



Discovery News

Summer 2016

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From the Director's desk...

As summer is upon us, I would like to remind all those looking to visit our parks about the wonderful recreational opportunities that await them. Not only will visitors find plenty of hiking trails, picnic areas, playgrounds, nature viewing and beauty within our parks system but our three (3) main parks offer opportunities unique to each park.

Take Arthur Dodd Memorial Park for instance, located in Sumnerville, Michigan, this 51 acre county park is our most popular summer park due to its location on the Dowagiac River.

Dodd Park constitutes approximately 90% of the public land on the Dowagiac River and most water enthusiasts who

recreate on the river use Dodd Park to either put in or pull out their watercraft. In addition, Dodd Park will soon be home to \$375,000.00 of park improvements such as a new pedestrian bridge, canoe launch, two camping cabins, expanded parking area and waterless bathrooms.



Dr. T.K. Lawless Park, located east of Vandalia, Michigan, is a 850 acre nature lovers paradise with four (4) lakes, seven (7) miles of hiking/cross country skiing trails, fishing, disc golf, and primitive camping, just to name a few. What Lawless Park offers that makes it unique within our county parks system is a ten (10) mile mountain bike trail. Mentioned as some of the best mountain biking in the region, riders can expect many elevation changes, tight turns and obstacles as they wind their way through the Lawless Park countryside.

Nestled along the crystal blue waters of the Dowagiac Creek, Fred Russ Forest and Newton's Woods County Park is located on Marcellus Highway between Marcellus and Dowagiac. Unlike any other county park in South-

west Michigan and Northern Indiana, Russ Forest Park allows horseback riding within its old growth forests and breathtaking landscapes.

So whatever your outdoor pleasure is, head out to your local Cass County Park for all your recreational needs. Chances are you'll be pleasantly surprised on just how much we have to offer.

See you in our parks.....

Scott Wyman Scott Wyman
Director

Cass County Parks and Recreation

Cass County Parks Commission Members

- Bruce Campbell—President
- Kevin Claire—Vice President
- Korine Blyveis
- Ann File
- Kevin Hershberger
- David Kring
- Linda Pruett
- Johnie Rodebush
- Jamie Stafne
- Pauline Washington—Secretary

Staff

- Scott Wyman—Director
- Randy Hartley—Maintenance
- Patty Dohm—Programming

Don't miss these great events In 2016!

- Cyclo Cross—October 23
- Harvest Fest—October 1
- Sand Hill Crane—October 8

Lightning bugs... those fascinating little critters

I remember as a kid, chasing lightning bugs around in the yard to save them in a jar; and now, I love teaching the grandkids the same thing! But what do we know about this “brilliant” little bug?

1. They are not flies (as in fireflies) or bugs. They are beetles.
2. They are the world’s most efficient light producers! A light bulb gives off about 90% of its energy as heat (that’s why if you touch a light bulb that has been on for a while, you might have burned your finger). Fireflies (lightning bugs) produce light by a chemical reaction, that allows them to glow without wasting heat energy—using 100% of their energy into making the light.
3. They “talk” to each other with their light signals. By flashing their lights, they attract mates. That also warns potential predators that they don’t taste good.
4. Lightning bugs are “bioluminescent” which means they glow in all stages of their lives. Ever hear of glow-worms...



yup, firefly larvae!

5. A favorite food of the larvae is escargot... snails! The larvae also eat worms. As an adult, they eat pollen and other insects.
6. There are many species of lightning bugs, and some females can even mimic the flashes of other species. So, when she attracts a male of the other species, she EATS him.
7. Scientists have developed remarkable uses for firefly luciferase (the stuff that makes them glow), such as markers to detect blood clots, tag tuberculosis cells, and monitor hydrogen peroxide levels in living organisms. I’m glad scientists have found a synthetic form of luciferase instead of the commercial harvest.
8. Some fireflies synchronize their flash signals. Wow—can you imagine seeing thousands of them lighting up the skies at exactly the same time? This “simultaneous bioluminescence” can be seen in a few places around the world, but one of the most famous is in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Thousands of people make the trip to

see this light show every year!

9. Each individual species is identified by their flash patterns... some make a J-shaped flash by lighting up as they fly in an arc; some fly in a straight line and light one flash every 3 to 8 seconds; one species makes a double flash every 5 seconds; and another flashes 3 times in 2 seconds.
10. While the ones we see here produce a greenish-yellow light, some are orange, and some don’t light at all. There is one that is called the Blue Ghost, and produces a soft, steady blue glow.
11. They have a very short life span—only one season. Once they mate, the females lay their eggs and die shortly after that.
12. Are there fewer lightning bugs now? Many people believe the firefly population is on the decline. Probably due to many things like light pollution, pesticide use and habitat destruction. According to Smithsonian.com, if a field where fireflies live is paved over, they don’t migrate to another field, they just disappear forever.

Sources:

Debbie Hadley, Insect Expert

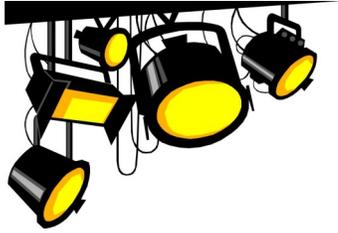
Farmers Almanac

Midwest Energy Cooperative—changing our landscape

On June 15, Midwest Energy Cooperative, along with nearly 90 of their employees, gave a day of community service throughout Cass County at ten different project sites. Team Lawless and Team Russ worked very hard on that extremely hot and humid day cleaning, painting, repairing, clearing trails and building fence... literally changing OUR landscape and making a huge difference in both parks!

