



Macon County Conservation District



EDUCATION & FIELD TRIP GUIDE



Learning opportunities at Macon County Conservation District sites
or your location on the nature, wildlife, and history of Central Illinois.

3939 Nearing Lane, Decatur, IL 62521
217.423.7708 | MaconCCD.org

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RESERVATIONS & GENERAL INFORMATION




You may make reservations for all Macon County Conservation District programs and services by calling (217) 423-7708 or emailing MCCD@MaconCCD.org. Staff are available to respond Monday-Friday from 8am to 5pm. Programs may be booked for any day of the week, including weekends. Reserve well in advance to secure the dates you want. Please have a selection of dates, times, and programs in mind when inquiring.

Programs may be held at your site or at one of ours. While most field trips take place at Rock Springs Nature Center, the Macon County Conservation District also manages four other sites in Macon County where programs can be offered.

ROCK SPRINGS CONSERVATION AREA & ROCK SPRINGS NATURE CENTER

1380 acre site with forests, wetlands, and prairies. Nature Center features live animals and interactive exhibits. Southwestern edge of Decatur  

FRIENDS CREEK CONSERVATION AREA



616 acre site with forests, prairies, and streams, near Argenta.   

**Note: The regular restrooms are located at the comfort station at the campground.*


GRISWOLD CONSERVATION AREA

45 acre site with wildlife habitat and a glacial kame, near Blue Mound.  

FORT DANIEL CONSERVATION AREA

609 acre site with forests and a creek, near Long Creek.  

SAND CREEK CONSERVATION AREA

768 acre site with prairies, forests, and floodplain, south of Decatur. 

KEY



Pavilion On-site



Restroom On-site



Pit Toilet On-site



CANCELLATION POLICY

On-site field trips may be held year-round and in all weather. In the case of inclement weather, such as heavy rain, extreme heat, or thunderstorms, alternative indoor activities can be conducted. We will never cancel a field trip due to weather, so please prepare your group and dress accordingly.

Should you want to cancel a program for any reason, please notify us as soon as possible. Backup dates may not be available, but we will do our best to accommodate when possible.

LUNCH

Groups are welcome to enjoy lunch outdoors during their field trips. You may reserve pavilions when you call to schedule your field trip program(s). Rock Springs Nature Center does not have an indoor lunchroom, but we can often accommodate groups inside during cold and rainy weather.

WHAT TO WEAR

We advise sturdy shoes (no sandals), socks, long pants, and long sleeves for participating in outdoor programs. Gloves, hats, and boots are recommended for damp and rainy weather.

VISIT ON YOUR OWN

We encourage you to bring your class to any of the five Conservation Areas across Macon County throughout the year. There is NO FEE to visit any of these sites or Rock Springs Nature Center on your own. We simply ask that you call ahead and let us know when you plan to visit.

LIBRARY AT ROCK SPRINGS NATURE CENTER

This resource library contains nature education, history, storytelling, and children's selections, as well as a good selection of field guides and books on various nature topics. Most of these resources may be borrowed for up to 30 days.

SYMBOL LEGEND

Certain programs are best at certain times of year. Look for the suggested season symbols below:



Spring



Summer



Fall



Winter

Some programs can be held at one of our Conservation District sites or at your site. Look for the designated symbols below:



Your Site



Our Sites



FEES FOR CONSERVATION DISTRICT PROGRAMS

AT A CONSERVATION DISTRICT SITE

\$2.00/participant per session

Minimum Fee: \$30 per session

Based on 1 hour per session, adaptable to your schedule.

Chaperones may attend for free, but program leaders will depend on them for student supervision. Chaperones are discouraged from bringing younger children.

AT YOUR SITE

In-County: \$40 per session, up to 30 students. \$20 for each additional session held that day.

Out-of-County: \$75 per session, up to 30 students. \$35 each additional session held that day.

\$20 surcharge for trips more than 80 miles round trip from Rock Springs Nature Center.

Do you need help funding your field trip? Grant opportunities may be available through the Decatur Area Audubon Society, one of our valued community partners. Call or email for more information.



FIELD TRIPS & PROGRAMS

Programs can be adapted to all grade levels. Each program is one hour in length unless otherwise noted, and we can adapt to your schedule.

