

## Enhancing Bird Habitat with BioChar

This fall, Maywood teamed up with the Lake Michigan Bird Observatory (LMBO) to plant 88 native trees as part of LMBO's biochar pilot. Biochar is a form of charcoal that is created when woody debris is burned in a low oxygen environment. The result is a soil amendment that soaks up nutrients like a sponge and can store it for long periods of time.

The Lake Michigan Bird Observatory is a non-profit organization based in Port Washington, WI that centers around bird habitat and conservation. This tree planting was achieved through LMBO's

Neighborhood Habitat Improvement Project (NHIP). NHIP aims to improve bird habitat, make neighborhoods more bird-friendly, and works to remove the barriers that prevent the public from making these bird-friendly changes.

Back in August, LMBO staff led a two-day training for Maywood staff and volunteers that centered around making biochar and its benefits. During this training, all the biochar needed for the future tree planting was created. Maywood staff then participated in crushing and mixing the biochar with compost to "charge" it. Charging ensures that the biochar is already filled with water and nutrients prior to planting. Biochar has an impressive water holding capacity and can hold seven times its weight in water. Trees

are then able to access this stored water and nutrients in times of need. Planting trees with biochar is a great way to help communities become more resistant to the effects of climate change, like frequent



Maywood Photo

drought and flooding. Biochar can also sequester carbon and store it instead of releasing it into the atmosphere. Through this biochar pilot project LMBO has successfully sequestered 13,822 pounds of carbon across six cities in Wisconsin.

Volunteers from Maywood, Warriner High School, and local corporations led the planting effort this September. After countless hours of hard work, 88 trees were planted at Maywood Environmental Park. We are incredibly grateful for all the hard work these volunteers put in, and without them this project would not have been possible.

The trees planted this past September included species like swamp white oak, black cherry, and serviceberry. Fruit and nut-bearing trees were prioritized during

this planting to improve habitat and food sources for local birds. Species were also selected because they support native insect species. During breeding season, birds feed their nestlings almost exclusively insects, so having plants that support insects is crucial to creating successful habitat for birds. For example, oak trees can support up to 342 species of lepidoptera.

Of the 88 total trees planted, 39 were planted with soil and 49 have been planted with soil amended with biochar. These trees will then be monitored in the future to assess their overall health. The student volunteers from Warriner High School are leading the charge to create a community map of all these trees, so future volunteers can monitor effectiveness of biochar as a soil amendment.

We are grateful to our partners that funded this pilot and native trees. Support was received from Daybreak Fund, We Energies Foundation, and Alliant Energy Foundation.

Want to learn more about the Neighborhood Habitat Improvement Project? Visit [LMBO.org](http://LMBO.org) for more information.

Mabel Kirst

## Winter is the Perfect Time to Hit the Trails



Maywood Photo

Winter is a spectacular time of year to enjoy the crisp stillness in the air at Maywood. Add a light sprinkling of snow, and the park becomes truly magical.

With enough snow, it transforms into a winter wonderland where adventure awaits!

Weather permitting, cross-country skiers can enjoy two beautifully groomed trails: one that loops through the prairie and another that winds through the pine forest in the northwestern corner of the park. These trails are maintained by dedicated volunteers with support from the City of Sheboygan's Parks Department. If you are not skiing, please stay off of the groomed trails and choose another path. Snowshoers and hikers are encouraged to use the other trails throughout the park and reserve the groomed trails for skiers. With several miles of trails winding through 135 acres, there is plenty of room for everyone!

If cycling is your preferred winter sport, please enjoy designated trails in our neighboring Evergreen and Quarry Parks. Maywood trails are not designed for bikes, and they can cause damage to the ecosystems we work hard to protect.

Kendra Kelling



## Volunteer Report

Autumn ushered in a season of service at Maywood, where volunteers from across the community stepped up to support a variety of improvement projects. Over several days, volunteer groups removed an aging section of boardwalk leading to the Outdoor Skills Area and installed a new, sturdier replacement. Groups from Muth, MilliporeSigma, Lakeland University, Oostburg State Bank, Warriner High School, North and South High Schools, Kohler Co., Sheboygan County Health & Human Services, and Johnsonville also spent time throughout the park organizing, planting, mulching, and watering more than 80 newly planted trees made possible through funding from the Lake Michigan Bird Observatory (LMBO).

In October, Maywood proudly took part in the YMCA's annual Scarecrow Festival at The Christopher Farm and Gardens, with special thanks to Barb Huibregtse for crafting a standout scarecrow to represent the park. Visitors to the Ecology Store will find 2025 Maywood maple syrup on shelves, along with several new items, including a winter tree identification guide, bird-call whistles, and stocking-stuffer-ready gifts. Maywood also extends our appreciation to longtime volunteer Patty Brungraber—known fondly as the "turtle whisperer"—for her years of dedicated care for the park's box turtles. Looking ahead, the park hopes to revive the Maywood Shutterbugs photography group and is seeking volunteers interested in helping reestablish the program. Anyone eager to support its return is encouraged to reach out!

