



Discovery News



Winter—2017

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 Kevin Claire—Vice President
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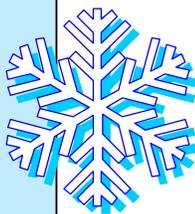
From the Director's desk...

As the vibrant colors of autumn fade into cool, crisp winter landscapes, I cannot help but reflect on another wonderful year of successes within our parks made possible by partnerships, volunteerism and fiscal stewardship just to name a few. Examples of some of our successes include:

- Hosted a Midwest Energy Community Volunteer Day where employees of Midwest Energy worked more than 200 hours within Russ Forest and Lawless Park doing a variety of work projects.
- Partnered with three Eagle Scouts to replace fire bowl seating at the Coy-Steiding Campground, added Wood Duck houses at Lawless Park and replaced old cedar fencing at Russ Forest Park.
- Partnered with the Cass County 4-H program to host Harvest Fest/Trunk-or-Treat, which created a record attendance of over 1,700 visitors to Lawless Park.
- The Star Gazers and Sandhill Crane events at Lawless Park realized their greatest attendance with more than 250 participants.
- Hosted more than 2,500 volunteer hours within our parks.

Discover Winter Nights...

Be sure to join us during our Winter Nights series at T.K. Lawless Park! This fun, festive time of tubing and crafts is always a lot of fun, and I just LOVE the hot chocolate available at the Schug! New this year will be tractor-drawn sleigh rides available at an additional cost. Don't forget to call 269-445-4456 and listen to the recording if you think it might be canceled.



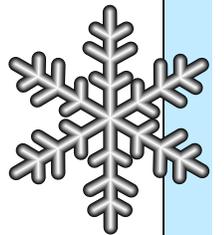
- Increased our park reservation totals by 16% from last year.

As we continue to create community through people, parks and programming, we realize we could not be successful without the continued support of the Cass County Board of Commissioners, volunteers and all those who visit our parks. That being said, the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission's mission is to preserve and protect natural resources and open space while meeting the recreational needs for all segments of our population. It is our hope to enhance the quality of life for county residents and park visitors through active citizen involvement, planned growth, and professional stewardship of our Cass County Parks.

See you in our parks,

Scott Wyman

Director
Cass County Parks and Recreation



DISCOVER WINTER NIGHTS 2017
DR. T.K. LAWLESS PARK
 Saturday Nights
 January 14, 21 & 28 and February 4 & 11
 5:00—9:00 p.m.
 \$2.00 park entry fee per person
 \$1.00 Tractor-drawn sleigh ride

Bonfire
 Refreshments
 Lighted Tubing Hill
 Lighted Cross-Country Skiing Trail (3 miles)
 Hay Rides
 Crafts / Nature Awareness

Experience Winter Fun at Dr. T. K. Lawless Park every Saturday, January 14 to February 11.
 As always, availability of certain activities is dependent on the weather.
 It's a great time to get outdoors and enjoy our county parks!
 Located on Monkey Run Street, nine miles east of Cassopolis,
 Off of M-60 and Lewis Lake Road.
 Please call 269-445-4456 if conditions are questionable!

For more information:
 Scott Wyman, Director
 scottwy@cassco.org
 269-445-4456

Sponsored by:
 Cass County Parks & Recreation
 The Friends of the Cass County Parks



Some Facts You “Otter” Know...

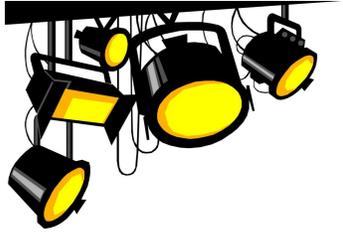


I don't know about you, but I think otters are such cute, quizzical little creatures. Who hasn't seen that adorable video on social media of one playing with a rock? So what do we really know about these captivating creatures... inquiring minds want to know... or at least MINE did!

1. Even though they have the ability to create and use tools just like beavers, monkeys and apes do, they are NOT related. Instead, they are related to badgers, ferrets, and mink (even a distant cousin of the skunk!).
2. Their lifespan in the wild is about 10 years, but in captivity, can live well into their twenties.
3. Even though we think they spend all their time in the water, they spend the majority of it on land. Sunbathing during the day, they are very active hunters at night.
4. Even though they look cute and cuddly, they are serious swimmers and fearless, voracious predators.
5. They can stay under water almost 8 minutes. They can also dive up to 300 feet.
6. They are the only known marine animal that doesn't have blubber to keep them warm. They depend on their beautiful, dense (450,000 hairs per square inch) fur to keep them warm... which makes their main predator humans. In some states they had been hunted near extinction because their pelt was such a sought after commodity... sometimes bringing over \$500 per pelt. (During the '80's pelt prices averaged about \$18.71.)
7. Although they can eat aquatic plants, they mostly eat things like amphibians, fish, turtles, crayfish, crabs and other invertebrates. Sometimes they will eat birds, eggs, and small mammals.
8. Since they are so agile in the water and on land, what eats THEM? In our area, that would be coyotes and birds of prey. They also have an intense vigilance and ability to fiercely defend themselves and their young.
9. They communicate with each other with whistles, growls, chuckles, and screams. They also scent mark (a very strong, musky odor... remember they are related to a skunk!) using the glands near the base of their tail.
10. They don't hibernate in the winter, they enter their dens underwater and catch fish under the ice, so you may not see them as much in winter.
11. Otters leave tracks with five toe marks and can usually be found around beaver colonies.
12. Males usually mate with several females in late winter or early spring. Pregnancy is about 2 months, but otters have the ability to delay the implantation of the fertilized egg, which means the young pups may be born up to a year after mating. They usually have 1-6 pups, but average 2-3. Mother otters have to teach their pups to swim.



