



# EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



Learning Opportunities in Nature, Wildlife  
and the Cultural History of Central Illinois

Field Trips & Programs  
IDNR Lending Trunks  
Mobile Nature Center  
Museum in a Box

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Macon County Conservation District is an extension of your classroom. Our nature programs for all grade levels complement your science curriculum with hands on learning. Our living history programs teach children from pre-kindergarten through college about pioneer life on the Illinois prairie.

All tours, presentations, and programs are adapted according to the age and needs of your group and align with Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards. The exact standards enhanced by the experience will vary depending on the content of the program, your students, and how you use the experience.

Programs and opportunities are available for schools, home-school groups, after school programs and organized youth groups such as scouts, religious groups, day care centers, and summer camps.

## RESERVATIONS

Reservations for all Macon County Conservation District programs and services may be made Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. by calling 217-423-7708. Programs can be booked for Tuesdays through Sundays. (Mondays are not available.) More detailed information can also be found at the Macon County Conservation District website: [www.maconcountyconservation.org](http://www.maconcountyconservation.org).

Reserve well in advance to secure the dates you want.

Special presentations and the Mobile Nature Center can travel to your classroom. If you are interested in saving money, check out the special programs that will travel to you, beginning on page 9. Additional classes at your school can make a reservation for a discounted rate if the program is scheduled on the same day as the others in the school building.

Rain dates are not provided, however, we can often work with your group indoors if the weather prohibits outdoor programming.

If you need to cancel your reservation for any reason, please contact us as soon as possible.

Groups are welcome to enjoy lunch outdoors during field trips. You may reserve pavilions when you call to schedule your field trip program(s). We do not have an indoor lunchroom, but can often accommodate groups inside Rock Springs Nature Center during bad weather. Contact us for more information:

**Macon County Conservation District**  
 3939 Nearing Lane • Decatur, IL 62521  
 217-423-7708

[mccd@maconcountyconservation.org](mailto:mccd@maconcountyconservation.org)  
[www.maconcountyconservation.org](http://www.maconcountyconservation.org)

## GENERAL INFORMATION

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

### VISITING ON YOUR OWN

We encourage you to bring your class to any of the Conservation District sites throughout the year. There is no fee to use the Rock Springs Nature Center or any of our trails. We simply ask that you call ahead and let us know when you plan to visit.

### SCHILLING LIBRARY AT ROCK SPRINGS NATURE CENTER

The library has environmental education, history, storytelling and children's sections as well as a good selection of field guides and books on various nature topics. Most of these resources may be checked out. The library's services are free. Call 217-423-7708 for library hours.

### TIPS FOR A "GREENER" FIELD TRIP

Don't just learn about nature on your field trip, do your part to take care of it with these green field trip ideas.

- 1. Bus or carpool.** If traveling by school bus, encourage another class from your school to share the bus. We can accommodate more than one class at a time if you book early. If parents are coming in their own cars to chaperone or if they are bringing their children, encourage them to carpool too.
- 2. Pack a green lunch.** Many parents use single use plastic bags or prepackaged lunches. This is convenient, but expensive and not very green. Encourage parents to pack lunches in reusable containers and send drinks in reusable bottles. For a really "green" lunch, buy locally grown foods, use cloth napkins or a bandana. Make this a contest to see which student has the greenest lunch.
- 3. Recycle everything that can be.** We have bins for aluminum and plastic bottles at our pavilions and in the nature center. Packaging from many food items can be sent to TerraCycle. This company makes resalable items (backpacks, totes and much more) from certain food wrappers, and other "garbage". Check out [www.terracycle.net](http://www.terracycle.net) to learn more.



### FEES FOR ONSITE CONSERVATION DISTRICT PROGRAMS:

Minimum Fee = \$20.00

\$1.50 / participant per session

Based on 1 hour per session, but we can adapt to your schedule.





## FIELD TRIP OPPORTUNITIES

The following hikes and programs are offered only at Conservation District sites. Most are usually held at Rock Springs Nature Center/Conservation Area. Programs can be adapted to all grade levels.

