

Volunteer Quarterly

July / August / September 2025



3939 Nearing Lane
Decatur, IL 62521
217-423-7708
MaconCCD.org

Dates to Remember

Volunteer Quarterly Meeting

Rock Springs Nature Center,
Auditorium

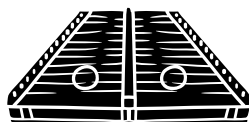
Friday, July 18, 11:30 am – 1 pm

Hear the latest news in educational programming, natural area restoration efforts, foundation projects, and more. Lunch provided. RSVP to Jenny Garver by July 14.



Rock Springs Quilters

Rock Springs Nature Center
Every Wednesday, 9 -11 am



Dulcimer Club

Saturday, July 5 & 19, 10 am

Saturday, August 2, 16, & 30, 10 am

Saturday, September 13 & 27, 10 am



Acoustic Jam Session

Rock Springs Nature Center,
Auditorium

Sunday, July 13, August 10, &
September 14, 2 - 4 pm

Vintage Base Ball Home Game

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Saturday, September 27, 10 am

Douglas Cup Tournament



Astronomy Jamboree

Friends Creek Conservation Area

Saturday, August 9, 8 – 11 pm

Enjoy live music from 8-8:45pm, create a craft to take home, enter a giveaway, and view the stars, visible planets, and possibly even a shooting star or two. Hot dogs, s'mores, and refreshments provided. Bring your telescope and share your knowledge. Free. Register online by August 8.



Hummingbird Festival

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Thursday, August 21, 3 – 6 pm

Learn all about hummingbirds. Watch as we capture, band, and release wild birds. Co-sponsored by Decatur Area Audubon Society. Free. No registration required.



Marketing & Foundation Update

Ashton Dukeman - Marketing Specialist

As we head into our busiest months, Foundation events and planning are in full swing! We're excited to be gearing up for our first-ever **Wine in the Wild** event, held at the newly named Woodbine Farm, the beautiful home of Pat Penhallegon. Planning has been buzzing, and we can't wait to share this new fundraiser with you.

We also recently wrapped up our annual **Rock Springs Ramble 5K** fundraiser. A huge thank you to all the volunteers who came out and made the day run so smoothly—we truly couldn't do it without you!

And as if that weren't enough, planning is already underway for our fall favorite: **Prairie Pedal!** Prep work is picking up, and we're looking forward to another successful ride.

Thanks for all you do to support these events—we couldn't ask for a better team of volunteers!

Welcome New Volunteers!

Camp Volunteer- Easton Brownlee

Master Gardener- Sandi Williams

Prairie Heritage Volunteer- Henry Ward &
Rachael Ward

Trail Monitor- Dalton Cunningham &
Justin Taylor

Vintage Base Ball- Joshua Meyer



Volunteer Fun & Learning



Conducting Wildlife Surveys at MCCD

Rock Springs Nature Center, Auditorium

Monday, July 7, 10 – 11 am

Join Animal Care Naturalist Taylor Buley for an engaging look into how wildlife surveys are conducted across Conservation District sites. The program begins with an indoor presentation, followed by a short hike to check a trail camera and review recent wildlife activity it captured. This is a great opportunity to learn more about local wildlife monitoring efforts. RSVP to Jenny Garver by July 3.

Trail Monitor Training

Rock Springs Nature Center,

East Conference Room

Saturday, August 2, 10 – 11:30am

Help us keep our trails in top shape! Trail monitors are key volunteers who observe and report on trail conditions throughout our Conservation Areas. This session will include a brief overview of the role, followed by a guided walk to practice monitoring techniques. The walk will last about an hour at a relaxed pace and is a great opportunity for individuals or families to get involved. Please dress for the weather and trail conditions. RSVP to Jenny Garver by July 31.



Remembering Our Volunteers & Staff

Norm Greenberg

(Nov 1934 - Apr 2025)- Foundation

Nancy Hudson

(Aug 1949 – Jun 2025)- Desk

Doug Kerr

(1956 – Mar 2025)- Staff

Bruce VanMetre

(May 1953 – Mar 2025)- Special Events

Hike Leader Training

Rock Springs Nature Center,

Washburn Classroom

Tuesday, September 9, 10 – 11:30 am

Do you enjoy spending time outdoors and working with children? Our volunteer hike leaders support environmental education programs by guiding small groups of students on nature walks. These hikes are easy-paced, typically last about one hour, and cover less than half a mile. We provide training, topic materials, and a chance to shadow an experienced hike leader before leading your own group. This opportunity is open to volunteers age 18 and older. RSVP to Alysia Callison by September 5.



Visit the Sites Volunteer Tour

*Rock Springs Nature Center, meet at the
Information Desk*

Tuesday, September 16, 9 am – 3 pm

This day-long outing offers a chance to explore the natural areas and historic sites cared for by the Macon County Conservation District. Our first stop will be a guided tour of the Oglesby Mansion, followed by a visit to Bois du Sangamon Nature Preserve. We'll learn about the site's history and future plans and take a short exploratory walk. Next, we'll head to Fort Daniel Conservation Area for lunch and a conversation about ongoing conservation efforts. We'll wrap up the tour with a stop at Powers Woods near Greenwood Cemetery. At each site, Operations staff will be on hand to share updates and answer questions. Lunch is provided—just bring yourself! Please dress for the weather and be prepared for some walking on uneven ground. Space is limited, so RSVP to Jenny Garver by September 11. We hope to see you there!



