

Traveler

Winter – indoors and out

Kathryn A. Kahler

Driving might take extra caution and daylight may be at a premium, but there's no reason to not get out for a day-trip or two this winter. Events at state parks, nature centers and outdoor venues across the state await you, or load up your skis, boards or snowshoes for a day on the slopes or trails. Here's a sampling we've found to jumpstart your plans. For more DNR-sponsored events, go to dnr.wi.gov and search for "parks calendar." Click on "Get outdoors! Nature Programs and Events Calendar" and narrow your search by activity type, location or date range.



Enjoy a horse-drawn carriage ride around Heritage Hill State Park.

HERITAGE HILL STATE PARK

Staff at the **Kettle Moraine State Forest – Northern Unit**, Ice Age Visitor Center, greet young and old for indoor storytime and crafting sessions. "Chick-a-dee-dee-dee Nature Storytime" (Thursday, Dec. 1, 6-7 p.m. and Friday, Dec. 2, 9:30-10:30 a.m.) is for 3- to 6-year-olds with accompanying adults. Meet at the Ice Age Visitor Center for an hour of nature fun. Children ages 6 to 12 will love creating a gift from nature at "Gifts from the Heart of Nature" (Saturday, Dec. 10, 10 a.m. to noon). To ensure plenty of supplies, call 920-533-8322 by Dec. 9. To sign up or get more information, call 920-533-8322 or email jackie.scharfenberg@wisconsin.gov.

Join the folks at the **Aldo Leo-**

pold Foundation, Baraboo, for "Sandhill Crane Congregation" (Dec. 2 and 3, 3-5 p.m.). Each fall, thousands of sandhill cranes use the sandbars and islands in the Wisconsin River



Sandhill cranes gather on sandbars in the Wisconsin River each fall.

ROBERT ROLLEY

for staging prior to migration. World-renowned bird expert Dr. Stan Temple will lead the program from the premier vantage point behind the Aldo Leopold Shack. Each date is limited to 25 people and advance registration is required. Call 608-355-0279, visit aldoleopold.org or email anna@aldoleopold.org.

Experience the magic of a mid-19th-century Christmas at "**A Wade House Christmas,**" in Greenbush (Dec. 3-4 and 10-11, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.). Guests will see rooms decked with fresh evergreen garlands, play games for young and old and hear stories from yesterday. Hop on a horse-drawn wagon ride for an even more memorable day. For more information, call 920-526-3271, email wadehouse@wisconsinhistory.org or visit wadehouse.wisconsinhistory.org/.

Spend a few hours this holiday season surrounded by the natural beauty of a **Natural Christmas, at the Ridges Sanctuary**, Bailey's Harbor (Dec. 10, 3-6 p.m.). Stroll the softly lit Hidden Brook Boardwalk and join us in our beautifully decorated Kaye Cabin, while sipping on warm cider, eating delicious cookies and listening to holiday music. This program offers a wreath-making workshop, holiday crafts, and even marshmallows and chestnuts around the open fire. Guided hikes and tours of the Range Light are available throughout the event. Admission to Natural Christmas is free. Wreath-making is \$10, which includes materials for one wreath. Additional wreaths and swags are \$5 each. Call 920-

839-2802, visit ridgessanctuary.org, or email info@ridgessanctuary.org.

Head over to **Heritage Hill State Historical Park** in Green Bay to celebrate "The Spirit of Christmas Past" (Saturday, Dec. 10 and 17, noon to 6 p.m.). Learn about how Christmas became an American tradition and how it was celebrated during different periods of Wisconsin's early history. Warm up near the fire as you listen to Christmas stories written more than 100 years ago. Enjoy seasonal music performed by local musicians and choirs. Kids, make a Christmas craft and meet St. Nicholas for a treat and family photo. See the beauty of the many Christmas trees donated from local tree farms and decorated by groups from the community. Enjoy a horse-drawn wagon ride around the park, and warm up with hot chocolate from the concessions stand. A per-person admission is charged for this event. Call 920-448-5150, email info@heritagehillgb.org or visit heritagehillgb.org/ to sign up or get more information.

A crisp hike under the full





Experience the legendary Birkie Trail without the competition.

AMERICAN BIRKBEINER SKI FOUNDATION © RANDOLPH

moon is a Wisconsin experience not to be missed. Join the **Lodi Valley Chapter of the Ice Age Trail Alliance** (Tuesday, Dec. 13, 7-9 p.m.) for a 2-mile round-trip walk and a great view of the moon over Lake Wisconsin and Paradise Island. Dress for the weather, bring a flashlight or headlamp and leash your pooch, if you'd like. Meet at the ColSac Ferry parking area (West Point). For start directions, visit <https://goo.gl/maps/5SdNk>. For more information call Bill Welch at 608-843-3926 or email billpatti@charter.net.

Want to experience the legendary Birkie Trail system without the competition of a race? Head to Cable for the **Birkie Tour** on Jan. 15. Starting from the Birkie Ridge Trailhead just north of Hayward, participants get a tour of the world-class trail system on their choice of 12-, 25- or 44-K perfectly groomed loops. Park, start and finish in the same location, enjoy the aid stations along the trail and when you're done, warm up in the big tent, and enjoy the hot food, beverages and camaraderie. Best of all, you'll be skiing, either classic or skate,



Snowshoe races start at 8:30 a.m., Jan. 21, at Mosquito Hill Nature Center.

MOSQUITO HILL NATURE CENTER



Head to Greenbush for "A Wade House Christmas" the first two weekends of December.

WADE HOUSE



Sip warm cider and munch on cookies in the Kaye Cabin at the Ridges Sanctuary in Bailey's Harbor.

RIDGES SANCTUARY

on one of the best cross-country ski trail systems in the world. Call 715-634-5025, or visit birkie.com/ski/events/birkie-tour/ to register.

Don't worry about mosquitoes in January! If you're a competitive snowshoer or just looking for a family day playing in the snow, join the fun at **Mosquito Hill Nature Center, Snowshoe Races and Winter Family Fun Day** in New London (Jan. 21). Snowshoe races start at 8:30 a.m. on 1-, 3- and 5-mile courses. All courses are groomed and fairly flat, with the 3- and 5-mile course skirting the Wolf River and Oxbow Ponds. Call 920-779-6433 or visit mosquitohill.com for registration, cost information and race times. From noon to 3 p.m., there will be human foosball, ice bowling, an otter slide for the kids and a chili bar to warm your innards. 

Kathryn A. Kahler is interim editor of Wisconsin Natural Resources.