

Artpark: The Park

by Marilyn Deane Mendell

What do you think of when you think of Artpark? Do you think of theatre, ballet and concerts? Maybe you think about crafts, fine art and outdoor sculpture. But do you think about walking on trails through lush green woodlands, watching for rare birds and wildlife? Do you think of history and archaeology?

Most of the people we speak with have never given any thought at all to Artpark as a naturalist's treasure, but that is exactly what it is! The Niagara Gorge is one of the most beautiful spots in Western New York and we claim a good portion of its view.

Few people know it, but Artpark is more than 200 acres covered with wildflowers and trails. If you're adventurous, you can hike a river walk that runs all the way from the park at Lewiston-Queenston Bridge. You can see brachiopods and crinoid fossils cemented into the limestone. And if you're interested in those things - we've got great rocks too! We have exposed rock beds from the Paleozoic Era and our red-shale walls come from



Bald Eagle

the Ordovician Period.

Artpark also has fabulous birds.

We're right at the apex of one of the world's most important migratory bird corridors. You can see rare gulls and indigo buntings. There's even a rumor that we have a family of eagles in residence. The local Audubon Society says we have over 120 species of birds flying through our park during the migratory seasons. Our birds' nests are truly inspirational! Many of the colorful yarns and bits of fabrics our visitors use in their craft projects blow away on the summer breezes. The birds pick them up and use them to create nests that are truly works of art.

The western boundary of the park is the fast running Niagara River where anglers enjoy hours on its banks. With luck and skill, they catch trout, salmon, smelt, bass and perch to name a few.

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If it's history you want, we've got it! Right beside our theatre and our marsh area, there is an ancient Native American burial mound that dates back to 140 AD. There are houses in Lewiston that provided a safe haven for runaway slaves before they escaped into Canada. No doubt it would take several visits to learn all about Lewiston's train and fort stories.

There are just too many.

But this year's big news at Artpark is our total immersion and participation in the National Wildlife Federation's Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program. That means that our Park Program's teaching arm will revolve around identifying and mapping food, water and shelter for our park's wildlife.

When we finish that task, we will send all of our gathered information to the National Wildlife Federation, and, if we qualify, then we will receive our certification as a Backyard Wildlife Habitat! We're so excited about this that we are planning a huge party to celebrate our accomplishments.

Actually it's more than a party. We're hoping that many of the naturalists who already have their own Certified Backyard Habitats will come to Artpark for the day. This will accomplish two goals: it will give each of them the opportunity

to meet fellow naturalists and to compare notes about their Backyard Habitats. Also, it will provide a chance to "talk shop" with newcomers to the program who are interested in certifying their own backyards. The enthusiasm of newcomers and the expertise of veterans will be the key to our success.

Along with the National Wildlife enthusiasts, the Roger Tory Peterson Institute has generously offered to share its birthday celebrations with us on August 22. They're planning on setting up a very special display of Peterson's personal articles in honor of his 90th birthday. The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and the Schoellkopf Museum have offered their support as well.

There will be plenty of neat people for you to meet, that's for sure. It's our 25th Anniversary, so we'd love to have you help us blow out a few candles. If you're interested in attending the party, you can call 754-9000, Ext.239 and ask for me or write us at P.O. Box 28, Lewiston, NY 14092. We'll send you all the details. I can tell you now that the whole day events will include a free Park Pas, free parking, a gourmet dinner and a theatre performance of The Sound of Music. The seats are already reserved for you!



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