Harvard Squared

"arts," she explains. “Participation used to be more of a passive activity: sit in a chair and listen to a concert and go see an art-exhibit opening. You wouldn’t hear the artists talk about their processes, or, going to a play, you wouldn’t hear the cast and director talk about the show afterward.” Studies show that people are highly motivated to attend arts events by “having fun, and learning and experiencing new things,” she continues: the very definitions of culture are widening to beyond the traditional genres of ballet, opera, and painting, and now extend to “community festivals, public art, and even food and drinks.”

ArtWeek organizers welcome both traditional and unconventional art-making—from gatherings with a social-justice and community-building theme, like an all-ages, all-abilities jogging event along “mural mile” in Framingham, she says, to off-beat experiences of the kind provided by an artist who fashioned instruments out of ice at the Faneuil Hall Frost Ice Loft (since closed) and

ALL IN A DAY: Spring Outings at Mass Audubon Sanctuaries

The Parker River National Wildlife Refuge stretches along the coast of Plum Island, near Newburyport. In addition to prime beach and walking territory for humans, the refuge’s 4,700 acres provide diverse habitats, from dunes and mudflats to marshlands, that are especially important for birds.

Mass Audubon’s nearby Joppa Flats Education Center holds events and excursions that explore these precious ecosystems, including “Falconry & A Raptor Road Trip,” on March 16. The adventure is led by Joppa Flats school and youth education coordinator Lisa Hutchings, teacher-naturalist Jonathan Brooks, and falconer Wendy Pavlicek, who also directs the Burlington Science Center, part of that town’s public-school system. She starts the day with a live birds-of-prey demonstration, and will explain their habits and hunting, and share her own experiences with these winged predators. That will be followed by an expedition into the refuge in search of raptors.

Elsewhere, Mass Audubon hosts other early spring events, such as the “Maple Sugaring” weekend (March 23-24) at Moose Hill Wildlife Sanctuary, in Sharon, and at Brookwood Farm, in the Canton section of the Blue Hills Reservation. Visitors use traditional tools and learn the age-old method of tapping sap from trees and boiling it into syrup.

At the Drumlín Farm Wildlife Sanctuary, in Lincoln, find out how the sheep, goats, pigs, and other barnyard animals are readying to emerge from winter. Or trek along the path at Bird Hill to see local raptors and pheasants. Short trails also diverge to other points across the 200-acre property, some with prime views of New Hampshire’s Mount Monadnock, others with sightings of the sanctuary’s white-tail deer. On March 30, the site hosts Woolapalooza. The annual fiber festival features the farm’s newest animal babies, sheep-shearing, works and demonstrations by local fiber artisans, and hands-on activities for kids.

For an evening event open only to those over 16, check out “Timberdoodles and Tapas,” at the North River Wildlife Sanctuary, in Marshfield, on Boston’s South Shore (April 6). Enjoy a Spanish-style dinner, then head outside to find an American woodcock (also known as a timberdoodle, bogsucker, and mudbat) performing his buzzing calls and elaborate and acrobatic aerial courtship display. “In the evening,” according to timberdoodles.org, “males may sing and fly for half an hour or longer, and when the moon is bright, they may carry on through the night.”

Clockwise from top left: Roam Plum Island while learning about falconry; visit the barn or stroll at Drumlín Farm Wildlife Sanctuary; or try traditional maple sugaring at the Moose Hill Wildlife Sanctuary.