

Fun learning at the Wildlife Festival

Specialists give workshops, lead outings about biodiversity



By Katharine Fletcher

Once again the organizers of the National Capital Region Wildlife Festival have outdone themselves, giving us all a top-notch menu of talks, rambles, and exhibits from which to choose.

Several, says annual festival organizer Madeline Kallio, “are super for kids. I particularly recommend families participate in any of the nature walks.”

As well, there are some talks which kids may enjoy (and remember: it’s fun for them to ask other friends to join in the festival activities).

With a theme of biodiversity, experts from around our region are poised to offer us insights into what biodiversity actually means in the context of the wild animals and plants which we can find here in our region. Simply put, biodiversity refers to the rich web of living creatures that co-exist, in anything from your back garden through to the Ottawa Valley – or the world.

Here are my best picks for family outings. To browse a complete list of all event listings, please go to: www.wildlifefestival.org

Best Wildlife events for families

Walks welcoming families

Saturday, April 10, 9 - 11 a.m., Nepean Sportsplex Assembly Hall F, 1701 Woodroffe Avenue: Representatives from the Canadian Wildlife Federation give a free guided Walk for Wildlife. In the Pinhey Forest searching for native birds (so bring binoculars), plants and wildlife. Registration begins at 9 a.m. in the Sportsplex and the walk commences at 10:00 a.m. Afterwards there’s a wrapup

reception with refreshments. Free parking. Visit www.nationalwildlifeweek.ca or contact 613-599-9594 ext. 250.

Friday, April 16, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m., Stony Swamp Parking Lot #8, Moodie Drive, south of Hunt Club: Family Nature Walk at Stony Swamp with Martha Webber. This evening walk introduces you to spring's night sounds in the forest. Contact: 613-839-5217.

Friday, April 16 (English) and Friday, April 30 (French), 7-10 p.m., Gatineau Park Visitors Centre, 33 Scott Road, Chelsea QC: Friends of Gatineau Park present Frog Chorus: where you will first learn about these amphibians during a lively chat in the Visitors' Centre. Then everyone heads outside to see whether they can identify the different species. Everyone gets a free CD with frog calls from the Frogwatch Programme! Adults \$15 (Members \$12), Seniors/Students \$12 (Members \$10), Children \$5. Information and Registration: (819) 827-2020
<http://www.friendsofgatineaupark.ca>

Sunday, April 25, 2 p.m., McCarthy Woods, Riverside Park/ Hunt Club: Enjoy a Nature Walk with naturalist-guide Lynn Kaplansky through an urban forest carpeted with spring flowers. Trails are easy but wear appropriate shoes/pants as they may be muddy. Meet in mall parking lot at McCarthy Rd. and Paul Anka Drive. Contact: 613-731-6141

Presentations older kids and teens can enjoy

Wed, April 7, 6 - 9:30 p.m.: Canadian Museum of Nature, Metcalfe and McLeod streets: Older kids and teens love to be included in grown-up lectures. Several specialists including biologists from Parks Canada are presenting a Forum on Biodiversity. Discover what biodiversity means, how climate change will affect biodiversity, and how invasive species affect our native ecosystems. Browse many information tables for displays, handouts and refreshments. Contact 613-831-2253 or www.ncrwildlifefestival.org

Thurs, April 8, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., Ottawa Public Library – Stittsville Branch, 1637 Stittsville Main: Sharon Kirsch, author of *What Species of Creatures: Animal Relations from the New World* asks us whether we've ever imagined sleeping with a muskrat up our sleeve – or building a lodge for a pet beaver! This fun-sounding talk promises to reveal some amazing encounters between the first European visitors to our part of the New World and the wild animals they found and befriended. Free admission; contact 613-836-3381

Monday, April 12, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., Ottawa Public Library – Carlingwood Branch, 281 Woodroffe Avenue: Join France Rivet for her compelling, family-oriented talk on beluga whales: Somerset Island: White Ghosts Country. Every summer hundreds, if not thousands, of these amazing animals congregate in the Cunningham Inlet estuary. They come here to rub against the rocky bottom to moult their skin. Free admission. Reservations and information 613-725-2449.

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