



Cover photo: Dallas Lake Park Prairie



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

"To develop and maintain a system of parks that preserves open space and natural areas, and offer outdoor recreation opportunities to the public."



Maple Wood Nature Center

ABOUT US

We are honored to share our year with you. We are grateful for the continued support and cooperation from our county leadership, area partnerships, and our incredible local communities. Our combined efforts have given us, and offered those who visit, a park system that is truly enjoyed. Thank you.

Mary Franke, Director

LaGrange County Department of Parks & Recreation

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Park Department Staff

Mary Franke, Director

George DeWald, Superintendent

Leslie Arnold, Interpretive Naturalist

Scott Beam, Communication Specialist/Maintenance Technician

Chris Sluyter, Maintenance Technician

Emily Wolfe, Secretary/Receptionist

Randy Merrifield, Park Ranger

Seasonal/Temporary Staff - 6 Summer and 1 Fall/Winter

Park Board Members

John Egli, President

Bob Arnold, Vice President

Ardala Hepler, Secretary

Paul Yoder, Member

Julia Wolhuter, Member

Eric Maginn, Member

County Council

Charles Ashcraft

Ryan Riegsecker

Harold Gingerich

Jim Young

Jeff Brill

Steve McKowan

Mike Strawser

County Park Properties

Cedar Lake Beach

Cedar Lake Fen

Dallas Lake Park

David Rogers Park

Delt Church Park

Duff Memorial Preserve

Maple Wood / LaGrange Nature Preserve

Pine Knob / Metz Fen

Shipshewana Lake Park

Wall Lake Beach

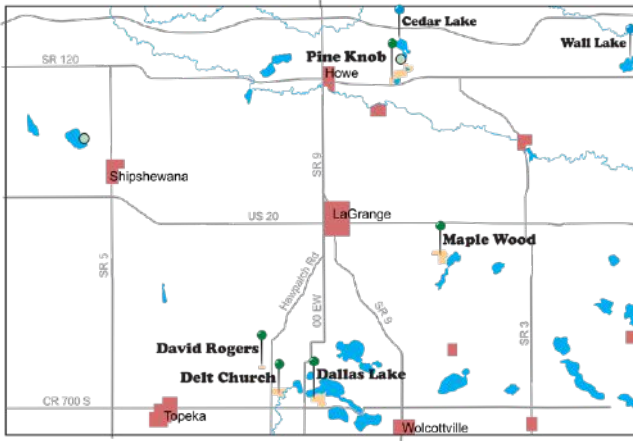
Commissioners

Terry Martin

Peter Cook

Kevin Myers

NUMBERS TO SHARE



712

The number of acres the Park Department manages. This includes nearly 400 acres of natural areas, 27 buildings, 3 playgrounds, 3 public beaches, and over 8 miles of trails and boardwalks.

7600

At least this many people follow or like our 5 Facebook park pages.



143,558

The number of people that have viewed our park pages online through Google.

400 +



Subscribers to our
Quarterly
Newsletter



Thirteen Lines

\$42,000

The amount of money spent for ADA accessibility & safety improvements in our county parks in 2021.

Rogers Park - new vault toilet

Maple Wood - new concrete pad

Dallas Lodge - new ADA height kitchen counters and rails along the porch

Delt Church - Tactile mats at trail & road crossings

Pine Knob - new ADA height kitchen counters

5300

At least this many people attended organized park events and programs this year.



6780

The number of trail feet built this year.
480 feet of existing boardwalk was replaced.
2800 feet of new boardwalk was built.
3500 feet of new limestone trails were laid.

AWARD

LaGrange County Department of Parks and Recreation was presented with the 2021 Governor's Award for Land Use/Conservation!

The Parks Department received the award for environmental excellence for its restoration efforts in the Mike Metz Fen at Pine Knob Park. The fen was acquired in two parcels: 108 acres and 21 acres in 2016, to bring the total acreage to 230 acres. Nearly 182 acres have been restored. Pine Knob park is home to at least 40 different endangered or rare species of plants and animals.



