

# Fall on the Farm



climbing big rocks that ring the exhibit and collecting sticks and acorns.

Solar-powered sculpture and other interactive exhibits are among the many changes that have been made at the Farm in recent years. Since the 50-year anniversary in 2005, a lot has changed at the Farm, which also just ended a successful capital campaign in 2008. Sanctuary director Christy Foote-Smith says that the farm needed extensive updating since not much had been done since Louise Ayer Hatheway willed the farm to the Massachusetts Audubon Society in 1955.

In the past few years, the Farm has already implemented most plans, including rebuilding all of the barns that house the farm animals, says Christy Foote-Smith, and



It's fun to pretend you're a farmer driving a tractor.



Kids sort wooden eggs of different sizes, dropping them down a chute and picking them up at the Poultry Barn.

Take the kids to  
Drumlin Farm  
this fall for a  
day they won't  
forget!



*Written and  
photographed by  
Elena Murphy*

**O**n a recent sunny fall afternoon, my husband and I packed our three kids, ages 4-9, into the car and headed out from Lexington to Drumlin Farm in Lincoln for a visit. The kids have been to the farm numerous times, and my 7-year-old even resisted going. "I don't want to see the animals again," he grouched. What people remember most about Drumlin are the farm animals, but they're just the beginning of what kids and adults can explore here.

After walking past pumpkins, eggplants and hot peppers piled high at the Visitor Welcome Center, we arrived at our first stop: the Sun Birds structure. This sculpture by Greg Curci uses the sun to move the wings of this sleek flock of metal birds on top of a pole. My kids have seen this sculpture before, but this time they figured out how to use the solar panels nearby to make the birds flap their wings. It was one of those "A-ha!" moments,

as they whipped off their jackets to cover and uncover the panels as fast as they could to get some real motion going.

Then we started down the hill. According to the visitor's map, a drumlin is a "tear-drop-shaped hill formed by glacial debris," and this particular hill was pretty steep for small kids or stroller-pushing parents. One of the best improvements has been to reshape it into a much more gradual slope with trails, some hands-on exhibits, and benches along the way.

Near the bottom of the hill, we found our 7-year-old had stopped to check out the newest exhibit: the Sensory Tree. A couple of tree trunks have been coated in resin and feature objects to touch such as bumpy frog statues and drumsticks. Our younger kids found it immensely satisfying to bang the drumsticks on the tree to their own beat. Once they were there, they could have stayed indefinitely,

the most recent campaign made possible the groundbreaking this month for a new Farm Life Center, which will feature two classrooms, one with a kitchen, to support the goal of letting kids and adults learn on-site about the Farm and surrounding wildlife.

There is a lot of wildlife at the Farm, which is also a sanctuary, and birds are the most visible. We walked through a patch of



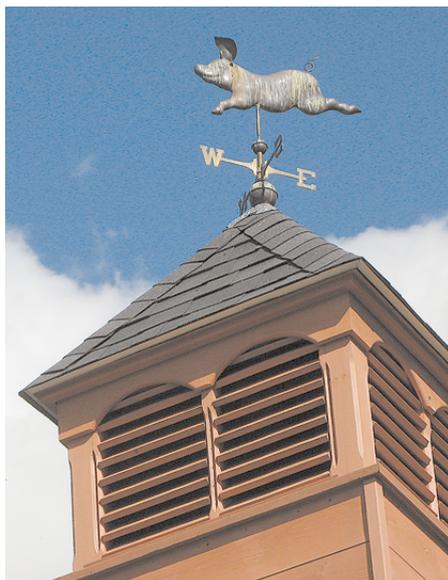
Kids enjoying the hayride around the Farm.



Boys making the solar powered panels move the birds' wings flap at Sun Birds sculpture. Sun Birds sculpture by Greg Curci at Drumlin Farm and Wildlife Sanctuary.



A bucolic scene.



The cupola on the Pig Barn.

woods that contains the non-releasable birds in large cages designed to integrate the trees and landscape around them. These birds have recovered from injuries at wildlife rehabilitation centers, but stay at Drumlin Farm because they cannot take care of themselves on their own. Though they are protected, they do get out a bit. One sleepy screech owl peered at us while a teacher gave a talk about owls at one of Drumlin's many outdoor classrooms. And teachers take the birds to schools in Lowell, Framingham and other towns, as well as senior centers.

Bird watching at Drumlin also is increasing. Bluebird boxes are sprinkled along the fields, and trails weave in and out of woods and fields so a walk can yield some surprises. (On one visit, I saw wild turkeys snacking in the wild grass and observing elementary-aged students at an outdoor classroom). And it may be even easier in coming months to see wild birds because the Farm received a grant from Intel to install some wildlife cameras and broadcast wildlife appearances on the Web.

Next, we toured the underground tanks,

where the animals seem to camouflage really well because they're always hard to find, and then checked out the animals above in the outdoor pens. Though my skeptical first-grader wasn't initially convinced that the black and silver fox was really a rarely colored red fox, he was intrigued to see a real wild animal close up.

What we didn't see that day was the Farm Discovery Trail that begins near the fox and rabbit pens. Along an orange pine needle-covered path, is a series of short, connected trails that kids often use when they visit with their teachers. However, it's open to everyone and kids love features such as the "stump jump": a group of sawed tree trunks that children can leap from or arrange into their own design. There are also wood boxes along the way for kids to fill with treasures they pick up, and the boxes the day I visited were crammed full of pinecones, leaves and rocks. On the ground are molds of animal tracks for kids to match, which would be especially fun in the snow.

