



Photo by Christa Rittberg

<https://friendsofmaplewoodnature.wordpress.com>

February 2022

## First Annual GNOME CHALLENGE Nature Walk

Join us for the **Gnome Challenge Nature Walk** February 12 – February 27 at Maplewood Nature Center. Walk the trails as you search for colorful gnomes. Locate all 30 gnomes. **They're visible from the boardwalk and the Green Heron loop.**



Photo by Rachel Van Heel

It's pure outdoor fun. Want to try your new winter gear? Need a special place to enjoy nature? Relishing the last weeks of snow and

winter? It's a great time to enjoy the trails.

"The Nature Center's trails are beautiful right now and there are many signs of wildlife," observed Rachel Van Heel, creative director of the Gnome Challenge, adding that "there are animal tracks and woodpecker holes telling stories about the Nature Center's winter inhabitants."

This event is sponsored by Friends of Maplewood Nature. "We hope that activities like

these will inspire the city to restore environmental education programs, designed and led by professional naturalists" added John Zakelj, president of Friends of Maplewood Nature.

***Send us a photo of your favorite  
Maplewood Nature Center gnome for a  
chance to win a prize in our drawing.***

**For event and drawing details,  
visit our website.**

<https://friendsofmaplewoodnature.wordpress.com/>



**Maplewood Nature Center's  
building is now open.  
Check the City's website for hours.**

<https://maplewoodmn.gov/960/Nature-Center>



Photo by John Zakelj

## DO YOU KNOW YOUR TREES?



Photo by Elizabeth Wolf

If you're like us, you want to know the name of the tree that produces the huge leaves. Or the tree with unusual bark, or the one that drops the seeds covering your path or creates the beautiful fragrance.

### *Tree Trek is coming, to answer your questions about trees!*

This spring, Friends of Maplewood Nature will install at-a-glance identification labels for an astonishing 52 kinds of trees.

In addition to tree identification, the labels' QR codes will link your smart phone's QR reader to further details.

**We're excited that your contributions have made this incredible resource possible. Watch our website announcing the celebration of Tree Trek's installation.**



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

FMN previously announced a call for volunteer board members. We now welcome five new directors. A few positions are open.

### What do our Directors do?

We support Maplewood Nature Center and the City's 14 designated preserves by helping to promote and protect these natural areas and educate people about the outdoors.

As one director expressed it, we're passionate about our environmental and educational mission and happy to do what we can to ensure the future of the parks that we treasure.

Our hands-on, all-volunteer nature enthusiasts bring many skills from occupations such as teacher, office specialist, lawyer, writer, pediatric physical therapist, musician, grant-writer, project manager. Our lives are filled with kayaking, wildlife watching, hiking, gardening, treasured pets, children's ski coaching, cross country skiing, camping, photography, sewing, woodworking, reading and other activities.

### *Three ways you can help nature.*

**\*\*\*You can share YOUR talents and enthusiasm as a Board member.** Are you passionate about the outdoors? Join our friendly group as we share our knowledge of and love for nature. If you're good at managing finances, you might enjoy being FMN's **treasurer**, for instance. There are many other ways you can participate. Why not put your talents to work for nature?

Contact John Zakelj at [maplewoodnature@gmail.com](mailto:maplewoodnature@gmail.com)  
We'll be happy to answer your questions.

**\*\*\*Become a member of FMN ...or renew your membership today.** Your tax-deductible membership donation supports advocacy and educational efforts. Visit our website.  
<https://friendsofmaplewoodnature.wordpress.com/membership/>

**\*\*\*Other Donations.** You can fund an FMN program with your donation.  
<https://friendsofmaplewoodnature.wordpress.com/donate/>



## DID YOU KNOW ....

...The black-capped chickadee is a year-round Maplewood resident? Look for this beautiful and busy little bird at the Nature Center, other parks, and in your own yard.

Listen, as well. Chickadee language is complex and sophisticated, according to experts who say that the birds rearrange vocal patterns depending on the circumstances and can make more than 15 distinct calls.



Photo by Nyiaj Leej Vaj

Even the chick-a-dee-dee's namesake call can vary. For instance, the number of "dee-dee" notes

might increase depending on the threat sensed by the chickadee.

If you remain still for a few minutes while listening to this call, you might be able to hear and see why the chickadee has given its alert. (It could be you!)

There's also the two-note "fee-bee" call, and sometimes a barely audible third note can be heard. This song indicates that you're almost surely hearing a male chickadee in late winter and spring. The female chickadee also has a song that is said to be uniquely hers.

Before heading out for your next walk, check the internet to hear various chickadee calls, or download one of the excellent birding apps to your phone.



## BATTLE CREEK GRASSLANDS Advocacy Update

***There is reason to hope for the preservation of this valuable wildlife habitat.***

You may remember that Friends of Maplewood Nature encouraged you to ask Ramsey County to drop plans for development of this 77-acre parcel bordering Battle Creek Park Reserve. You can see portions of the property from the eastern edge of Battle Creek Park, and from Century Avenue, north of the Ramsey County Correctional Facility.

In late 2020, FMN was alerted to the County's plan to sell the land for residential and business development. Since then, FMN, along with other grassroots groups of concerned nature-lovers and environmentalists, has engaged in many hours of listening, research, discussion, letter-writing, and outreach to the public hoping to persuade both Ramsey County and the City of Maplewood to use this opportunity to preserve this habitat.



Photo by Elizabeth Wolf

After hearing from concerned wildlife advocates, Ramsey County engaged a surveyor who confirmed that the grasslands are active nesting habitat for

endangered and rare species that are in severe decline.

*(continued)*

### **Advocacy Update**, *continued*

Nevertheless, Ramsey County sought proposals for development of the grasslands as well as the recently closed Ponds of Maplewood Golf Course.



*Photo by John Zakelj*

*Coyotes observed from the eastern border of Battle Creek Park Reserve.*

However, no proposals were submitted by developers for the grasslands parcel. "The fact that the County received no proposal for the grasslands property supports our point of view that this parcel is not appropriate for housing," noted John Zakelj, Friends of Maplewood Nature president and long-time Audubon Society member. "More and more people have come around and are seeing the unique natural value of that grassland."

Ramsey County rejected all development proposals for the golf course because they failed to meet the County's objectives, according to commissioners.

Development initiatives are on hold pending Ramsey County's decision.

***Zakelj said a coalition of grassroots environmental groups will continue lobbying for the grasslands parcel to be permanently added to Battle Creek Regional Park.***

### **Your help is still needed**

What can you do to assure permanent protection for this unique natural area?

Every voice counts. Please take a few minutes to make your opinion heard about this important issue.

Here are some suggestions.

### **Review the history**

<https://friendsofmaplewoodnature.wordpress.com/news-2/>

<https://friendsofmaplewoodnature.files.wordpress.com/2022/02/grassland-fact-sheet-2022-feb-2.pdf>

### **Email your questions to us**

[maplewoodnature@gmail.com](mailto:maplewoodnature@gmail.com)

### **Contact the decision-makers**

<https://friendsofmaplewoodnature.wordpress.com/news-2/>