There is a minimum fee of \$20.00 for each tour or program. Chaperones may attend for free, but program leaders will depend on them for student supervision. Chaperones are discouraged from bringing younger children.

### NATURE HIKES AND FIELD TRIPS

#### 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.

#### MAPLE SYRUP

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

**When:** February through March

#### CHANGES — SEASONS

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

#### INSECTS OF OUR WORLD

Learn about insects through an indoor presentation. Then, look for them on a hike and see at what makes them special. Catch and release invertebrates with nets and examine them with magnifying glasses.

**When:** April through November

#### SEEDS — NATURE'S HITCHHIKERS

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

**When:** September through mid-October

#### POND LIFE

Hike to a pond to look for turtles, frogs and other critters that live in or around the water.

#### PRAIRIE PATHS

On this hike we will experience a prairie in all its glory. Learn about "turkey foot and Indian grass," how the Native Americans and pioneers felt about the prairie and what happened to it.

#### MOTHER NATURE'S NEIGHBORHOOD

Ecology and natural communities will be covered during an indoor presentation followed by a hike through the natural communities at Rock Springs Conservation Area.

#### 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 fall.

#### ANIMAL SKELETONS

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

#### PONDS AND WETLANDS

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

**Time:** 1 – 2 hours





### ANIMALS IN WINTER

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

### HOLIDAYS 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 or take them back to their schoolyard or home.

### BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Identify a variety of bird species and their skills, do bird activity, and/or use our binoculars on a birding hike.

### FIELD CLASSES AND OUTDOOR SCHOOL

Let us work with you to provide a program or field trip tailored to your needs. Contact us at 217-423-7708.

### 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/student

### 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 2-3 children with an adult.

**Fee:** \$20/canoe

## HISTORY FIELD TRIPS

### A VISIT TO HOMESTEAD PRAIRIE FARM

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

**Time:** 2 hours

**When:** September through mid-November

### MEET THE TROBAUGHS

Tour the 1860s house that the Trobaugh family lived in years ago. Groups with very young participants will hear a story about the Trobaugh children before they visit the home. Limited to 30 participants.

### BETHEL SCHOOL DAYS

Experience what going to school was like around 1900 during your visit to the historic Bethel Schoolhouse, a one-room school at Friends Creek Conservation Area in Argenta, IL.

### 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.

**When:** mid-November through mid-December

### HOMESTEAD PRAIRIE FARM TOUR

Glimpse farm life just outside Decatur in the 1860s as you take a living history tour of this 1860s farmhouse and yard. Offered year-round.

## SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

### YOUR PLACE OR OURS

Let us bring a program to you with the following special presentations from our Mobile Nature Center. These programs may also be scheduled at Rock Springs Nature Center.

**In your classroom, Macon County Schools:** \$50.00 per class up to 30 students. \$30.00 each additional class that day.

**Out of County Schools:** \$60.00 per class up to 30 students. \$35.00 each additional class that day. \$20.00 surcharge for trips more than 100 miles round trip.

**At Rock Springs Nature Center:** \$1.50 per student. \$20.00 minimum



## NATURE PROGRAMS

These programs are indoor presentations and last about 1 hour in length. They can be adapted to all age levels.

### DISCOVERING DINOSAURS

Examine replicas of a dinosaur track, skull, egg, tooth, and more as you explore these animals. Storytime is available for younger children upon request.

### FROG MUSIC

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

### THE UN-LOVABLES

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

### WHOO GOES THERE? OWLS

Learn about the habits and habitats of native owls. A craft is available for younger ages upon request. For older groups, students can dissect an owl pellet for a fee of \$2.00/pellet. Note: No live owls.

### THE BUZZ ABOUT BEES

Students will learn the important role bees play in our lives - from making honey to pollinating food crops. The difference between bees and wasps will also be highlighted. For older groups, information on native bees and honey bee diseases will be included.

### SNAKE AND TURTLE SHOW

Meet a real snake to find out what they are really like. Live turtles and snakes help students learn the true nature and value of these creatures. May be adapted for various age groups.

### FOREST, FOREST, WHERE IS THE FOREST?

Students participate in a skit to "build" a forest and then observe the affects as pioneers move in and cut the trees to build their community.