And now, we know just what we “otter”!



Spotlight on Our Parks Board

Linda Prue

1. How long have you been involved with Cass County Parks and Recreation?

For over 15 years. First as a Friend of the Parks, and then as a board member.

2. Why is volunteering your time important to you?

I believe that I should give back to the community where I live, work, and play. I enjoy it.

3. What do the parks mean to you?

We have beautiful parks and they are such an asset to Cass County. I believe our parks are the best kept secret in the county!

4. What achievement, project or event are you most proud of during your time as a park commissioner?

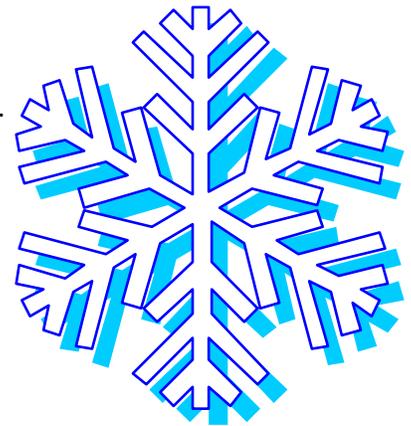
Driving the “Witch’s Ride” during Harvest Fest. I don’t know who enjoyed it more... the kids or me??? It was great!

5. What would you like to see accomplished in the near future?

I would love to see the parks be able to build cabins at Lawless Park as well as the ones we are building at Dodd Park. I’m sure the cabins will be a hit with the public. The thing I would like most to see is the Board of Commissioners levy a small millage, as allowed by statute, so the parks could expand and become self-sufficient.

6. How many hours have you volunteered during your time with the Cass County Parks?

I have no idea, but it’s been a significant amount of time and I enjoy it!



2017 Parks Pass

Are you ready for a fun-filled year at our beautiful Cass County parks? Why not purchase one of our 2017 county parks passes! In-county residents pay \$15 and out-of-county residents pay \$25... what a bargain for visiting T.K. Lawless Park as many times as you would like!!! Note– this pass **does NOT** provide entry to our special events.



After-Hours Tubing Party

Here’s a great opportunity to have an after-hours tubing party at Lawless Park which will include the use of the Schug, with a warm fire in the fireplace and 30 tubes for your use on the lighted tubing hill. The cost is \$100—refreshment option is available. Great idea for winter birthday parties, group meetings or family get-togethers. We can also provide tractor-drawn sleigh rides for an additional cost! Call us at 445-4456 for reservation information!



Cass County Parks & Recreation

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Find us on Facebook: [Casscoparks](#)

MAP Key

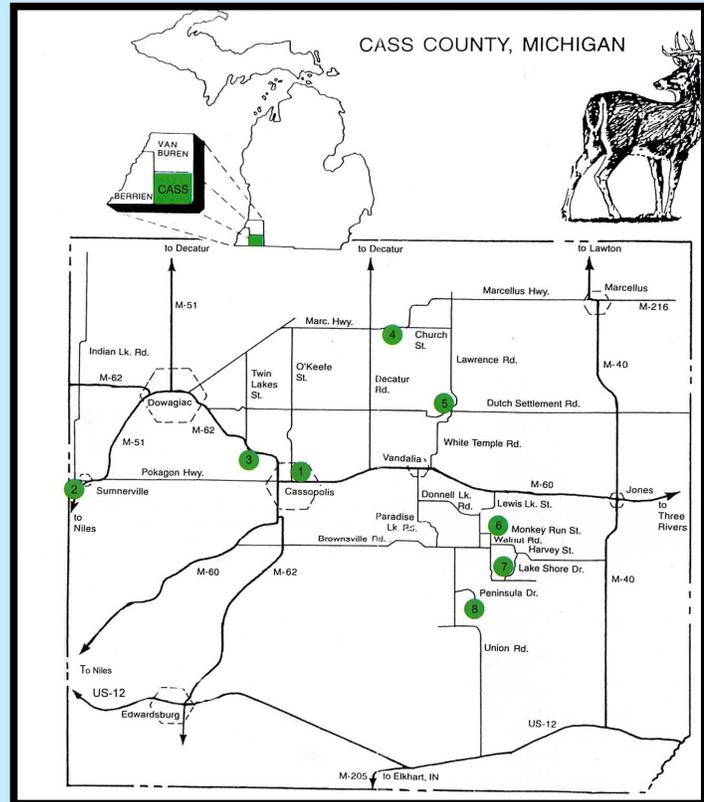
1. Parks Department Office
2. Arthur Dodd Memorial Park
3. Veterans Memorial Park
4. Fred Russ Forest Park
5. Stevens Lakeside Memorial Park
6. Dr. T.K. Lawless Park
7. Henry Sears Boat Launch
8. Harmon Parks



We're on the Web!

www.casscountymi.org/
countyparks.aspx

DISCOVER CASS COUNTY... ONE PARK AT A TIME!



Winter

Okie Howe

On a bright winter day right after it snowed
I'm off on my skis up the Old Mountain Road
I'll rest on a log at the top of the hill
And sit still a while- all quiet and still

The woods are so lovely- the snow is so deep
The whole world around me is soundly asleep
I listen and look and there's not a sound
Just the wonder of winter- it's here all around

The sturdy old oak trees and the birches so white
The maples and beeches-the shadows and light
I'm part of it all in my own quiet way
Just looking and loving each bright winter day

My winter wings are my cross country skis
I'll fly or I'll light wherever I please
How lucky I am- I'm alive and so well
And winter's my season, I guess you can tell.

Winter, Okie Howe,
written 1996, 80 years old