

# inSTALLations

February 2010

## Critter Corner

### Wild Woodchucks



We celebrate Groundhog Day on February 2nd, but wild woodchucks will not come out of hibernation until March or April. Each woodchuck hibernates in its own underground burrow and will lose 30% of its body mass over the course of the winter. Males will be the first to emerge in spring and are followed by the females a few weeks later.

Baby woodchucks are born about a month after the females mate and weigh less than an ounce at birth. By six weeks old they are weaned and heading out on their own. They won't reach their full adult size until the end of their second summer making them vulnerable to fox, large hawks, bobcat, and bear.

Although you won't see any today, woodchucks are regularly sighted here at Chippewa Nature Center. They visit the Homestead Farm area and sometimes hang out in the Arboretum or around Peeper's Pond. The tunnel entrance is usually 10-12 inches in diameter with a pile of fresh dirt around it. When the snow melts and the sun shines this spring, be sure to look for these amazing mammals.

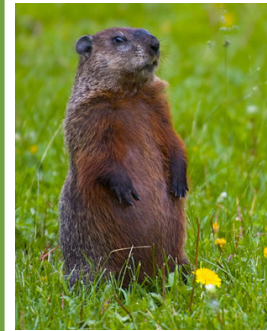


## Nature Notes

'Groundhog' and 'woodchuck' are two names for the same animal.

Woodchucks are one of a handful of true hibernators in Michigan. Their body temperature, heart rate, and metabolism drop dramatically in winter. They don't eat or eliminate waste and cannot be easily woken up.

Woodchucks are the largest member of the squirrel family. They occasionally climb trees in search of food.



A woodchuck's tunnel may be 20 or 30 feet long underground

Dandelions, daisies, goldenrod and clover are favorite groundhog foods. They will also help themselves to the goodies in your garden.

**Visit the Temporary Visitor Center for program information.**