Don't see a program you're looking for? We can create a custom program specific to your needs. Examples of custom topics include Illinois Fish, Natural Resources and Sustainability, Animal Migration, and more. Contact us to create your program.

NATURE PROGRAMS

ANIMAL ADAPTATIONS



From double-coated fur to the fringed edge of an owl's wing, animals have many adaptations that help them survive and thrive. Learn about a variety of these with hands-on activities and a hike.

ANIMALS IN WINTER

Uncover animal activity in winter through a presentation and a hike to look for tracks and other evidence that not all animals hibernate during winter.

ANIMAL SKELETONS

Contrast vertebrate animals and invertebrates during an indoor presentation. Then look for vertebrate animals, with an emphasis on mammals, during a hike.

ASTRONOMY

Discover our place in the solar system and learn about the night sky. Weather permitting, we will go outside and view the sun through a telescope.

BIG GREEN MACHINE

This presentation and hike covers the importance of green plants in the food web and emphasizes wildflowers and leaves in the spring, and seeds and leaves in the fall.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Discover the many unique characteristics that birds have, then learn to identify some of them. Can include a hike with binoculars.

CHANGES: SEASONS

Plants and animals are preparing for what comes next. We will explore the woods to find clues of their preparation.

EARTH'S HIDDEN MYSTERIES

Delve below ground to unearth some of Earth's hidden creatures. Get a "feel" for earthworms and the important role they and other ground-dwelling creatures play in the ecosystem.

ENDANGERED ILLINOIS

What's the difference between an endangered, threatened, and extirpated species, and how do animals get added to these lists? Learn about some of Illinois' at-risk species and what you can do to help.

FROG MUSIC

Meet live amphibians and enjoy learning about frogs and toads. Learn the calls and songs of local species.

GOING BATTY

Focusing on Illinois bats, participants identify truths and myths about these fascinating mammals. A variety of activities will entertain and educate students.

Note: No live bats.



HOLIDAY FOR THE BIRDS

Learn about birds at the “Window on Wildlife” and make pine cone bird feeders. Participants can hang the cones on trees and shrubs around the Nature Center.

ILLINOIS MAMMALS

Examine pelts, skulls, tracks, and scat of Illinois mammals to piece together what their lives are like. This program can tie well with the French fur trading era of Illinois history.

INSECTS OF OUR WORLD

Learn about insects through an indoor presentation. Then, catch and release invertebrates with nets and examine them with a magnifying glass.

LET’S ROCK

Dig up the differences between rocks and minerals, and begin to recognize the roles they play in everyday life. This program can also include a look at fossils.

MAPLE SYRUP

Visit Rock Springs Conservation Area to explore how trees are tapped and sap is processed into yummy syrup.

When: February through March.

MOTHER NATURE’S NEIGHBORHOOD

Habitats and food webs will be covered during an indoor presentation followed by a hike through natural areas.

POLLINATOR POWER

Students will learn the important role of pollinators, from bees to butterflies to birds. Emphasis on native pollinators and their impact on the environment and us.

PONDS AND WETLANDS

Discover the importance of water habitats. Then hike to a pond or wetland to catch, examine, and release wild critters.



PRAIRIE PATHS

On this hike we will experience a prairie - one of the rarest habitats in Illinois. Learn about prairie plants, how the Native Americans and pioneers felt about the prairie, and what happened to it.

PREHISTORIC ILLINOIS

Discover an Illinois before people, from warm tropical seas, to dark muddy swamps with giant insects, to dinosaurs, and to the ice age. Emphasis on geologic history and prehistoric wildlife.

REPTILES OF ILLINOIS

Learn what makes reptiles unique. Live turtles and snakes help students learn the true nature and value of these creatures.

SEEDS: NATURE'S HITCHHIKERS

Take a hike to see what hitches a ride. Look at seeds close-up and aid in seed dispersal.

SENSORY & NATURE AWARENESS HIKE

A guide will lead your group on a hike emphasizing sensory awareness and the textures, shapes, smells, and sounds of nature. This hike will increase their appreciation of what's happening in the woods and prairies.

SURVIVAL SKILLS

Go head-to-head and see if you have what it takes to survive in the outdoors. Teams will try their hand at building a shelter, following a map, starting a fire, and more. For third grade and above. \$3/person.
Time: 2 hours.

