



SUMMER 2025

# Prairie Islander

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## Living on the Edge: Part 1

### The Importance of the Edge Between Habitats: A Crucial Ecological Transition

Jerry Culp

In the world of ecology, the "edge" refers to the boundary zone where two distinct habitats meet. These transition areas, known as **ecotones**, are crucial to the health and functionality of ecosystems. Whether it's the boundary between a forest and a grassland, a wetland and a dry field, or even the interface between a prairie and a woodland, these edges serve as hotspots of biodiversity, ecological interactions, and resilience to environmental change. Understanding the importance of these habitat edges is key to both conservation and the study of ecological dynamics.

#### 1. Biodiversity Hotspots

One of the primary reasons habitat edges are so vital is their role in fostering **biodiversity**. An ecotone is more than just a simple boundary—it's a dynamic area where species from both adjoining ecosystems interact. For example, in the case of a prairie-woodland edge, plants, animals, and insects that are adapted to either the prairie or woodland environment may overlap, creating a zone of higher species diversity. Species that require a combination of characteristics from both environments, such as a mix of sun and shade or access to different types of food, are more likely to thrive here.

These transitional areas often serve as refuges for species that are unable to live in the more extreme conditions found in the heart of the prairie or woodland. For instance, some bird species prefer the edges because they provide access to both the open space of the prairie for foraging and the cover of the woodland for shelter. The result is a higher density of life in these areas compared to either of the two neighboring ecosystems.

#### 2. Critical Habitat for Wildlife

Edges between habitats provide **unique habitats** that may not exist in the interior of either ecosystem. This is particularly important for species that rely on specific conditions found only in these transition zones. For example, certain types of amphibians, reptiles, and mammals need the varied microhabitats offered by edges—places where they can find food, shelter, and mates. The edge between a wetland and a forest, for instance, provides a mix of moisture and shelter that many amphibians need for breeding and feeding.

In addition, the availability of both open and sheltered spaces in these areas supports a wide variety of plants and animals. For example, animals

that need cover from predators but also need access to open spaces for hunting, such as certain species of birds of prey, may be found in these edge zones. The combination of resources in these areas makes them indispensable for wildlife survival.

This article is a three-part series which will be continued in the fall and winter editions of the *Prairie Islander*.







# 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Summer Concert Series

Alysia Callison

Get ready for another year of great music in the outdoors with our 9<sup>th</sup> annual Summer Concert Series!

This outdoor concert series sponsored by Stifel Investment Services is held every other Sunday in the summer, and features a variety of bands and performers that play Americana, bluegrass, folk, old-time, and more. Bring a lawn chair or a picnic blanket and sit back, relax, and enjoy the show.

This year's series kicks off on June 1 with Devin C. Williams, a singer-songwriter from the Springfield area. Devin's soulful style is rooted in Delta Blues, but he also creates his own path that's sure to please all listeners.

On June 15, Celtic Whistle will take the stage again to delight us with some Irish music and lovely harmonies, complete with flutes, accordions, and banjos.

Returning to the lineup after several years is Rylie Bourne, who will perform on June 29. Rylie is from Central Illinois but currently based in Nashville, and is known for her signature, smooth voice delivering country and bluegrass tunes.

Another returning favorite, on July 13 the Hood Family Band will take the stage. This talented family plays folk, Americana, and bluegrass tunes, complete with beautiful harmonies.

The Magnolia Janes will take the stage on July 27. This acoustic duo blends string arrangements with acoustic guitar, and experimental synth sounds with classic rock.

Rounding out the series, Nick Dittmeier & the Sawdusters will join us on August 10. This group plays a creative blend of Americana, country, and Southern rock, and is sure to please.

Each performance begins at 7pm and will be held near the pavilions at Rock Springs Conservation Area. Snacks will be available for purchase. All concerts are free, and in the event of rain, we will move indoors.

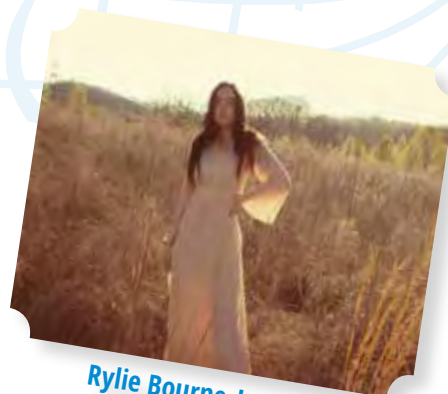
We can't wait for this year's lineup, and we hope to see you there!



