

Friends of Steele Creek Nature Center and Park

Knobs and Knolls

January 2017

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Nature Center Expansion

As 2017 begins, construction of the Nature Center expansion nears completion! As soon as BurWil Construction is done with construction of the 5,000 sq. ft. addition to the existing building, finishing work on that portion of the facility can begin. City employees will be putting final touches on the building's interior, and we will begin preparing for installation of many of the new exhibits that will fill the space.

Among the high priority features that we plan to have ready for our grand opening in the fall are an impressive aquarium array with central workspace, two dioramas featuring woodland creatures and birds frequently found in the Park, an impressive waterfowl exhibit, and a children's interpretive crawl through cave. The aquariums will feature specimens currently housed at the Nature Center along with additional species found in the Park; the central work area is designed to also serve as a learning space that the staff can use for small group activities. The dioramas, which will incorporate most of the non-aquatic live and preserved animals, will be equipped with interactive drawers full of hands on activities for kids of all ages. The waterfowl exhibit will perfectly complement the nearby real-world view from the large picture windows overlooking the lake and knobs. We continue to work closely with Jeremy Stout and exhibit designer Ed Hackley as we finalize the exhibit designs and begin the process of identifying and contracting with professional fabricators to create and install these exhibits.

In addition, we are working closely with Jeremy, Terry Napier and Mike Musick to design and equip the 1200 sq. ft. learning center as a flexible space to be used for classroom, laboratory and meeting activities.



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Nature Center Expansion (Continued)

To be sure that things are done right, we've decided to push our grand opening back (just a bit) to next October. Wildlife Weekend will provide the perfect opportunity to showcase our exciting new facility and to celebrate the hard work and generous contributions of all who are helping to make it a reality.

Future exhibits planned for the expanded section of the Nature Center include an interactive, electronic wall display demonstrating the relationships between plants and animals in the Park ecosystem, an interpretive crawl-through beaver dam, and geology and archaeology displays providing glimpses beneath the Park and into its past.

Once we have moved into the new space, the current nature center space will be completely renovated and refurbished to house two additional flexible galleries along with staff/volunteer work space, storage space for collections, and modest kitchen facilities. We hope to have this phase completed by the summer of 2018.

Accomplishing all of this will take lots of money! Our budget just to fully furnish and equip the new space (including the future exhibits described above) is about \$300,000. Thanks to many of you we are well over halfway to that goal. But much more is needed to bring all of our dreams to reality. If you've already contributed to our Nature Center Expansion Fund, many thanks for your support. **If you've not yet made a contribution, now is the time to do so!** We also count on you, our members and faithful supporters, to help spread the word for us, and to let us know of any additional possible major donors!



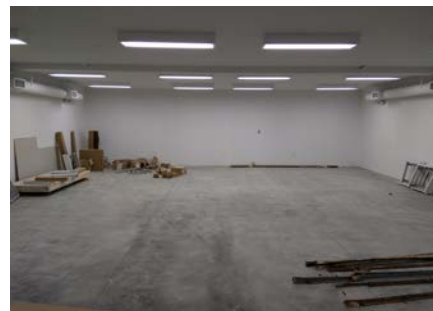
View from the Lake



Lakeside Windows Gallery



Main gallery from front entrance



Downstairs Classroom/Learning Center

Thanks!

We have been thrilled with numerous major contributions to our Nature Center Expansion Fund in recent months. Among them are:

The Massengill-DeFriece Foundation - \$50,000
Anne and Ben Cowan - \$30,000
Friendship Enterprises - \$15,000 (over three years)
Lea and Rush Powers - \$7,000
Don and Gina Shawl - \$5,000
Spike Tickle - \$5,000
AT&T - \$2,500
Citizens Bank - \$2,500
Optimist Club of Bristol TN/VA - \$2,500
Connie Mergel - \$2,500
Sonie and Bill Schermer - \$2,500
John and Karen Vann - \$2,500
Sarfraz and Audrey Zaidi - \$2,500

Many thanks to these very generous donors.

And many thanks to all those who have made other generous donations, large and small. All major donors (\$2,500 and above) will be recognized on permanent signage at the Nature Center. All donors will be recognized on our "giving tree" to be located near the elevator in the new building.

Donate Today

Use the form below to contribute to our expansion fund, or go online to pledge your donation today!

The Nature Center at Steele Creek Park Expansion Fund Contribution Form

Name: _____
Phone: _____
E-mail: _____
Address: _____

Makes checks payable to:

Friends of Steele Creek Nature Center and Park

Mail to:

P.O. Box 1763, Bristol, TN 37620

Unless you request that it remain anonymous, your **tax deductible** gift will be gratefully acknowledged and published in the *Bristol Herald Courier* in conjunction with the grand opening, targeted for spring of 2017. Please indicate donor name as you would like it to appear.