Nathan Dallesasse

## Maywood Winter 2025-2026 Calendar

For more detailed program descriptions, visit [GoMaywood.org](http://GoMaywood.org) or the front desk in the Ecology Center, or call (920) 459-3906. To register for any Maywood program, call (920) 459-3906 or email [maywood@sheboyganwi.gov](mailto:maywood@sheboyganwi.gov). The Ecology Center is closed December 24, 2025-January 1, 2026. The park and trails are open 4 am-10 pm daily.

**OWLS (Older, Wiser, Livelier Scholars)**, 10-noon. Free for members/\$5 for general public, registration required. **December 5:** No OWLS. **December 12:** OWLS Winter Potluck. **December 19:** No OWLS. **December 26:** No OWLS. **January 2:** Bur Oak, meet at Maywood. **January 9:** No OWLS. **January 16 Offsite:** John Michael Kohler Arts Center. **January 23:** No OWLS. **January 30 Offsite:** Ice Age Trail. **February 6:** No OWLS. **February 13 Offsite:** Tellen Sculpture Garden. **February 20:** No OWLS. **February 27:** Ojibwe History and Culture at Maywood.

**Yoga at Maywood.** Visit [GoMaywood.org](http://GoMaywood.org) for program descriptions and registration deadlines. **Yoga for the Holidays**, Wednesday, December 3, 5:30-7 pm. Free for 2025 Maywood yoga class participants, \$20 for general public. In preparation for the final month of 2025, allow yourself to be guided through a gentle yoga practice, followed by a yoga nidra meditation. **Winter Yoga at Maywood**, Wednesdays, January 7, 14, 21 and 28; and February 4, 11, 18, and 25, 5:15-6:15 pm. \$80 for the series if registered by December 15, \$120 after December 15. Settle into the stillness of winter with a yoga practice incorporating mindful outdoor movement, slow flow, and restorative poses. **Yoga Retreat at Maywood**, January 31, 9 am- 3 pm. \$135 for members, \$165 for general public. Immerse yourself in the beauty of winter at Maywood, focusing on exploration of connection to self, community, and nature. Decaf coffee, tea, snacks, and a complimentary warm vegetarian lunch will be provided.

**Maywood Nature-based Book Club**, in partnership with Mead Library, 10-11 am, free. Register at [GoMaywood.org](http://GoMaywood.org) Winter titles: December 6, *The Children's Blizzard* by David Laskin. January 3, *Mozart's Starling* by Lyanda Lynn Haupt. February 7, *The Mist: A Thriller* by Ragnar Jonasson.

### December 2025

**6 Wishing for Winter**, 2-7 pm. Free for members/ \$5 for non-members. Family-friendly event welcomes winter with crisp winter hikes, toasty s'mores around the campfire, cozy story time, nature crafts, and more.

### January 2026

**13 Nature at Noon**, noon-1 pm. Free, registration and donations appreciated. Janet and Andy Raddatz present "Madagascar, the Eight Continent." They will focus on the wonderful wildlife they saw in Fall 2022. Bring your lunch, Maywood will provide coffee, tea, water, and a dessert.

**13 Unleash Your Inner Well-being: An "Instruction Manual to You" Workshop**, 5:30-7 pm. Free, donations appreciated. From 5:30-6 pm, join us for a short hike to enjoy the park and the brisk winter air. We then move indoors for the Wellbeing Workshop from 6-7 pm when we join Dr. John Reitz on a journey to unlock the secrets of your body and discover the power within you to achieve optimal well-being.

**24 Maple Syrup Training**, 9-10:30 am. \$5 for members/\$10 for general public. Registration required. Interested in learning about maple sugaring and gaining hands-on experience? Join Maywood staff and experienced volunteers for an overview of the maple sugaring process used at Maywood. Learn how you can volunteer with the program at Maywood and gain experience to try maple sugaring yourself.

### February 2026

**7 Trivia Night**, 6 pm. \$80/table. Gather your team and test your trivia knowledge. Advanced registration is strongly encouraged.

**10 Nature at Noon**, noon-1 pm. Free, registration and donations appreciated. Mike and Terri DeMaster present "Machu Picchu and the Galapagos Islands" and share their travel experiences from these exotic locations. Bring your lunch, Maywood will provide coffee, tea, water, and a dessert.

### Save the Date!

Flapjack Day, Sunday, March 15

# The Leading Edge



Everyone knows love is in the air in February. You may have heard it at Maywood if you were there on a cold, dark night in February 2025. It is eery and loud; some describe it as “maniacal”. This is the mating sound of barred owls, the result of which, of course, is barred owl babies that hatched in March in a nesting box on the catalpa tree. The eggs were diligently incubated by the mother, who would only leave the nest to regurgitate a pellet and defecate. Owls must regurgitate the indigestible parts of their meal, such as bones and fur, in the form of a pellet. She was being fed frequently by her loyal mate during this time.

