



Feeding the Ambassadors

An Eastern milk snake with injuries from an encounter with a predator was found at Havenwoods State Forest last summer. The snake was taken inside the nature center and received treatment and a diet of a few small mice each month to help it recover.

The milk snake now lives inside the nature center with 16 other animals.

Some of them were dropped off by people who could not properly care for them, and others were seized by law enforcement officers investigating illegal possession of endangered animals. Many animals that had been injured and treated, or raised in captivity, are no longer able to live on their own in the wild.

The nature center's 17 animals serve as ambassadors for their species, giving visitors the opportunity to see them up close and learn about their role in the natural environment. Havenwoods Superintendent Angela Vickio said.

Care and feeding of the ambassadors, including cleaning of the display cases, takes up to 20 hours of staff time each week. And the cost of food, nutritional supplements, veterinary checkups and medications, and display case cleaning supplies amounts to \$4,000 to \$6,000 a year, Angela said.

A veterinary service – with staff trained to care for reptiles, amphibians, small mammals, and birds – checks on the health of the ambassadors.

The need to control humidity and temperature in the cases, as well as purchase of habitat components for display cases, are additional costs.



This is Millie, an eastern fox snake that was found injured at Havenwoods during last summer's Bioblitz. Photo: Don Behm

The public is encouraged to help the Friends of Havenwoods pay the costs of keeping the ambassadors healthy. See page 3 for details. You can watch the animals being fed from 1 to 2 p.m. on the last Saturday of every month.

The largest of the animals, a snapping turtle named Pearl, resides at the center of the lobby inside a glass display case with a water tank. Names were given to the 17 animals so that veterinarians could track their individual care and health history. *(cont. next page)*

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Helping keep the ambassadors healthy

Public donations of \$1,666.48 in 2022 paid for costs of the material needed to provide the snapping turtle a case suitable for its size and mobility.

Three box turtles, a terrestrial species, also live in the nature center.

One of them is a 3-toed box turtle known as Box Ann. At 63 years old, it is the oldest of Havenwood's indoor residents. The other two terrestrials are ornate box turtles.

The three box turtles are served meals of vegetables, fruit, and protein on slate plates. As they take turnip greens and other food off the plate, the slate files their sharp beaks and claws. Protein can be a few meal worms or a roach.

The nature center's aquatic turtles are fed a much different diet.

The snapping turtle is given a variety of pellets containing nutrients and dehydrated insects, Grant Wright, a staff educator and property ranger, said. Those pellets also are on the menu for the Blanding's turtle, two painted turtles, and an eastern musk turtle.

A tiger salamander, American toad, and two Cope's gray tree frogs dine on meal worms, and a roach or cricket.

Princess, ornate box turtle found injured on the land, eating squash off slate plate. Slate files down sharp beak and claws of turtle as it takes food. Photo: Don Behm



Grant and other staff raise meal worms to cut costs. They have not been as successful in raising roaches. A Western hognose and Eastern fox snake are offered a dead mouse at mealtimes.

On a recent Saturday, Grant held a nightcrawler above the Butler's garter snake as it slowly swallowed. The helping hand ensures the nightcrawler does not wiggle free. The garter snake is too weak to eat on its own after recent illnesses due to a parasite and an enlarged heart.

During educational programs, staff remind participants of the need to keep wildlife in the wild to ensure those species live on. For the center's animals that cannot be released back to the wild, the Havenwoods staff encourages you to donate to their care to ensure the ambassadors continue to educate visitors.



Grant Wright lifting Pearl, a snapping turtle, out of a display tank in the nature center in preparation for feeding at Havenwoods State Forest. Photo: Don Behm

Have you ever wanted to see a turtle eat? Or see a snake up close? Come visit the animals as they eat their lunch on the last Saturdays of each month from 1-2:30 p.m.

Donate to Animal Care Costs

The Friends of Havenwoods State Forest is asking its members and supporters of the state's only urban forest to contribute to the costs of feeding and caring for the 17 animals living in the nature center.

Forest staff spend more than \$4,000 a year on food, veterinary visits, and display case cleaning supplies. Staff also buy special bulbs for heat lamps, water filters and bedding for snakes. They have a wish list of habitat improvements, such as climbing branches for snakes, plants for aquariums and terrariums, and other enhancements for display cases.

You may send a check made out to Friends of Havenwoods, write animal care on the "For" line and mail it to: Friends of Havenwoods, 6141 North Hopkins St., Milwaukee, WI 53209. Or you can go online to

<https://www.friendsofhavenwoods.org/donate> and click on "\$Custom Amount" to enter your donation. Then click on "Write us a comment" and type in "animal care" in the space provided.



Top, painted turtle. Photo: Sophie Detweiler.



Bottom, sharing learning time with turtles who live in the nature center at Havenwoods State Forest. Photo: Wisconsin DNR

MOHEE Returns



MOHEE 2023. Photo: Wisconsin DNR

The Midwest Outdoor Heritage Education Expo (MOHEE), a free one-day outdoor skills field trip for fourth to seventh graders will return to Havenwoods State Forest from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on May 8, 2024.

Around 1,000 students are expected to attend. Pre-registration is required. For information, call 608-358-1708.

To register online, go to www.ohedYes.org, click on the Events tab, then select MOHEE. At that website, you also can view a video of 2023 MOHEE events at Havenwoods and the MacKenzie Center at Poynette.

New Date for Candlelight Hike Saturday, February 3

You are invited to enjoy a leisurely hike in the soft glow of candlelight, then warm up with a mug of hot cocoa and s'mores at Havenwoods State Forest on Saturday, Feb. 3.

Forest staff and volunteers will light a 0.75-mile section of trail starting at the nature center.

Hiking is scheduled from 5 to 7 p.m. Wear boots and dress for the weather. Snowshoes will be available if the snow is deep enough.

This event is free and open to the public.





Friends of Havenwoods, Inc.
6141 North Hopkins St.
Milwaukee, WI 53209

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Nature Center Hours

8:30 a.m.—4 p.m.

Tuesday thru Saturday

The grounds are open 6 a.m.—8 p.m.
If you will need to enter the building
please call 414-527-0232 to make sure
the staff are not busy elsewhere.

*Newsletter volunteers: Don Behm
and Chris McLaughlin*

Friends of Havenwoods Membership

Become a member! Go to www.friendsofhavenwoods.org/donate
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Friends of Havenwoods, Inc.
6141 N. Hopkins Street
Milwaukee, WI 53209

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