Devin C. Williams-June 1



Celtic Whistle-June 15



Rylie Bourne-June 29



Hood Family Band-July 13



Magnolia Janes-July 27



Nick Dittmeier & the Sawdusters-August 10



## Briefs .....



### PRAIRIE PEDAL SAVE-THE-DATE

Preparations are underway for the annual Prairie Pedal fundraising event put on by the Macon County Conservation Foundation, so mark your calendars! The Prairie Pedal is an annual bicycle ride fundraiser for the Macon County Conservation Foundation. Held on the last Sunday in September, this event raises funds for natural areas and wildlife in Macon County, Illinois. This year, the date for the Prairie Pedal will be Sunday, September 28. Choose from a 20-mile, 40-mile, or 62-mile ride on quiet Macon County country roads. You'll see vibrant prairie grasses, wildflowers, and likely spot some wildlife as you ride. We're excited to host this amazing event, and we can't wait to see you there!

### SUMMER VAN TRIPS

Join the Macon County Conservation District for three zoo-rific van trips this summer! We're heading out to meet creatures big and small at the Lincoln Park Zoo, Saint Louis Zoo, and Indianapolis Zoo. From roaring lions to swinging primates, it's a wild way to spend your summer!

#### Lincoln Park Zoo

-Monday, June 30, 9am to 9pm. \$30 per person.

#### Saint Louis Zoo

-Monday, July 21, 9am to 8pm. \$30 per person.

#### Indianapolis Zoo

-Monday, August 11, 9am to 8pm. \$30 per person.

Charges for these events cover transportation and/or parking. Register online by the Friday prior to each trip. For full list of details and information, visit [MaconCCD.org](http://MaconCCD.org).



### YOUTH VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Did you know that the Conservation District has a youth volunteer program? We are looking for youth ages 13 through 17 to volunteer with our 2025 summer camps. Youth camp volunteers assist trained camp counselors as they lead hikes, help with activities, play games, and more! This opportunity is a fun way to fulfill those community service hours required by many schools. Training and a volunteer camp t-shirt are provided. For more information, contact Jenny Garver at 217-423-7708 or [JGarver@MaconCCD.org](mailto:JGarver@MaconCCD.org)





# Happenings

Events located at Rock Springs Conservation Area and open to all ages unless otherwise indicated.  
Register online at [MaconCCD.org](http://MaconCCD.org) by noon, unless otherwise noted.

## Hours

### OFFICES OPEN

Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm

### NATURE CENTER OPEN

Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm

Saturday, 9am-5pm

Sunday, 1-5pm

### TRAILS OPEN

Daily, 7am to sunset

## Holidays & Closings

### OFFICES & NATURE CENTER CLOSED

Friday, July 4, Independence Day

### NATURE CENTER OPEN, OFFICES CLOSED

Thursday, June 19, Juneteenth

Macon County  
Conservation District



## Open Houses

### BETHEL SCHOOL

Saturdays, June 7, July 5, and August 2, 1-4pm

See what going to school was like in the early 20th century at the historic one-room schoolhouse located at Friends Creek Conservation Area. 13734 Friends Creek Park Rd., Cisco, IL. Free.

### HOMESTEAD PRAIRIE FARM

Saturdays and Sundays, June-October, 1-4pm

Discover this 1860s farmhouse and the lives of the people who lived there. Located at Rock Springs Conservation Area, 3939 Nearing Lane, Decatur, IL. Free.

### GOVERNOR OGLESBY MANSION

Sundays, June 29, July 27, and August 31, 2-4pm

Wednesdays and Saturdays, June-August, 2-4pm

Tour the restored home of Illinois Governor Richard J. Oglesby. Encounter the lives of its family members and explore their late 1800s lifestyle. \$5/adult, \$2/child. Members are free. 421 W. William Street, Decatur, IL.



