer Info!

*Registration Required

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