SYMBOLS OF OUR STATE

Glimpse Illinois' natural history through the state symbols that school children chose to represent Illinois. We can cover the state tree, bird, wildflower, mammal, insect, prairie grass, fish, amphibian, reptile, fossil, and mineral. Some live animals included.

THE UNLOVABLES

Discover the truth behind animals that are often misunderstood or not considered particularly “cute” or “cuddly”, and the important roles they play in ecosystems. Some live animals included.

WHO GOES THERE? OWLS

Learn about the habits and habitats of native owls. We'll examine mounted specimens to see differences between species.

Note: No live owls. Owl pellet dissection may be added for an additional \$2.50 per person. Call for availability.

WORLD OF WATER

Explore the water cycle, the human impact on water, and the importance of water in the ecosystem through hands-on activities.

SPECIALTY PROGRAMS

ARCHERY

Rotate through life-like 3D targets featuring turkey, deer, bears, and more. Equipment and basic instruction is provided. For ages 10 and up.

Fee: \$5/person

POND CANOEING

All instruction and equipment, including life jackets and paddles, are provided for groups to paddle the Cattail Pond at Rock Springs Conservation Area. Each canoe can fit up to 2 adults or 2 children with an adult.

Fee: \$20/canoe

TEAM BUILDING

Engage in a variety of team building activities, with an emphasis on trust, cooperation, and communication. For ages 10 and up.

Time: 1-2 hours

Fee: \$3/person



HISTORY PROGRAMS

HOLIDAYS ON THE PRAIRIE

Students will learn about Christmases of the past at the Homestead Prairie Farm, and early Christmas traditions in this hands-on program.

HOMESTEAD PRAIRIE FARM TOUR

Glimpse farm life just outside Decatur as you take a living history tour of this 1860s farmhouse and yard.

NATIVE AMERICAN LIFEWAYS

What was life like for the Native Americans who inhabited Illinois 200 years ago? What natural resources were available and how did they use them? Take a trip back to a different time and culture. Play traditional games.

ONE ROOM SCHOOL

What was school like in the 19th century? Learn about one room schools, teachers' duties, lessons, and student life with this interactive presentation.

PLAYTIMES PAST

What kind of toys did children have in the 1800s and what games did they play? Discover the fun of old fashioned toys and games during this interactive presentation.

TRAVELER'S TRUNK

What was it like to be a traveler in the days of stagecoaches and steam trains? Learn how to pack light and make do.

A VISIT TO HOMESTEAD PRAIRIE FARM

With an emphasis on change in local environment and lifestyle, you will begin with a short indoor presentation, take a hike through the woods and prairies, then experience life on a 1860s living history farm. \$3/person.

Time: 2 hours



OGLESBY MANSION

The Governor Richard J. Oglesby Mansion in downtown Decatur is a historical house museum that tells the life story of one of Decatur's most important citizens of the 1800s. Through tours, exhibits, and programs come learn about a man who was a friend of Abraham Lincoln, went west in the Gold Rush, fought in two wars, served as a U.S. Senator, and was elected Governor of Illinois three times.

Contact the mansion volunteers to discuss various program and tour options.

Call (217) 877-2217 or visit www.OglesbyMansion.org.



LENDING TRUNKS

These interactive teaching kits are available to educators in the Macon County area. Each trunk contains a variety of materials to support student learning, including books, videos, artifacts, lesson plans, activities, posters, and more. Recommended grade levels are listed. Contact staff at (217) 423-7708 or MCCD@MaconCCD.org to reserve your Museum in a Box. Must be picked up at Rock Springs Nature Center. All boxes are free to use and may be borrowed for up to two weeks.

MUSEUM IN A BOX

Assembled by Conservation District staff, these boxes highlight a variety of local nature and history topics.

BATS

Who: Grades K through 12

BIRDS OF PREY

Who: Grades K through 12

DEER

Who: Grades PreK through 12

FROG AND TOADS

Who: Grades K through 12

PRAIRIE

Who: Grades 3 through 12

PREHISTORIC LIFE

Who: Grades K through 8

REPTILES

Who: Grades K through 6

TURKEYS

Who: Grades K through 12

1860S FARM LIFE

Who: Grades K through 6

CIVIL WAR SOLDIER

Who: Grades 3 through 12

NATIVE AMERICAN LIFEWAYS

Who: Grades K through 6

IDNR LENDING TRUNKS

These trunks, available through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' lending trunk program, feature additional natural and cultural history topics.