Thank You Volunteers

Jenny Garver - Volunteer Coordinator

We are so grateful to have you as part of our volunteer team! From January through May, an incredible 290 volunteers have generously contributed over 3,500 hours of their time. Whether you volunteer once a year or dedicate hundreds of hours, your involvement makes a meaningful impact, and we're thankful for every moment you share with us.

It's been a busy few months, and we want to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has pitched in during recent events. Sixty-six volunteers helped make the Festival of Spring a success, and another twenty-two supported the Rock Springs Ramble. These large community events truly require a team effort, and we couldn't do it without your energy, enthusiasm, and dedication. Be sure to check the volunteer opportunities section of this newsletter to see how you can get involved with upcoming events.



We also want to take a moment to recognize some truly outstanding volunteers who have gone above and beyond so far this year. Five individuals have already contributed over 100 hours: Valorie B, Christa C, Debbie H, Angie H, and Joan M. Another six volunteers have each given between 50 and 99 hours: Jerry C, Marsha C, John R, Rich R, Jim S, and Lonnie W. What an incredible show of commitment!

If you haven't had a chance to turn in your volunteer hours, don't worry. It's never too late. Just reach out, and we'll make sure your time is recorded and appreciated.

Thank you again for all that you do. We're proud to have you as part of our volunteer family!

Tidbits of Information

- **Holiday Closures:** Rock Springs Nature Center will be closed on July 4.
- **Virtual Card Catalog Update:** Over the past ten months, three volunteers and Volunteer Coordinator Jenny Garver have worked diligently to enter the Nature Center's library collection into an online catalog. As of mid-June, the database includes an impressive 1,915 items! We're excited to share that the collection is now accessible by visiting www.librarycat.org/lib/mccdlibrary. The best part? You can browse the collection from any device with internet access—no login required.
- **Summer & Seasonal Staff Update:** There are plenty of new faces at the Nature Center this summer! Nicholas Merrell has joined us as the Historic Sites Intern, while Felicity Hunt is serving as our Naturalist Intern. Salem Schultz is the Audubon Intern for the season. We're also excited to welcome our Summer Camp Counselors: Miles Guebert, Izzy Ledesma, Emily Morthland, and Timber Ziegler. In addition, we have two interns from the Dawson Civic Leadership Institute - Amaia Jones and Kyle Morris - who will be supporting various summer programs. Be sure to say hello if you see them around!
- **Volunteer Gear Reminder:** Just a quick reminder that we have volunteer t-shirts and hats available! The t-shirts are a light blue 50/50 cotton blend, and the hats are light gray with a classic ball cap style. If you'd like a shirt or hat, please reach out to Jenny Garver. We'll be happy to get you set up.



- **Staff Office Lines:** Just a friendly reminder that staff phone numbers beginning with 217-542-**** are direct office lines. These numbers can't receive text messages, so please be sure to call instead. Thanks for helping us stay connected!

Program Services Update

Alysia Callison - Director of Program Services

What a summer it's been already! June was off to a very busy start as summer camps and summer library programs kicked off. For those that may not know, the District hosts five different summer camps:

- Earth Adventures: a full day, week-long, summer-long camp for children ages 6-12
- Adventure Club: a camp that meets on Tuesday mornings for children ages 5-12
- History Camp: a history-themed camp that meets on Wednesday mornings for children ages 6-12
- Mini Camp: for ages 1-5 with an adult buddy, this camp meets for one hour on either Tuesday or Thursday mornings
- Extreme Camp: a more adventurous, full-day camp for children ages 10-15

While we still have spots open in Mini Camp and the last week of Extreme Camp, all of our other camps are totally full – an exciting feat that tells us our camps are well-liked and offering something worthwhile in our community. We are so grateful to the families that trust us with their children over the summer!

Outside of camps, staff are also kept busy with visits to regional libraries to support their summer reading programs. In the first two weeks of June, staff visited 18 libraries – and that's in addition to other programs (nursing homes, summer schools) and staff projects. The rest of the summer proves to be just as busy and fulfilling.



Of course, we also have public programs and events to tend to! We hope to see you at one of our upcoming Summer Concerts, yoga programs, van trips, and/or special events like Astronomy Jamboree and the Hummingbird Festival. We hope your summer is as great as ours!

The More You Know

The Macon County Conservation District (MCCD) is fortunate to have a nonprofit partner that plays a key role in supporting its mission. **The Macon County Conservation Foundation**, originally established in 1981 under the name Natural Heritage and Wildlife Foundation, was created by MCCD employees Janet Atkins and Rodney Washburn as a way to accept donations of land and financial gifts on behalf of the District. In 2003, the organization adopted the name Macon County Conservation Foundation to more clearly reflect its purpose and connection to the local community.



