

New pricing structure to go into effect on Wisconsin State Park System properties Feb. 15

A new demand-based pricing structure for Wisconsin State Park System properties will go into effect on Feb. 15, 2018 that is intended to encourage use and manage capacity while providing funds for property improvements that directly enhance visitor experiences.

There will be no increase in the annual admission fees to park system properties, however daily admission fees will increase at three properties: Devil's Lake, Peninsula and Willow River state parks. Devil's Lake daily admission fees will increase \$5, with resident daily fees going from \$8

to \$13 and non-resident daily fees going from \$11 to \$16. Daily fees at Peninsula and Willow River will increase \$2, with resident daily fees going from \$8 to \$10 and non-resident daily fees going from \$11 to \$13.

Camping rates will be adjusted across the system based on demand, by both increasing and decreasing camping rates. Depending on campsite type and time of year, some properties will experience both a rate increase and a rate decrease. The average camping fee increase will be \$3 per night and will range to a high of \$7 at Devil's Lake and Penin-

sula on electrical sites during summer weekends. The greatest camping fee decrease will be \$5 per night.

"We believe this new pricing structure will help us better manage the demand we're seeing at some of our highly used properties while encouraging use at our lesser visited properties," said Ben Bergey, director of the Wisconsin State Park System.

The 2017-2019 state budget set new rates and authorities for the DNR including: the ability to adjust camping rates from the base rates set in statute and the ability to adjust daily admission

fees from the base rates set in statute, at all properties. Also included in the budget is a \$5 increase on all electrical campsites at Devil's Lake, Peninsula, Kohler-Andrae, High Cliff, and Willow River.

Also authorized in the 2017-2019 state budget, the park system plans to reinvest \$2 million in user fees to fund property improvements, including the electrification of an additional 200 campsites at different campgrounds throughout the system including Big Bay, Blue Mound, Buckhorn, Copper Falls, Devil's Lake, Governor Dodge, Harrington

Beach, Hartman Creek, High Cliff, Interstate, Lake Kegonsa, Mirror Lake, Nelson Dewey, Pattison, Peninsula, Perrot, Potawatomi, Wildcat Mountain, Willow River and Wyalusing. They will also fund technology improvements at parks and the addition of electronic pay stations at various properties.

Other improvements will be made at a number of properties throughout the state, and may include new fire rings, picnic tables and grills; graveling and grading campsites and repairs and improvements to facilities, entrance roads and parking.

Under a separate funding act (Act 71) approved by the legislature, the park system will complete \$4.5 million in water and waste water infrastructure improvement projects at various state parks across the state, including the replacement of vault toilets and camper dump station at Peninsula State Park and replacement of water infrastructure at Devil's Lake State Park.

Implementation of the new rate structure will begin on Feb. 15, 2018. For more information about the Wisconsin State Park System, search for keyword "parks."

Birds need extra assistance in winter

Cold weather can be particularly taxing on many of the birds individuals discover in their backyards throughout the year. Although some species migrate to warmer climates each winter, many stay put and attempt to ride out winter in their normal habitats. Birds that tend to stay put include finches, sparrows, titmice, jays, woodpeckers, chickadees, and cardinals.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology says that, in much of North America, winter days can be windy and cold for birds, and nights are even more challenging. In winter, birds no longer have berries and lush vegetation to consume and insects have

died or gone underground. Since finding food can be especially difficult, and shelter may be scarce, many birds can benefit from a little help from their human friends.

Shelter

Wild Birds Unlimited says shelter for birds is hard to come by in winter. Trees have shed their leaves, and evergreens may not be as abundant or protective. As a result, birds frequently seek man-made structures that can provide refuge from the elements.

People can provide shelters for birds, which may include traditional birdhouses, windbreaks and snow shields. Even a brush pile can simulate the natural shelters of

trees and shrubs that birds prefer. Roost boxes are another option and one that can accommodate small flocks that will group together and share their body heat.

Use leaves and branches to provide natural camouflage and help



Suet is a high-fat meal for birds who need food in winter.

attract birds to the shelter. Offer yarn, fabric scraps, cotton, and other insulating materials that birds can use to help make their

shelters more comfortable.

Food

Birds require high-calorie and high-fat foods

in the winter so they can keep up their metabolism to generate warmth. Also, since birds' feeding habits vary depending on the type of bird, it may be necessary to place feeders at varying heights to maximize access.

Feeders should be located out of the wind and in an area that offers safe refuge from predators. The National Wildlife Federation also says individuals should put out sizable feeders and/or use multiple feeders to provide ample food during snow and ice storms. Feeders should be checked regularly and kept full.

Consistency is also important because birds will grow accustomed to

being supplemented with food and may depend on such supplements to survive.

Bird Watcher's Digest suggests a variety of foods for birds. Black-oil sunflower seeds, peanuts, suet, cracked corn, millet, thistle seed, safflower, and various fruits can help many birds thrive. It's also suggested to include mealworms, which can be purchased at bait stores or pet stores. These larvae of beetles can be presented in a shallow dish with slippery sides so the worms cannot crawl out.

Birds typically need extra support to survive harsh winters. Offering food and shelter during these bleak months can help.

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