### 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.

### ILLINOIS MAMMALS

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

### 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.

### 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.

### A TRIP THROUGH TIME — GEOLOGY OF ILLINOIS

Take an imaginary trip through time to explore the geologic history of Illinois. Discover warm tropical seas, dark muddy swamps with giant insects, and the ice age.

### WILD AND WONDERFUL WOLVES

Are *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Three Little Pigs* really presenting an accurate story? Learn about the history of wolves and how people view these animals today.

### EXPLORING THE UNIVERSE

Tour the universe through this slide presentation and hear Greek and Native American legends about the stars. Hands-on projects or crafts are available by request. You can combine this program with stargazing or the indoor Star Lab Mobile Planetarium (see page 13).



## HISTORY PROGRAMS

### NATIVE AMERICAN SKY LEGENDS

The first people in North America had many legends about the beginning of their world. Students will enjoy this interactive storytelling session as they learn about American Indian traditions and the night sky.

### ONE ROOM SCHOOL

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

### PLAYTIMES PAST

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

### NATIVE AMERICAN LIFE-WAYS

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

### QUILTS THROUGH THE YEARS

Learn the history of quilts and their importance in daily life through sample quilts and the stories they tell. Hands-on materials available for small groups.

### THE TRAVELER'S TRUNK

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

### TRAPPERS AND TRADERS

Who were the first Europeans to explore and exploit Central Illinois? Find out what they were looking for and how they interacted with the people already living here.

### GOVERNOR OGLESBY MANSION

The famous Oglesby Players will be offering the play "President Grant Visits the Oglesby Mansion" three times daily from March 14-18, 2016. This play is based on Grant's historic visit to Decatur in 1880, and is offered to area school children. It is especially appropriate for fifth graders. Admission is FREE.

After the twenty minute play the children will have a chance to ask questions of each character: President Grant, Governor Oglesby, Mrs. Oglesby, their servant girl, and the docent as they tour the mansion. The actors will respond to students' questions from the perspective of their 1880s character.

You can find more information about the event at [oglesbymansion.org](http://oglesbymansion.org).



## MOBILE NATURE CENTER

The Mobile Nature Center can be scheduled for your school or group. It is ideal for outdoor events, science fairs, scout and community activities. A naturalist will be available to make presentations, and engage participants in hands-on activities.

**In your classroom, Macon County Schools:** \$50.00 per class up to 30 students. \$30.00 each additional class that day.

**Out of County Schools:** \$60.00 per class up to 30 students. \$35.00 each additional class that day. \$20.00 surcharge for trips more than 100 miles round trip.

## TELESCOPE VIEWING

Make arrangements for an astronomy demonstration using our 8" Celestron telescope. You can view sun spots during the day or stars and planets in the evening. Programs can take place at any of the conservation areas, your school, or a meeting place. Can be combined with Exploring the Universe or the Star Lab Planetarium for an additional fee.

**Fees for Telescope Viewing, Macon County Schools:** \$30.00 per class for up to 30 students, \$25.00 for each additional class that day.

**Out of County:** \$35.00 per class for up to 30, \$30.00 for each additional class that day. \$20.00 surcharge for more than 100 miles round trip.

## STAR LAB FACILITATION

Our trained staff will come to your school to facilitate the Star Lab Mobile Planetarium. Let us take care of all the details of rental, set-up and presentations. Presentations offered by our staff include:

- The Night Sky
- Constellations and Greek Legends
- Native American Legends

All presentations are tailored to the age and ability level of your group and vary in length from 20 to 45 minutes.

**Fees for Star Lab Facilitation, Macon County Schools:** \$125.00 per day

**Out of County Schools:** \$150.00 per day. \$20.00 surcharge for more than 100 miles roundtrip.

# MUSEUM IN A BOX

These interactive teaching kits, which were assembled by conservation district education staff, are available to educators in the Macon County Area. They are listed by age-appropriateness with youngest first. Call 217-423-7708 to reserve your Museum in a Box. Must be picked up at Rock Springs Nature Center.