After approximately a month of incubation, the two hatchlings emerged from the love nest. The father now had to feed his mate plus his offspring. He would be feeding them chipmunks, squirrels, rodents, and even fish, frogs, and crawfish. By day 11 or 12, the mother was venturing out to help her mate feed their ravenous owlets. Barred owls, as with most owls, hunt at night and roost during the day. Shortly before fledging, the babies began branching, or leaving the nest and hopping around in the tree branches. Owlets do this to develop strength and practice using their wings and talons before learning to fly. One of the babies fell out of the catalpa tree, but they are good climbers, and it climbed back up the tree successfully. A video of this can be seen on our Facebook page, thanks to a Maywood member. The barred owls left the nest at around six weeks old, which is early compared to most owl species. Many owl parents rear their young for six months, feeding them throughout the summer. Parents may lose up to a third of their body weight and forgo molting. When compared to the owls who did not raise offspring, the parent owls look worn and disheveled... not unlike human parents. Now, the barred owls can be spotted around Maywood, especially down by the Pigeon River.

In the end, the barred owl babies will have grown into the fourth largest owl of the 19 North American owl species, standing at 19-21 inches. Using their excellent hearing, eyes that are specialized for nocturnal vision and can see UV light, and almost silent flight, they can hunt successfully on the darkest of nights.

Barred owls are known to nest in the same spot year after year. Maybe this February, you can visit Maywood in the cold darkness of winter to hear their love in the air (as long as it’s before 11 pm when the park closes).

Jennifer Smith

Bibliography: Ackerman, J. (2023) *What an Owl Knows*. Penguin Books.

Ellwood H. May Environmental Park  
Association of Sheboygan County, Inc.  
3615 Mueller Road  
Sheboygan, WI 53083-2610

920-459-3906  
maywood@sheboyganwi.gov

## GoMaywood.org

Association/Trust  
President: Marty Steinbruecker  
Park Director: Kendra Kelling  
Trust Administrator: Angie Doell  
Office Coordinator: Nathan Dallesasse  
Custodian: Donna Pantel  
EcoEdges Editor: Nathan Dallesasse

Our Mission  
To foster environmental stewardship through educational and outdoor experiences that connect our community with the natural world.



Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. Postage PAID  
Sheboygan, WI  
Permit No. 48

# ECOEDGES

A Publication of the Ellwood H. May Environmental Park Association of Sheboygan County, Inc.



Nathan Dallesasse

## New Signage Leads the Way

Where am I? Is this Maywood or Evergreen Park? Can I ride my bike or walk my dog here? Am I on the right trail? Even if you are a frequent visitor, it can be confusing at some locations. The Maywood Advisory Board tackled the issue of guidance signs in Maywood to identify what we needed, what was missing, and what information we wanted to provide to visitors of our environmental park.

An ad hoc committee was formed with Maywood staff and Advisory Board members to sort through the observations, comments, desires, and limitations and convert them into a plan of action. The result was a multifaceted plan that is in three phases, starting with “Welcome” signage at the recognized park entrances. Next is trail identification and marking for the six Maywood habitats, in concert with a revised Maywood map. The third phase will be updates and new informational signs to provide detailed background information at various sites.

The Welcome signage phase has been addressed first. Locations for the signs were identified, and several versions of a sign were created to convey a welcome, indicate activities encouraged,

activities not permitted, and hours of operation. A design was finalized, with a fresh appearance that guides use while maintaining the unique attributes of our environmental park. The proposed locations of the Welcome sign and the proposed sign itself were provided to the City of Sheboygan for approval, which has been granted. The 24” wide and 18” high Welcome signs have been erected at eight locations, mounted on 4x4 posts. The new Welcome sign is pictured above.

The Signage Committee has and will continue to address all guidance and informational signs in Maywood and Bur Oak, as time and funds permit. Look for enhancements in the park that guide and inform you about its interesting and unique characteristics. To avoid the clutter of too many signs with too much information, the GoMaywood.org website provides detailed information, such as trail difficulty and length, supplementary information, maps, programs, events, a calendar, and so much more. We want you to enjoy Maywood, your City of Sheboygan environmental park.

Dan Redman

Maywood Presents

# Trivia Night

SAT FEBRUARY 7  
6PM

Gather your team and test your trivia knowledge! Teams up to eight compete for 10 rounds!

**\$80 PER TABLE**

gomaywood.org

REAL MAYWOOD SYRUP

Save the Date  
**Sunday, March 15**

- Pancake Breakfast
- Maple Sugaring Tours
- Games & Activities
- Nature!