

More Than a Walk in the Park

Photo by Don Kemp

By Stephen W. Madewell, Deputy Director

When the sun rises in Lake County, it brings forth a stirring of life as old as the ages. As some animals retire to the den, others begin a new day. As the sun climbs higher in the sky, the air warms and breezes begin to caress the landscape. Along the creeks and streams one can hear the soothing rippling of water as it moves to the lake and, ultimately, out to the sea.

People leave their homes and also begin another day. Some will jump in a car and hurry on their way while others may have the opportunity to start their day a little differently.

There is the lady dressed for work walking her dog at Concord Woods Park at 7:30 am. The runner and his daughter at Penitentiary Glen Reservation enjoy a jog through the early morning light. Then there is the photographer at Chagrin River Park trying to photograph the mink he saw there yesterday at sunrise. At Chapin Forest Reservation, you see the neighborhood coffee clutch hiking Lucky Stone Loop Trail and at Lakeshore Reservation, two women are practicing yoga.

As the day progresses, preschool and daycare centers show up to use various picnic shelters. A grandpa and a granddaughter watch the ducks and try to

catch a fish at Veterans Park. And at the Farmpark a group of fifth graders learn about how a cow can turn hay and grain into meat and milk.

On the Greenway Corridor, a young adult in a wheelchair finds a bit of autonomy once again and a recovering stroke victim gets stronger with every step. And neither has to worry about speeding cars.

Deep in a secluded place at Erie Shores Golf Course a mother wood duck watches her eleven babies drop one by one from their nest. They are one of the 2,000 animal species that live in Lake Metroparks amongst the thousands of plant species that also live in these special habitats. Some of these plants only live where it is cool enough or moist enough to resemble a Canadian or mountain climate; others may exist only on the sand dunes along the lakeshore.

These plants and animals are no different than the people that call Lake County home. They all have basic needs. All living things need clean air, clean water and food; the relative abundance of these essential things is often taken for granted. We often define the quality of our life by recreational and other leisure time activities as well as family time.

While Lake Metroparks contributes to the quality of life by providing facilities and structured programs to offer these types of experiences every single day, there is also a contribution of vital needs that makes Lake County an enjoyable, more livable space.

Ninety percent of Lake Metroparks properties are in a natural state. These natural areas not only provide habitat for animals, but also slow rain runoff to recharge ground water. Protected are millions and millions of trees that generate oxygen, absorb pollutants, muffle noise, and cool air and water temperatures.

Every day as the sun rises and a new day begins, the natural systems fundamental for life continue to function. Supporting these systems is the contribution that we have chosen to make in Lake County through the creation and preservation of the Lake Metroparks system. It is the recreational and educational access to these park areas that can bring joy to the user. But we all benefit from this agency. A hike in Lake Metroparks is so much more than just "a walk in the park." It is an opportunity to be immersed in the celebration of the great cycles of nature. 🌿