Sponsorship Levels

____ \$25,000 Oak (Champion)	____ \$1,000 Poplar (Partner)
____ \$10,000 Maple (Benefactor)	____ \$500 Pine (Supporter)
____ \$5,000 Chestnut (Sponsor)	____ \$100 Magnolia (Contributor)
____ \$2,500 Hemlock (Patron)	____ <\$100 Holly (Friend)

Donations at the Hemlock Level and higher will be noted on permanent signage at the Nature Center. Pledges will be accepted for gifts of \$2,500 and above, with payment due in full on or before December 31, 2016.

All donations are fully tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.

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Elements of Nature Photography

*In this issue, we finish our series of articles on using your camera to capture nature, **by Sonie Schermer**. Sonie is a founding board member of Friends, and an accomplished amateur nature photographer. Thanks to Sonie for her helpful insights!*

COMPOSITION – Creative Use of Light

In prior issues we have covered the topics of composition and depth of field in making good photographs. Just as important is light. Light makes the photo. Learn to know light!

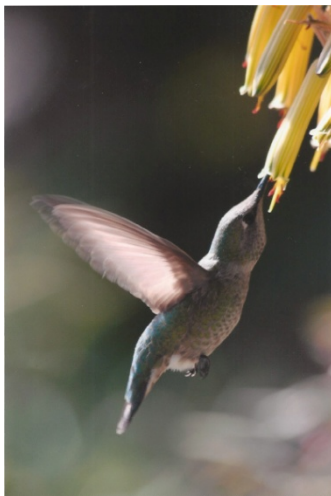
The best shots are taken at “the Golden Hour”, around sunrise and sunset. You need to get out early while the light is right and before the crowds arrive. We use light by “seeing it” with shutter speed and aperture control.

Shutter speed is the measure of the duration in length of time that the shutter stays open. It controls how you capture movement. Faster speeds “freeze” the movement but require more light and a larger aperture (see below). Slower shutter speeds allow the picture to be taken in lower light with smaller apertures and may result in blurring of the subject.

Aperture (F-stops) refers to the size of the opening of the lens. The larger the F-stop number, the smaller the opening, resulting in less light passing through the lens. The smaller the F-stop number, the larger the opening, and thus more light the lens lets through to the image sensors.

Light Tips:

- “The Golden Hour”, the time around sunrise and sunset, lights the subject from the sides, creating shadows and therefore texture to photos, best time to shoot.



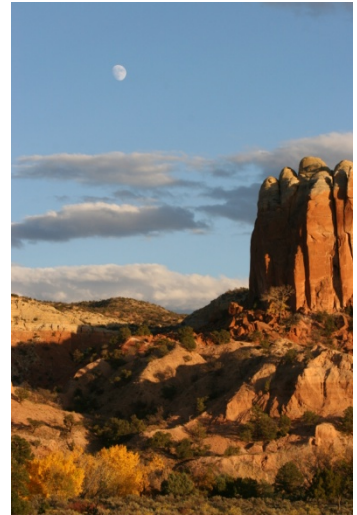
- Set the shutter speed to the fastest you can to “freeze” the motion of your subject.

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Elements of Nature Photography (continued)

- Set the F-stop to the smallest number your lens allows (F/2.8, F/4, F/5.6) for focused foreground and out of focus background.
- Set the F-stop to middle numbers (F/8, F/11) to have foreground and background in focus as the eye sees it.
- Set the F-stop to the highest number available (f/22, F/30) to have as much as possible in focus.



- Learn to “see” light and use it smartly: front light (comes from behind you), side light (1/2 in light and 1/2 in shadow), and back light (comes from in front of you).



- Available light is believable and natural; or you can make your own light with a flash or fill flash.

- Moody light like fog or rain make more dramatic shots. Cloudy days offer soft uniform light which gets rid of harsh bright whites and very dark shadows.

I hope this series of tips has given you food for thought and motivates you to go out into nature and play with your camera. Enjoy what you are seeing and photographing.

Sonie Schermer

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2017 Wildlife Weekend Photo Contest Winners

This year's Wildlife Weekend Photography Contest and Show was again a great success, with many wonderful entries in both the adult and youth divisions. With thanks to all of the participating photographers and to our outstanding judges (Earl Neikirk of the Bristol Herald Courier and Chris Duncan of Chris Duncan Photography), here are the winning entries in both divisions.