Presently: Park staff is working to complete installation of two miles of boardwalk and limestone trails that will connect to the existing trail network in Pine Knob Park.

Looking to the future: The Parks Department is also planning to construct a shelter and restroom along the trail through the fen portion of the park.

GIFTS & GRANTS

\$59,750

Grant awarded by the US Fish & Wildlife - Great Lake Restoration to Blue Heron Ministries for their efforts in the restoration of the Cedar Lake Fen Wetland.

\$ 7,439

Grant awarded by LaGrange County Community Foundation from the Fall Community Impact Fund. The grant fund will be used to replace two pieces of aging playground equipment at Delt Church Park.

\$ 500

Gift awarded by LaGrange County Community Foundation. As one of the nominees for this year's "Heart of Gold" award, Laurie Couture directed this gift to LaGrange County Department of Parks & Recreation.

\$ 2402

Donations are privately gifted to the park department throughout the year. Of this amount, \$ 1,150 was received in the form of memorial donations. The balance was given out of their love for our county parks!

The Parks Department also received a new AED Defibrillator through a grant from Parkview Hospital to replace the department's existing expired unit. Valued at \$1,700.

HIGHLIGHTS

Fen Trail Project at Pine Knob

A new two mile trail loop installation began in 2021.

Park staff completed 2800' boardwalk, which includes a bridge and fishing platform; and, 3500' of limestone trail was laid.

Plans for completion in 2022.



Photos include:
Left: Fishing Platform overlooking Duff Lake
Right: Bridge Progress



Forest School - Naturalist Leslie Arnold is having success with the Forest School Program.

A grant from the LaGrange County Community Foundation provided funds to expand the materials and learning experiences that can be offered. A canoe trailer was obtained to transport canoes and gear for water exploration.



Educational materials and equipment also included rain-suits, binoculars, magnifiers, compasses, first aid kit, weather study materials, and nature study containers.



Maple Syrup Days was modified again for 2021 as a result of Covid-related health safety concerns. The Parks Dept. did offer school tours and family/group tours by reservation.

The Friends of LaGrange County Parks hosted the annual Sap Run/Syrup Stroll for 58 participants.

The Friends and LaGrange Tri-Kappa assisted the Park Dept. Staff with a 2 day, drive-through sale event offering maple syrup, maple kettle corn, maple cotton candy and gift items.

All was a success. 246 people attended the event. Maple Syrup was sold out!!



2021 Sap Run / Syrup Stroll

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

DALLAS LAKE PARK

- New ADA compliant height counter top in Lodge kitchen
- New balusters for ADA compliance on Lodge deck railing
- New ADA compliant sink plumbing safety covers
- Maintenance Barn overhead door repair
- Swimming Pier Seasonal Install and Removal
- Replacing landscaping around Park Office with native plants
- Boardwalk repair and maintenance
- Office landscaping to include native and non-invasive plants
- Repair Lodge restroom flooring
- Playground inspections and maintenance
- Beach Maintenance



CEDAR LAKE BEACH

- Clean up fallen limbs

DAVID ROGERS PARK

- New ADA compliant vault toilet installed near barn
- Repaired cabin windows as needed
- Altered seating benches in front of stage

WALL LAKE BEACH

- Added layer of sand
- Clean-up along channel

DELT CHURCH PARK

- Interior circle drive received dust control application
- New ADA tactile mats installed at crossings
- Restoration plans continued: herbicide applications & stump removal in over 10 acres for invasive plants
- New playground mulch material, maintenance, and repair
- Replaced siding on one vault toilet building
- Removed aging Logan Field Pavilion
- Playground Maintenance: Some restorative finishing
- Disc golf course: updating course design began



DUFF MEMORIAL PARK

- Habitat restoration

MAPLE WOOD / LAGRANGE COUNTY NATURE PRESERVE

- New 1200 SF Concrete Pad between the Nature Center and Sugar Shack
- Maintain Sugar House - Syrup supplies and materials
- Cut wood in preparation for syrup season