## Ground Squirrels Vintage Base Ball Games



Join us for the national pastime: base ball! Cheer for your home team, the Rock Springs Ground Squirrels, in a game of vintage base ball played with authentic 1858 rules.

To see their complete schedule, go to [Facebook.com/GroundSquirrels](https://Facebook.com/GroundSquirrels)

## MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES & STAFF

David Castor, President

Gussie Reed, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President

Mark Allen, Treasurer

Michael Sams, Secretary

Karen Schneller, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President

Jerry Culp, Executive Director

Philip Julius, Director of Operations

Alysia Callison, Director of Program Services

Nicky Besser, Director of Finance & H.R.

## Contact Us

Macon County Conservation District • 217-423-7708  
[mccd@MaconCCD.org](mailto:mccd@MaconCCD.org)  
[MaconCCD.org](http://MaconCCD.org)



## Connect with Us

Follow us on social media!  
[MaconCCD.org](http://MaconCCD.org)





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Register online at [MaconCCD.org](http://MaconCCD.org) by noon, unless otherwise noted.

## Music

The following programs are free and open to the public at Rock Springs Nature Center.

### DULCIMER CLUB

Saturdays, 10am-12pm

June 7 and 21

July 5 and 19

August 2, 16, and 30

### ACOUSTIC JAM SESSION

Sundays, 2-4pm

June 8, July 13, and August 10



## Art

### NORTH GALLERY ARTISTS

DL Pratt

May & June

Enjoy photography of wildlife and landscapes from local photographer Danny Pratt.



Bill Mott

July & August

Artist Bill Mott explores historic landscapes through still-life canvas paintings.

### SOUTH GALLERY ARTISTS

Jane Koenig

May & June

View the beauty of nature just outside your backdoor as captured by local photographer Jane P. Koenig.

### Wonders of Series: Rock Springs

July & August

In this series, we will bring to you the wonders of each of our Conservation Areas. This installment of the series focuses on Rock Springs Conservation Area.

Have a passion for nature  
or event photography?  
Become one of our  
volunteer photographers!  
Email our Volunteer  
Coordinator, Jenny Garver  
at [JGarver@MaconCCD.org](mailto:JGarver@MaconCCD.org)



## Meetings

### MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD MEETINGS

Third Wednesday of each month, 5:30pm

June 18, July 16, and August 20

### DECATUR AREA AUDUBON SOCIETY MEETINGS

Connect with Decatur Audubon on Facebook.

### ROCK SPRINGS QUILTERS

Wednesdays, 9-11am



## Take Your Pick

Below you'll find activities offered at multiple times or locations. Register online before the last full weekday prior to the program. Programs held at Rock Springs Conservation Area unless otherwise noted:

### YOGA IN THE PINES

Saturdays, June 7, July 19, & August 9, 5pm

Join yoga instructor Michelle Huttes of Prairie Flower Yoga for a strengthening and relaxing slow flow yoga session in the Pine Forest. All skill levels welcome for this donation-based class. Bring your own mat and any props you regularly use. Weather-related cancellations will be announced on the District's Facebook page. Free. No registration required.







# Happenings

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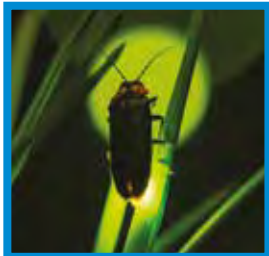
## June

### FIREFLY HIKE

**Saturday, June 14, 8pm**

Take a walk on the Rock Springs-Fairview Bike Trail as we learn about fireflies and then try to find some. Meet outside the entrance to Rock Springs Nature Center.

\$2/person. Register online by June 13. Min/Max: 5/30.



### PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: THE HEAT OF THE SUMMER

**Sunday, June 15, 2pm**

Discover why it gets so hot in the summer and learn how animals adapt through a craft, story, and outdoor exploration. \$2/child. Register online by June 13. Min/Max: 5/20.

### VAN TRIP TO LINCOLN PARK ZOO

**Monday, June 30, 9am-9pm**

Venture to downtown Chicago to visit the second-oldest zoo in the United States. Nearly 200 species of animals can be found, including rhinos, polar bears, macaques, and more. Zoo admission is free, lunch is on your own. Meet at Rock Springs Nature Center. \$30/person. Register online by June 27. Min/Max: 4/10.