The Foundation plays a vital role in supporting conservation efforts throughout Macon County. **Its work focuses on three key areas: restoring natural areas, enhancing educational programs, and engaging the community.** Through funding and support, the Foundation helps restore prairie, wetland, and forest habitats that benefit native plants and wildlife. It also provides resources for educational programs, field trips, and nature exhibits, giving children and adults alike opportunities to learn about and connect with the environment. In addition, the Foundation organizes popular fundraising events such as Rock Springs Ramble, Prairie Pedal, and Wine in the Wild – fun and meaningful ways for the public to support local conservation projects.

Community involvement is essential to the Foundation's success. Volunteers, donors, and event attendees all play an important part in advancing its mission. Whether you choose to contribute your time, make a donation, or simply spread the word, your support helps preserve Macon County's natural areas for future generations. To learn more about the Foundation or find ways to get involved, visit www.MaconCountyConservationFoundation.org.

Operations Update

Phil Julius - Director of Operations

Operations crews have been very busy with the growing season in full swing. Many District sites have an infestation of invasive and exotic plants, including crown vetch, sericea lespedeza, Canada thistle, teasel, and honeysuckle. The growing season allows for the use of herbicides to slow the growth and even kill these species. Staff have been spraying herbicide at several District locations, targeting these invasive plants. Another method to slow the spread of invasive plants is mowing before the invasive plant goes to seed. Several acres have been mowed to slow the growth of plant life and prevent the reproduction of invasive plants.



With changes to staff offices, the need for a new conference room has come. Operations staff have been working on framing and drywalling a new conference room on the lower level, which is located below the Window on Wildlife. The new conference room is a little bigger than the previous conference room and will make a nice addition to the office space. Operations staff have many talents, and it shows in projects like these.



Staff have been doing prep work for several special events. The public usually doesn't see the setup and take down for these events, but this is critical to the events functioning so well. A huge thank you to all the Operations staff for the hard work they do.

Volunteer Opportunities

Native Garden Workdays

Native Garden Workdays

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Thursday, July 24, August 28, & Sept 25, 9 am

The Macon County Master Naturalists are seeking volunteers to help maintain the native tier garden in front of the Nature Center. These morning workdays will last one to two hours, depending on the amount of work needed in the garden. Volunteers are encouraged to bring their own tools, including work gloves, a hand trowel, shovel, bucket, and hand pruners. The tier garden showcases native prairie and woodland species that attract a variety of insect life for everyone to enjoy. Please RSVP to either Jenny Garver or head gardener Linda (lindasuehendricks@gmail.com) at least one day before each workday so we know who to expect. Thank you!



Astronomy Jamboree

Friends Creek Conservation Area

Saturday, August 9, 8 – 11 pm

Calling amateur astronomers! We are looking for folks to bring and set up their telescopes and share knowledge during this “star party” at Friends Creek Conservation Area. Call Alysia Callison if you're interested in bringing your scope.



Volunteer Opportunities

Prairie Pedal

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Sunday, September 28, 6:30 am – 3 pm

The Prairie Pedal bicycling event raises funds for the Macon County Conservation Foundation. All proceeds support natural areas and wildlife diversity in Macon County. During this event cyclists ride 20, 40, or 62 mile routes. Volunteers can choose from time commitments of 2 to 5 hours. Volunteer stations include registration, rest stops along the bike routes, photography, and clean-up. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver by September 20.



Archaeology & Artifacts

*Rock Springs Conservation Area,
Homestead Prairie Farm*

We are seeking volunteers to help sift through dirt for artifacts from the 2018 excavation beneath the farmhouse.

This opportunity is open to individuals aged 13 and older. For more information or to sign up, please contact Brent Wielt.



Nature Center Greeter

Rock Springs Nature Center

Join us as a Nature Center Greeter and be the friendly face that welcomes visitors to our beautiful location! You'll engage with nature and history enthusiasts of all ages, answer simple questions, and assist staff with various projects. With convenient morning and afternoon shifts available seven days a week, this is a wonderful opportunity to connect with nature, history, and your community in a meaningful way! This opportunity is open to individuals aged 18 and older. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver.



Volunteers in Action



We have a dedicated crew of volunteers assisting with the Nest Box Program. This volunteer program has been recording data for 14 years for Cornell University. In 2024, volunteers observed 1,066 eggs with 662 eggs successfully hatching.

To RSVP or Contact Staff in This Issue

Rock Springs Nature Center: 217-423-7708

Taylor Buley: TBuley@MaconCCD.org; 217-542-5524

Alysia Callison: ACallison@MaconCCD.org; 217-542-5538

Ashton Dukeman: ADukeman@MaconCCD.org; 217-542-5537

Jenny Garver: JGarver@MaconCCD.org; 217-542-5536

Phil Julius: PJulius@MaconCCD.org; 217-542-5528

Brent Wielt: BWielt@MaconCCD.org; 217-542-5525