PINE KNOB PARK

- New ADA compliant height counter top in Clubhouse kitchen
- Refinished clubhouse deck
- Fallen tree maintenance
- New post box for fee collection at archery trail head
- New 3-D Archery Targets and target inserts
- Replaced 480' aging boardwalk section
- Metz Fen Trail Project progress

PERSONNEL

- Turf mowing, snow removal, trash collection, pier installation and removal
- Maintenance, janitorial, and repairs of: buildings, beaches, boardwalks, trails, roads, equipment, playgrounds, vault toilets
- Archery Range 3-D targets: seasonal installation and removal
- Playground Safety Training and Inspections
- Frequent training on topics of health and safety in the workplace
- Stewardship of restored and natural areas: Prairies, wetlands, and woodland areas
- Supervising volunteer projects

SHIPSHEWANA LAKE PARK

- Installed bench near playground
- Clean up property
- Install charcoal grill
- New playground surfacing

EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

Summer Day Camp

By Gone Days and Nature Bound -- 4 weeks of summer day camp was full after a year of no camps. 102 children attended one or more weeks of camp. Games, hiking, exploring, playing, swimming, and learning filled the days.



Dallas Days

Naturalist Leslie Arnold shared 4 different opportunities for children to learn about fun topics on the office lawn at Dallas Lake Park. Summer Day Camp children would often attend.



Free Canoe Days

Naturalist Leslie Arnold provided two opportunities for the public to borrow a canoe and equipment to use at Pine Knob's Meteer Lake.

Family Fishing Day

Rainbow Pit, Pigeon River June 5 with 13 attending.

LaGrange County 4-H Fair

Naturalist visited with at least 32 people

Artifact ID

Dallas Lake Park Lodge September 4 with 14 attending.

Music in the Park Summer Concerts

Sweetgum Pavilion Dallas Lake Park.
July - Second Wind Band - 25 attended
August - Autumn Grey - 35 attended
September - Here Nor There - 20 attended



Hunter Safety Education - Dallas Lake Sept 14, 46, 17 with 51 in attendance. Pine Knob Oct 1 & 2 with 32 in attendance. Indiana conservation Officers & Scott Beam led the instruction.



"Our family had a great time at their Halloween gathering! It had a not so scary wagon ride and activities in the building that the kids loved."

Amishland & Lakes Annual 2 day bicycle ride through LaGrange County with one Sag stop being at Dallas Lake Park. The Naturalist visited with the bicyclists & shared information about LaGrange County Park system with approximately 78 visitors.

Not so Spooky Trail was a new event this year. This free event offered horse drawn wagon rides on the "haunted" trail through the woods at Maple Wood. Games with prizes were set up inside the Nature Center. Popcorn, cotton candy, and warm drinks completed the evening. Around 125 attended over two evenings. Those who attended expressed their happiness with this family friendly event. Not so Spooky Trail was considered a success.

NATURALIST REPORT - Attendance

Maple Wood Nature Center Attendance

In Building: This total represents every patron who entered the Nature Center for a purpose other than a program, as well as groups who used the building for private occasions.

Programs: This is the total number of people who attended public programs offered by the Naturalist at Maple Wood. It also includes school field trips to Maple Wood. For March, it does not include the attendance to Maple Syrup Days.

Days Open: Beginning in July, the hours of operation were officially changed to Wednesdays, and every 2nd Saturday and 4th Saturday. This change allow the Naturalist to travel to other properties and reduces the expense of building hosts.

	People in Building	Program Attendance	Number of Programs	Days Open
January	22	81	8	8
February	46	29	5	8
March	41	761	24	11
April	23	159	10	8
May	83	146	12	9
June	35	26	4	9
July	40	51	6	9
August	20	74	10	6
September	32	90	10	8
October	32	88	9	7
November	20	100	7	7
December	61	28	5	8
TOTALS	455	1633	110	98

	Number of Programs	Attendance
January	6	143
February	7	187
March	4	126
April	10	274
May	8	241
June	5	86
July	10	173
August	6	190
September	15	615
October	8	347
November	7	349
December	5	240
TOTALS	91	2971

Visiting Naturalist Programs

The Naturalist traveled to schools and day camps in the county. Many visits are established and repeat monthly, while others may be a "once a year" field trip.