## FEES FOR THE MUSEUM IN A BOX: (Strictly Enforced)

Macon County Schools \$5.00 for 2 weeks, \$2.00 per day late fee  
Out of County Schools \$10.00 for 2 weeks, \$2.00 per day late fee

## NATURE MUSEUM IN A BOX

### INSECTS

Loads of information and fun activities. This kit includes lesson plans, games, videos, posters, real specimens plus collecting equipment.

**Who:** Grades P through 6

### OH DEER!

The white tailed deer is Illinois' state mammal. This kit, containing books, lesson plans, a deer pelt, and much more is sure to be a hit with all ages. Use it to augment the study of state symbols, spur a discussion of hunting or help preschoolers learn the difference between white tailed deer and reindeer.

**Who:** Grades P through 12

### RHYTHM & RECYCLE

Explore what household items can be used to construct musical instruments. Kit includes drums and musical instruments.

**Who:** Grades K through 3

### DINOSAURS

Every kid loves dinosaurs. This kit contains interactive materials, curriculum materials, and lots of fun stuff for the dino fan. Sure to be a hit.

**Who:** Grades K through 4

### REPTILES

Learn about common and uncommon reptiles with this kit chock full of books, videos, posters, games, activity ideas and more.

**Who:** Grades K through 6

### ASTRONOMY

Includes background materials, lesson plans, videos, posters, games, books, websites and much more. Perfect supplement for a unit or enrichment materials.

**Who:** Grades K through 12

### BATS

Learn about bats in Macon County and beyond. Kit includes videos, slides, skulls, skeletons, books, lesson plans, activities, posters.

**Who:** Grades K through 12

### BIRDS OF PREY

This kit contains materials relating to hawks and owls with emphasis on local species. Posters, activities, lesson plans, skulls, and much more included.

**Who:** Grades K through 12

### FOSSILS

Kit includes video lab for middle and high school. Materials to "make a fossil" included, along with books, lesson plans and background materials.

**Who:** Grades K through 12

### FROGS AND TOADS

Full of facts about frogs and toads. Lesson plans, posters, books, videos and CDs help the student discover more about these amphibians.

**Who:** Grades K through 12

### TALKIN' TURKEY

This kit is full of items and information from the National Wild Turkey Federation, plus replica skull, track, scat, egg and other fun materials. It will be a great addition to a unit at Thanksgiving or anytime.

**Who:** Grades K through 12

### TREES

Trees are so important to our environment. This kit helps students learn to identify common trees with seeds, wood, and leaves. It also helps younger students understand the importance of trees in our lives. Contains lesson plans, books, specimens and posters.

**Who:** Grades K through 12

### PRAIRIE

Learn more about this important, but vanishing biome. Illinois is nicknamed "The Prairie State" for a reason. Kit includes lesson plans, videos, CDs, prairie plant specimens, skulls, scat and egg replicas of prairie birds.

**Who:** Grades 3 through 12

### WETLANDS, PONDS AND STREAMS

Fresh water aquatic environments are often misunderstood. Help your students learn about the importance of this varied habitat with videos, books, activities, posters, test kits and lesson plans.

**Who:** Grades 4 through 12





## HISTORY MUSEUM IN A BOX

### 1860S FARM LIFE

Students will catch a glimpse of life in rural Central Illinois. You'll gain in-depth perspectives through artifacts, activities and selected topics that demonstrate the experiences of men, women, and children that lived the 19<sup>th</sup> Century farming lifestyle.

**Who:** Grades K through 6

### NATIVE AMERICAN LIFEWAYS

The Native Americans in Illinois had their own way of life attuned to the environment. This kit helps students understand and appreciate the unique aspects of Illinois tribes through artifacts and furs from the animals they hunted, the crops they grew, and legends from the Midwest.

**Who:** Grades K through 6

### CIVIL WAR SOLDIER

The Civil War Museum in a Box provides an in-depth look into the life of the common American Civil War soldier. Students gain this experience through artifacts, activities, and selected topics that focus on food, daily living, and the hardships that soldiers faced.