Our hats off to Midwest Energy for everything they did throughout the entire community that day, it sets the bar very high for what the rest of us can do to volunteer, even just a few hours. Thank you!





Spotlight on Our Parks Board

Let's get to know one of our fantastic members of the Cass County Parks Board:

BRUCE CAMPBELL

1. How long have you been involved with Cass County Parks and Recreation?

When the Parks Department went to Act 261 in 2009, I was designated as a Park Board Commissioner by statute as a representative of the Drain Commissioner's Office.



Bruce with his lovely granddaughter Jaylynn.

2. Why is volunteering your time important to you?

It is such a pleasure to see the enjoyment of the parks visitors.

3. What do the parks mean to you?

I have always been a supporter of our parks. They all have their unique features and there is so much potential for future growth.

4. What achievement, project or event are you most proud of during your time as a park commission member?

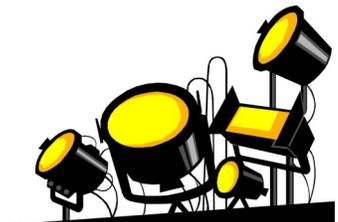
Receiving the grant from the DNR for improvements to Dodd Park. It will become our first park with rental cabins.

5. What would you like to see accomplished in the near future?

Realizing grant opportunities for facility expansion at T.K. Lawless Park.

6. How many hours have you volunteered during your time with the Cass County Parks?

Over 200 hours.



FRIENDS OF CASS COUNTY PARKS

The Friends of Cass County Parks are a group of supporters dedicated to connecting people to recreation, nature, and the community of Cass County. The group is proud to announce that they have received their non-profit 501(c)(3) designation.

The designation will allow any person or organization to make donations or membership fee paid tax deductible. Donations to the local parks will be used for improvements and changes within the parks system with monies flowing to educational projects, local activities and parks development.

The Friends were established in 1989 as a volunteer group to provide support to the county's nine parks. The annual Harvest Festival, Discover Winter Nights, and Spring Egg-stravaganza, are just a few events the group supports. There is so much to see and do at your local county parks and with your donations you have the opportunity to see your dollars at work.

Anyone interested in becoming a Friend of Cass County Parks or to make a tax free contributions can contact The Friends by e-mail: ccfriendsofparks@yahoo.com or by mail at P.O. Box 131, Cassopolis, MI 49031.

Get Involved! Volunteer! Come and Visit!

Cass County Parks & Recreation

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Find us on Facebook: [Casscoparks](#)

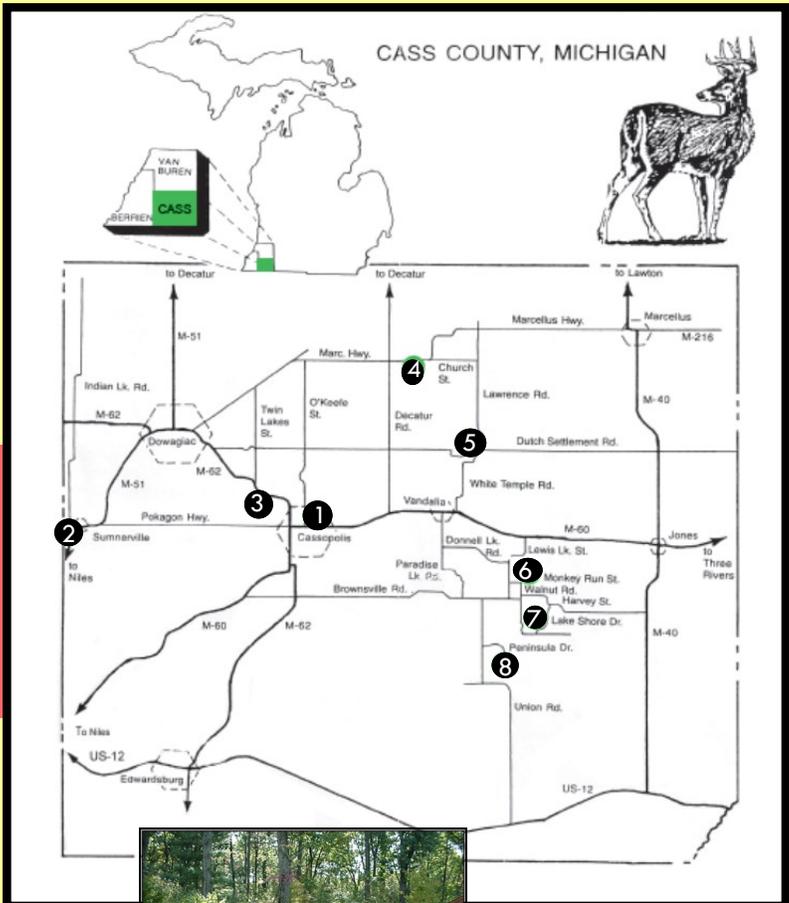
MAP Key

1. Parks Department Office
2. Arthur Dodd Memorial Park
3. Veterans Memorial Park
4. Fred Russ Forest Park
5. Stevens Lakeside Memorial Park
6. Dr. T.K. Lawless Park
7. Henry Sears Boat Launch
8. Harmon Parks



We're on the Web!
[www.casscountymi.org/
countyparks.aspx](http://www.casscountymi.org/countyparks.aspx)

DISCOVER CASS COUNTY... ONE PARK AT A TIME!



All our volunteers truly make up the "heart" of our parks. Thanks everyone for everything you do !



We couldn't do it without YOU!!!