Family programs were offered at Dallas Lake Park and David Rogers Memorial Park during the summer and fall months.

When the Naturalist visits a school, she may travel to several classrooms repeating the same program several times -- this is counted as one program.



NATURALIST REPORT - Summary

Comparing the attendance of this year with the last two years. Most programs were canceled in 2020 due to Covid concerns and restrictions. While attendance numbers for organized programs have increased, we look forward to having higher special event attendance.

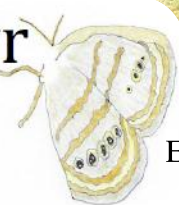


	2021	2020	2019
Special Events	646	45	4053
Maple Wood Nature Center Programs	1633	1472	1359
Visiting Naturalist Programs	2971	1351	2123
Indiana Hunter Education	83	116	93
TOTALS	5333	2984	7628



The Lonely Satyr

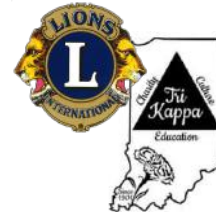
For Butterfly Enthusiasts
of Northeast Indiana



Electronic Newsletter started in May 2020.
43 currently subscribe to 7 issues/year.

PARTNERSHIPS

Friends of LaGrange County Parks
 Lagrange County Community Foundation
 LaGrange County Library
 Blue Heron Ministries
 Dekalb Horseman
 LaGrange County Leadership
 Acres Land Trust
 Indiana Fish and Wildlife
 LaGrange County Highway Dept.
 Indiana Department of Natural Resources
 Land and Water Conservation Fund
 Stroh Lions Club
 Olive B Cole Foundation
 LaGrange Tri-Kappa
 LaGrange REMC
 JDAI - LaGrange County
 Volunteers
 Hosts



These valuable partnerships, along with many others, provide funds and manpower that make possible many of the park improvements and programs. We are grateful for each and every one and aspire to continue working with so many of our valued partners as we continue to make improvements to our county parks.

SCHOOL CONNECTIONS

Prairie Heights Community School Corporation
 Westview School Corporation
 Lakeland School Corporation
 Metropolitan School District of Steuben County
 Middlebury School Schools
 Oak Farm Montessori School

Parochial Schools: 11
 Preschools: 7
 Home School Cooperatives from: Allen County, LaGrange County, Steuben County, Noble County, Whitley County, and Sturgis, Michigan

FINANCIALS

2021 Annual Budget

	Amended Budget	Spent	Balance	Used
General Fund (1219)				
Personnel	\$43,8993.90	\$412,872.99	\$26,120.91	94%
Supplies	\$48,293.09	\$41,230.54	\$7,062.55	85%
Other Services	\$49,117.00	\$46,830.12	\$2,286.88	95%
Capital Outlays	\$61,598.35	43,135.66	\$18,462.69	70%
1219 Total	\$598,002.34	\$544,069.31	\$53,933.03	91%
Non-Reverting (1179)				
Summer Seasonal	\$21,974.41	\$555.84	\$21,418.57	3%
Supplies	\$22,974.12	\$6,000.91	\$16,973.21	26%
Other Services	\$46,259.50	\$23,874.19	\$22,385.31	52%
Capital Outlays	\$8,996.00	5862.94	\$3,133.06	65%
Refunds	\$449.50	\$449.50	\$-	100%
1179 Total	\$100,653.53	\$36,743.38	\$63,910.15	37%
Summer Camp (4906)				
Recreation Personnel	\$7,245.41	\$4,758.12	\$2,487.29	66%
Supplies	\$250.00	\$250.00	\$-	100%
Other Services	\$750.00	\$120.61	\$629.39	16%
4906 Total	\$8,245.41	\$5,128.73	\$3,116.68	62%
ACCOUNT TOTALS:	\$706,901.28	\$585,941.42	\$120,959.86	83%
Encumbered Funds		\$31,894.80		
2021 TOTALS		\$617,836.22	\$89,065.06	87.4%