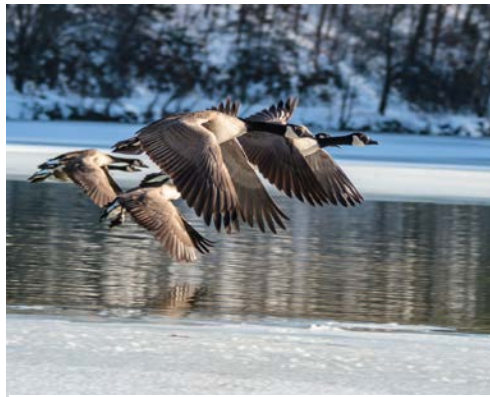
Youth Division – Second Place
Brice Lay – “Not Little, Just Fun Size”



Youth Division – First Place
Matthew Hess – “Wings”



Youth Division – Third Place
Abijah Swiney – “Duck Duo”



Adult Division – First Place
Pam Conley – “Wings”



Adult Division – Second Place
Pam Conley – “Otter Friend”



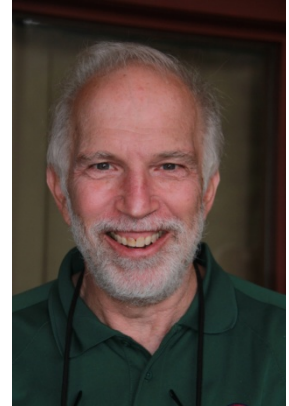
Adult Division – Third Place
Erin Velsor – “Reflections of Steele”

All of the winning entries, including Honorable Mention and People's Choice Award winners, can be seen [here](#) on our website.

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Transitions

Wildlife Weekend was, in one way at least, the end of an era. In October, **Larry McDaniel** retired from his position as Assistant Naturalist at the Nature Center. He was, at the time, the longest serving naturalist at the Park, having worked there from June 2006 until October 2016, with only a brief hiatus a few years ago. Already an accomplished birder of the region when he started, Larry spent his time compiling species accounts and photographic records for the park and organizing them into a usable format. He also became a dedicated entomology enthusiast during his tenure with the Nature Center, and has earned a reputation as one of the preeminent moth experts of the Southeastern United States.



Larry is a talented educator and has taught thousands of young people on paths of nature discovery. He was the inspiration for and has been the moving force behind the very popular “Nature Photography” summer camp sessions. Those of you who follow our [Recent Sightings blog](#) probably know that Larry originated that series of reports, and faithfully maintained it up until his retirement. Almost all of the [Park species checklists](#) that are available on our website were compiled by Larry, and his online photographic collection, [Steele Creek Park Nature Guide](#) is a wonderful resource for anyone wanting to know more about the natural history of the area.

Larry left the Nature Center to tend his farm in Johnson City, but remains active in local nature circles (including Steele Creek Park). Although will miss his regular presence at the Nature Center – his friendly smile, inquisitive nature, expertise and wisdom, and eagerness to share his love of nature – we wish him all the best in the years to come!

The good news is that **Lance Jessee** has been hired to take Larry’s place at the Nature Center. Lance graduated in 2016 with a B.S. degree in Geology from ETSU, but began work at the Park as a seasonal employee in 2015 where he helped with summer nature camps and programs, exhibit maintenance, and Park research. He is passionate about all aspects of natural history, amphibians and reptiles especially. He began as a permanent employee in the position of Assistant Naturalist in November 2016, following Larry McDaniel's retirement. Among his many other responsibilities, Lance has assumed the role of [Recent Sightings](#) reporter. Congratulations and welcome to Lance Jessee!

Winter Nature Center Activities

Friday, January 13th, 5:30 pm. Space Rocks/Basic Winter Astronomy - Meet Jeremy at the Park Conference Room for a short discussion and activity on meteorites! Then, if it's clear, we'll go outside and identify some winter constellations.

Thursday, February 2nd -Groundhog Day!

4:00pm -Groundhog Day Hike: Meet Don at the Nature Center for a fun walk, not just about these fascinating animals, but also the cosmic importance of this seemingly silly holiday!

5:30pm -Fireside Chat: Groundhog Day: Stop in to the park lodge for refreshments and an informal discussion on mammals, astronomy, history, and all the other unexpected aspects of this holiday!

Saturday, February 4th, 9:00 am. Winter Nature Photography - Meet Lance at the Nature Center for a brief talk on winter nature photography, then take a mild walk through the park and give it a go! Don't have a camera? Not a problem. Check out one of ours for free (just call ahead to reserve).

Friday, February 17th, 5:00 pm. Great Backyard Bird Count Feeder Watch - Meet Don at the Nature Center to engage in citizen-science while learning about bird-watching and taking part in this nation-wide count!

Saturday, February 25th, 5:00 pm. Wilderness Preparedness - Never go on a hike unprepared! Meet Lance at the Nature Center for a talk on the "Ten Essentials" and simple guidelines to follow to be prepared for backcountry travel.

Save the Date! March 11th, 2017 - TREE KEEPERS WORKSHOP

The Department of Parks and Recreation will be hosting Tree Keepers, in the Park Lodge during the day. This will be an in-depth event focusing on practical tips for planting and maintaining your garden trees. Call the Department of Parks and Recreation (423-764-4023) for more information!

You can keep up with what's going on at the Park and with *Friends* by liking us on Facebook or by following our webpage at <http://www.friendsofsteelecreek.org>.

We appreciate feedback about our communication. Let us know if you find these newsletters interesting and/or useful. If you have suggestions for topics to be covered, or other formats that we could use, let us know by e-mail at mail@friendsofsteelecreek.org.

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