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 HEALTH & FAMILY

See the forest for trees — and the art shows

Nature centers put photos, landscapes, still lifes on display



BARBARA BROTMAN
Outdoors

Jack and Denise Gallagher went out for a winter walk and ended up at an art opening.

After a hike at Ryerson Woods near Deerfield, they stopped for a drink of water at Brushwood, the headquarters and arts center hub of Friends of Ryerson Woods. And there they happened on the opening reception for its new show of landscape paintings.

Artists Susan Kraut and Richard Deutsch were talking with visitors about painting, landscape and light. People wandered, gaz-

ing at Deutsch's paintings of pilings in the Chicago River and Kraut's of storm-clouded skies.

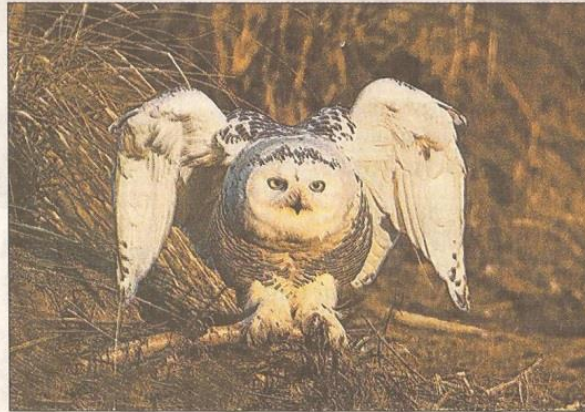
Hiking boots on their feet and glasses of lemonade in their hands, the Gallaghers celebrated their good fortune.

"It's perfect," Denise Gallagher, of Evanston, said. "We walked for an hour, and we came in here, and it's just wonderful."

As can be any adventure that combines the art of nature and nature itself. Especially in winter, when it can be quite pleasant to experience the outdoors, indoors.

There are a number of opportunities to do so. Brushwood, the Greek Revival-style building that was the summer home of the Edward L. Ryerson family, has art shows year-round. The Morton Arboretum and Chicago Botanic Garden frequently hold nature-themed art exhibits. At the Botanic Garden Saturday is the opening of "Woodcut," featuring handmade prints of cross-sections of salvaged wood by artist Bryan Nash Gill.

The Peggy Notebaert Nature



JERRY GOLDNER PHOTO

A photo of a snowy owl is as part of the exhibition "Owls of Illinois" by photographer Jerry Goldner at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum.

Museum is showing an exhibit called "A Meticulous Beauty," in which Jennifer Angus has arranged sustainably farmed insects into a wallpaperlike pattern.

And the museum recently unveiled "Owls of Illinois," an

exhibit by wildlife photographer and owl aficionado Jerry Goldner, of Evanston.

All are in a setting that offers the opportunity to see art, then experience it by walking outside.

Goldner's pictures are dra-

"Nature and art have always been very entwined."

— Richard Deutsch

matic, large-scale images of owls he has seen in the Chicago area. They range from the snowy owl that drew crowds to the lakefront in 2011 and 2012 to the rare burrowing owl that Goldner has seen only once, when he took the picture that is in the exhibit.

The pictures are beautiful, but Goldner's aim is also to inform the public about owls.

"People don't realize there are so many different species in Illinois," he said. "Owls are the most elusive, the most difficult to photograph, the most sought after in the birding world, and the most beautiful to me."

At Brushwood, the focus on fine arts, which includes a book

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Natural art

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group and art classes, has enabled it to reach more people, said Sophia Twitchell, executive director of Friends of Ryerson Woods.

"Environmental education in some regards can be sort of exclusive. Not everyone wants to know the migration pattern of a certain species or the Latin name of a flower," she said. "But they still really respond to and love nature."

"In order to engage that broader community, we started to focus on the intersection of art and nature."

It is a natural intersection, said Deutsch, who teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

"Nature and art have always been very entwined together," he said. "The Art Institute probably has more landscapes than any other subject."

Which makes sense, he said: "The landscape is the place where we all have very strong visual, emotional, psychological responses."

And the sky is an important, brooding presence in a number of Kraut's paintings, appropriately for a show titled "Sky/Place."

"It's the feeling of the light, for me, when it's cloudy and dusky, when the light is disappearing, but you can still feel it in there," said Kraut, also a teacher at the Art Institute.

She and Deutsch were delighted to be showing their works at Brushwood.

"It's such a great place for an exhibition," Deutsch said. "I can look right out there and see the light itself."

"It's very sweet, very intimate; definitely not intimidating the way some galleries are," Kraut said. "In a way, shows like this are the most gratifying. People aren't thinking about it as art."

But after seeing it, they might think differently about nature. Outside the exhibit, the late afternoon sky over Ryerson Woods was a windblown patchwork of blue sky, dark-bellied clouds, white puffs so soft edged that you couldn't see where they ended, and a long band of clouds that formed a hori-

zontal line above the trees.

It looked like a painting. At least it did now.

If you go

Brushwood is within the Edward L. Ryerson Conservation Area, at 21950 N. Riverwoods Road, Riverwoods. Free. More information at ryersonwoods.org or 847-968-3343.

For the outdoors part of your visit, the 561-acre preserve has 6.5 miles of trails through forest and along the Des Plaines River and a small farm. For information, call 847-968-3320.

The Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum is at 2430 N. Cannon Drive, Chicago. Admission is \$9 for adults, with discounts for students, seniors and children and suggested donations days for Illinois residents on Thursdays. More information is at www.chias.org or 773-755-5100.

For your outdoor segment, the museum has a rooftop bird observation walk with great views, which is located just east of North Pond, a prime spot for a walk.

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