2021 Revenue

Archery Trail	\$5,244.80
Dallas Lake Admissions	\$9,142.68
Summer Day Camp Fees	\$4,600.00
Maple Wood Nature Center	\$9,420.00
Programs	\$3,626.00
Reservations	\$27,237.50
Total Earned Revenue	\$59,270.98
Donations	\$2,912.36
Grants	\$7,439.00
Misc Receipts	\$3,669.00
Total Revenue	\$73,291.34



2021 Capital purchases included a Chevrolet Equinox, John Deere Mower, Kubota RTV, and a Power Wagon. Older equipment was traded in for the purchase of the vehicle, mower and RTV as part of our asset rotation program.

Encumbered funds is budget money that is spent, but the order has not been received or invoiced by the end of the fiscal year. This year, encumbered funds will be used to provide playground replacement parts at Delt Church Park, vault siding, and a dump trailer for park maintenance.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

CEDAR LAKE BEACH 5★

"Nice quiet place to enjoy a little sunshine along with swimming."

DALLAS LAKE PARK 4.6★

"Beautiful beach and nice walking trail."

"Very beautiful & scenic. Excellent trail around pond lil."

" Beautiful, native habitat, abundant wildlife."

DAVID ROGERS PARK 4.9★

"Quiet little park, very nicely managed and presented. Like the log cabins and signs, shows part of the early pioneer life and spirit."

"Wonderful place! I got married there!"

DELT CHURCH PARK 4.8★

"Excellent park, could be one of the best around. Large pavilions for cookouts. Great trails and huge play set, also a scenic river."

"Beautiful and spacious park with walking trails, frisbee disc golf, large children's play area, multiple covered pavilions and more that we couldn't see on our short trip!"

"Maple Wood is a hidden local treasure!"

MAPLE WOOD PARK 4.8★

"Great little nature park!! Love maple syrup days!!!"

"Great walking trails"

"I really enjoyed it! Beautiful preserve with nice trail signs"

"Love this little piece of heaven."

"The park is a beautiful natural gem of northern Indiana."

PINE KNOB PARK 4.8 ★

"They have an amazing 3D archery trail"

"Great venue for a small gathering"

"Great park with excellent walking trails."

"Fantastic place to relax, fish, observe nature, or go on a walk. This is a gorgeous place"

"This place has set a new standard for me on what parks should be."

WALL LAKE BEACH 4.3 ★

"Such a cool place to bring little ones."

Great trails!

"Great place for family time!"

2021 Summary and Future Considerations

A great deal of staff time was spent on the new trail system at the Duff Lake/Mike Metz Fen.
ADA improvements to our park properties have been well received and appreciated.
Delt Church Park will see continued effort in creating the Oak Savanna Prairie in selected areas.

2022 Plans / Goals

Delt - Build new pavilion to replace the removed Logan Field Pavilion
Delt - Update and improve the disc golf course layout, tee pads, signage, and amenities
Delt - Install new well
Delt - Continue restoration efforts in Oak Savanna Prairie areas
Pine Knob - Continue 1st phase of Metz Fen project (trails and boardwalks)
Pine Knob - Begin next phase of Mike Metz Fen project (pavilion & vault toilet & signage)
Maple Wood - Upon completing this report, Maple Syrup Days are planning to be held in 2022
Continued invasive vegetation control throughout park properties
Equipment - Add skid steer
Public Survey
Compile a new 5 year Master Plan



Proposed amenities for Disc Golf at Delt Church Park



Proposed new pavilion for Delt Church Park

Future Goals

Evaluate funding and needs for improvements at Shipshewana Lake Park
Continue the Mike Metz Fen Project to completion in 2023
Continue property restoration and invasive control efforts in all properties