After getting a peek at a few wild

animals, our kids trooped over to the sheep, goats, and other farm animals that were grazing outside. The kids liked watching the piglets climb all over each other in the pig barn and weighing themselves together on a huge scale to see if they weigh as much as a pig going to market (not quite yet).

What we didn't know at the time are all the green improvements around the Farm. For instance, Mia Kheyfetz, marketing director, notes the pig barn features a solar panel that combines sun and fans to heat a classroom in the barn. Another change has been made to a pond near the Poultry Barn. This pond was clogged with invasive plants that benefited from the manure-containing water that ran down the slight hill from the cows and horses' barn. Volunteers pulled out the invasive plants, enabling other deep-rooted native plants to absorb the nutrients that come with the run-off and use them before they enter the pond.

We then strolled over to the Red Barn, also known as where the horses and cows

## Fun things to do at Drumlin



A lot of people don't know Drumlin Farm is open all winter, says Mia Kheyfetz. It's open Tuesday-Friday, and Monday holidays year-round, and closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. If you're looking for some popular events, below is a sample and you can find out more about the Farm's programs, preschool and summer camps at [www.drumlinfarm.org](http://www.drumlinfarm.org).



### Winter Solstice:

Ages 4 and older are invited to hear stories of how people used to view and celebrate winter long ago. Make a candle to light during these shortest days of the year. Friday, Dec. 18, 4-5:30 pm; and 7-8:30 pm.



### Cheesemaking:

Make cow or goat milk cheese, including paneer, mozzarella, and fresh goat cheese. Sat., Dec. 5, 12-4 pm or Sat., Jan. 16, 12-4 pm.



### Backyard Sugaring:

Learn how to identify and tap sugar maple trees and how to boil and store maple syrup. Sat., Feb. 6, 1-4 pm.



### Digital Photography:

Get some tips on how to use your digital camera to capture splendid outdoor views around Drumlin. Thurs., Jan. 7 and 14th, 7-9 pm.

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Tuesday - Sunday, and Monday federal holidays.  
Website: [www.massaudubon.org/drumlin](http://www.massaudubon.org/drumlin)  
The programs listed require pre-registration

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“drove” an old stationary tractor near the Poultry Barn, climbing all over it, and making growling motor sounds, while his siblings sorted wooden eggs inside the chickens’ barn and parents took advantage of the momentary quiet by sitting in the sun.

In such a leafy, serene setting, buffered by trees from any noise, Drumlin is an ideal environment for seeing

animals firsthand. However, only a short walk over to the other side of the farm is Boyce Field, home to Drumlin’s wide range of organic produce. Being able to pick strawberries in the summer, and see where the Swiss chard and pumpkins grow, is all part of an initiative at Drumlin to “Know your food,” says director Christy Foote-Smith.

The Farm makes it easy for people to get to know local food. The Visitor Welcome Center has open carts with produce for sale, and seasonal produce is also available through a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), where subscribers pay a fee and each week get some of what has just been picked at the Farm. There’s even a winter CSA, which Drumlin’s Mia Kheyfetz says is unusual. If you join the winter CSA, expect plenty of kale, as well as potatoes, onions and squash from the root cellar. And anyone wondering what to do with all these hardy New England vegetables can attend a “Winter Harvest Dinner” at the Farm that will be cooked from Drumlin’s own meats and vegetables in February.

At the end of our trip to Drumlin, as the kids picked out pumpkins and I grabbed some last-minute dinner ingredients, even our 7-year-old said he liked the visit, especially the tractor. There’s something here for everybody.

MORE PROGRAMS AT DRUMLIN FARM

**Native Wildlife**  
Visit our Bird Hill and Drumlin Underground exhibits for the rare chance to see New England’s most popular wild animals up close, including our skunk, rabbit, owls, hawks, deer, and fox. These animals make Drumlin Farm their home because they have been injured or disabled and cannot survive in the wild.

The Learning Garden  
Ever climbed inside a tent of beans? Tasted fresh mint off the stem? Get

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your hands dirty in our learning garden and find out how much fun vegetables can be! The garden is at its best during the late spring, summer, and fall months, and you can also purchase our own produce at the farm stand to take home with you.

**Discover Drumlin Activities**  
Join our naturalists on the farm for drop-in discovery activities to learn more about the nature of Massachusetts. Discover Drumlin activities are free with admission to the sanctuary and run at 10:00 am, 11:30 am, and 2:30 pm daily from April 1 - November 30 and at 10:00 am, 11:00 am, and 2:30 pm on weekends from December 1 - March 31. Activities and their locations are listed daily in the bulletin near the admissions window.

**Hayrides**  
Hop onboard for a good old-fashioned hayride around the farm. In the spring, summer, and fall seasons, hayrides depart from the Red Barn, weather permitting, every 15 minutes from 10:00 am - 12:30 pm and 1:30 pm - 3:45 pm. Age 13 - adult \$2, 2 - 12 \$1, under 2 free.

**Hiking Trails**  
Stroll along our vegetable fields, amble through the woods, or hike to one of the highest points in the greater Boston area on our 3 miles of trails. The view from the top of our drumlin offers a glimpse of both Mt. Modadnock and Mt. Wachusett on a clear day.