AQUATIC ILLINOIS

Who: Grades 3 through 12

ILLINOIS BIRDS

Who: Grades 3 through 8

ILLINOIS FOSSILS

Who: Grades 3 through 8

ILLINOIS INSECTS AND SPIDERS

Who: Grades PreK through 8



ILLINOIS INVASIVE SPECIES

Who: Grades 5 through 12

ILLINOIS POLLINATORS

Who: Grades PreK through 8

ILLINOIS PRAIRIE

Who: Grades K through 8

ILLINOIS STATE SYMBOLS

Who: Grades K through 8



ILLINOIS TREES

Who: Grades K through 10

ILLINOIS MAMMALS

Who: Grades K through 12

PEOPLE & ANIMALS FROM ILLINOIS' PAST

Who: Grades K through 8

EXPLORATION PACKS & WORKSHOPS

EXPLORATION PACKS

Use our themed Exploration Packs to enhance your own adventure at Rock Springs Conservation Area. Each pack includes a trail map, exploration equipment, and activities for children and adults. These packs are available to borrow at no cost.

Themes include:

- BIRDS
- FISH
- IDNR FIELD TRIP PACK
- ILLINOIS' AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES FIELD PACK
- INSECTS
- MAMMALS
- SPRING & SUMMER
- SURVIVAL
- TRACKING
- WETLANDS & PONDS

SCOUT WORKSHOPS

The Macon County Conservation District offers workshops for the scouts to earn merit badges. These 2-3 hour workshops are held at Rock Springs Conservation Area and are open to troops, individual scouts, or anyone else who wants to learn. Workshop fees are \$9/scout for two-hour workshops, and \$12/scout for three-hour workshops. Schedule your workshop by calling (217) 423-7708. Workshop themes include:

- **CUB SCOUTS (2 hour workshops)**
 - Conservation
- **WEBELOS (2 hour workshops)**
 - Into the Woods
 - Into the Wild
 - Earth Rocks
- **SCOUTS (3 hour workshops) ages 10+**
 - Forestry
 - Fish & Wildlife Management
 - Soil & Water Conservation
 - Indian Lore
 - Astronomy (partial)
 - Bird Study
 - Reptile & Amphibian Study
 - Mammal Study
- **GIRL SCOUTS (2 hour workshops) Ages 10+**
 - Between Earth and Sky
 - Breathe
 - Get Moving
 - WOW! Wonders of Water



SERVICE LEARNING PROJECTS

Do you have a student or group looking to complete a volunteer Service Learning Project? The Macon County Conservation District has several options to choose from. Have another project idea? Reach out to us at (217) 423-7708 or MCCD@MaconCCD.org to discuss.

GARLIC MUSTARD REMOVAL

Learn the natural history of this invasive plant, and work on removing it from our natural areas.

When: April-May

SEED COLLECTING

Harvest native wildflower seeds from our prairies to diversify other sites.

When: September-October

HONEYSUCKLE REMOVAL

Remove invasive bush honeysuckle at District sites to encourage the growth of native species.

When: Year-round

Who: Ages 13+



StarLab Planetarium

Bring the night sky to your school or facility with a StarLab presentation!

PRICING

Off-Site Programs:

In-County: \$200 per day

Out-of-County: \$250 per day, with a \$20 mileage surcharge over 80 miles round-trip.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

Setup, tear down, two staff members, and one 30-45 minute presentation.

Additional presentations in the same day may be added for \$20 each.

Choose a presentation topic from the following:

- Stars and Constellations - Learn about stars, constellations, and asterisms. Hear folklore about some of the constellations we can see from our own backyard.
- Our Solar System - Get an up-close look at the sun, moon, and planets as we journey through the solar system.
- Our Place in Space - Space is a BIG place! Where does Earth fit within it? Starting here at home, we'll travel to the outer reaches of the solar system, galaxy, and beyond.

REQUIREMENTS

StarLab requires at least 25x25 feet of floor space and **at least 16 feet** of vertical space, and it will need to be placed near a power outlet, **indoors**. Roughly 30-35 people can fit inside comfortably. Please ensure your space fits these requirements before scheduling, as we will NOT be able to set up if the space is inadequate.



Program Wishlist & Notes