## July

### PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: TRICKY TRACKS

**Sunday, July 20, 2pm**

Examine some of the evidence animals leave behind – tracks! Learn about their unique footprints through a craft, story, and outdoor exploration. \$2/child. Register online by July 18. Min/Max: 5/20.



### VAN TRIP TO SAINT LOUIS ZOO

**Monday, July 21, 9am-8pm**

Observe wildlife from around the globe, including cheetahs, hippos, and sea lions. Admission to the zoo is free, lunch is on your own. Meet at Rock Springs Nature Center. \$30/person. Register online by July 18. Min/Max: 5/10.

### LAURA INGALLS WILDER: HER LIFE

**Saturday, July 26, 2pm**

Whether you know Laura from the television series *Little House on the Prairie* or her book series, there was more to her life story than the average fan knows. As a multi-faceted woman, she continues to attract controversy and foster debate amongst her admirers and critics as new books and podcasts emerge. Guest speaker Janilyn Kocher is a Professor of History at Richland Community College where she teaches both American and European history as well as Political Science. Free. No registration required.



## August

### VAN TRIP TO THE INDIANAPOLIS ZOO

**Monday, August 11, 9am-8pm**

Observe wildlife from around the globe, including orangutans, tigers, and dolphins. Admission and lunch are on your own. Prepurchase admission at the zoo's website to save money. Meet at Rock Springs Nature Center. \$30/person. Register online by August 8. Min/Max: 5/10.

### NATIVE POLLINATORS

**Saturday, August 16, 9-11am**

Join a guest speaker from the U of I Extension Master Gardener program to learn about local pollinators and the impact they have on our environment. Free. Register online by August 15. Min/Max: 5/30.

### PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: UNLIKELY FRIENDS

**Sunday, August 17, 2pm**

Discover some of the unlikely 'friendships' that people have observed in nature, including coyotes and badgers. We will do a fun craft, read a story, and explore outside. \$2/child. Register online by August 15. Min/Max: 5/20.





## WINE IN THE WILD

Saturday, June 28 5-9pm

Join us for an unforgettable evening as we host our first event of its kind, Wine in the Wild, on Saturday, June 28, 2025! Sip, savor, and support local wildlife conservation like never before at our newly acquired and named Woodbine Farm. We'll enjoy a savory meal, delicious beverages, an auction, and games that are sure to be crowd pleasers, all while supporting the mission of the Macon County Conservation Foundation.

Sponsorship opportunities are available and there are many ways for you to participate in this new fundraising event.

**This is a 21+ Event. Cash bar.**

**This event will be held outdoors.**

## INDEPENDENCE DAY 1860

Saturday, June 28, 6-8pm

Enjoy an Independence Day celebration 1860s style! Tour Homestead Prairie Farm, see the heirloom vegetable and herb gardens, play with vintage toys and games, and at 6:30pm, enjoy a performance from Wild Columbine, a group that plays traditional music from the 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Visitors are invited to bring lawn chairs. In case of rain, the concert will be moved inside Rock Springs Nature Center. Free. No registration required.



## ASTRONOMY JAMBOREE

Saturday, August 9, 8-11pm

Friends Creek Conservation Area

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. Min/Max: 5/100.

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 at 217-423-7708 if you're interested in bringing your scope.



## HUMMINGBIRD FESTIVAL

Thursday, August 21, 3-6pm

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



**INDEPENDENCE DAY**  
*1860*  
 SATURDAY, JUNE 28, 6-8PM  
 See inside for more details



Macon County Conservation District

**ASTRONOMY JAMBOREE** ✨  
 SATURDAY, AUGUST 9 8-11PM  
 SEE INSIDE FOR MORE DETAILS



Macon County Conservation District



**HISTORIC WOODBINE FARM**  
 • Est. 1862 •



**Wine in the Wild**  
**Saturday, June 28, 2025**

Tickets \$75



A Fundraiser by the Macon County Conservation Foundation

[MaconCountyConservationFoundation.org](http://MaconCountyConservationFoundation.org) 217.423.7708

Historic Woodbine Farm  
 7206 Sefton Road, Dalton City, IL 61925

MACON COUNTY conservation FOUNDATION