**Who:** Grades 3 through 12

## LENDING TRUNKS

Illinois Department of Natural Resources' Lending Trunks are available at Rock Springs Nature Center. Educators may use these kits free of charge for up to two weeks. Call to reserve. Kits must be picked up at Rock Springs Nature Center.

### FIELD TRIP PACK

This backpack includes many items to assist your early childhood students as they explore nature. Hands-on equipment will encourage self-initiated learning. Suggestions for teachers on how to incorporate natural-resources activities into your lessons are also included.

**Who:** Grades P through 3

### ILLINOIS INSECTS AND SPIDERS TRUNK

Insects and spiders fascinate students. Encourage them to learn more about these organisms by using the resources in this kit. Books, DVDs, student activities, field guides, posters, insect/spider observation equipment and a video are just some of the items included.

**Who:** Grades P through 6

### PEOPLE AND ANIMALS FROM ILLINOIS' PAST TRUNK

Prehistoric mammals, extirpated mammals and Native Americans' relationship with nature are the subjects of this resource trunk. Contents include: mammoth and mastodon tooth replicas, Native American games, activities, posters, replica pottery, a video, reference and activity books.

**Who:** Grades P through 6

### ILLINOIS BIRDS RESOURCE TRUNK

Stop and listen to one of nature's instruments with this kit filled with field guides, books, track and egg replicas, DVDs, videos, CDs with bird songs and calls, and even bird replicas that sing.

**Who:** Grades P through 8

### ILLINOIS WILD MAMMALS TRUNK

Discover Illinois mammals with this kit! Pelts, skulls, replica tracks and scat and many other interesting items are sure to be a hit with your students.

**Who:** Grades P through 12

### ILLINOIS' STATE SYMBOLS RESOURCES TRUNK

Illustrate the Illinois State Symbols and the significance behind these symbols with this trunk. There's an Illinois Facts section, too.

**Who:** Grades K through 6

### ILLINOIS PRAIRIE RESOURCE TRUNK

Teach about prairies and the people who inhabited them with this trunk. Field guides, activity books, reference manuals, bison artifacts, numerous lessons, CDs and other items are included for your use.

**Who:** Grades K through 8

### ILLINOIS TREES RESOURCE TRUNK

This kit is jam-packed with books, posters, "tree cookies," lumber samples, videos, to help you learn about Illinois trees.

**Who:** Grades K through 10

## ILLINOIS' INVASIVE SPECIES RESOURCE TRUNK

Invasive species is an important topic. What are they? How did they get here? What problems do they cause? What can we do about them?

These questions can be answered by using the Illinois' Invasive Species resources trunk. Contents include student activities, background information, images, lessons, field guides, specimens and other items.

**Who:** Grades 3 through 12

## ILLINOIS FOSSILS RESOURCE TRUNK

This kit emphasizes Illinois fossils. Includes fossil molds, fossil hunt kits, reference collection, field guides, posters, activities, and a video.

**Who:** Grades 4 through 8

## AQUATIC ILLINOIS RESOURCE TRUNK

Discover the secret life of water with this kit. Children will explore the biological, historical, chemical, and other aspects of water through books, posters, water sampling tools, videos, DVDs and activities.

**Who:** Grades 5 through 9

## EXPLORATION PACKS & WORKSHOPS

### EXPLORATION PACKS

If you would like to explore Rock Springs Conservation Area on your own with your students, our Exploration Packs enhance your experience. Each pack includes a trail guide highlighting areas of interest and a toolkit for fun. Field guides and activities for children and adults are included. Seasonal and topical packs allow your group to explore many aspects of nature as it changes with the seasons. Pack topics include:

- Birds
- Insects
- Forest Ecology
- Prairie Ecology
- Spring and Summer
- Tracks and Trails
- Wetlands and Ponds
- Winter Ecology

These self-guiding packs are made available to you for FREE by a grant from PPG Industries.



### GIRL AND BOY SCOUT WORKSHOPS

The Macon County Conservation District offers workshops for Boy Scouts and Girl 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/webelos or cub scout, \$9/girl scout, and \$12/boy scout. To schedule a scout workshop, please contact us at 217-423-7708.

#### Workshop Themes

##### Cub Scouts (2 hour workshops)

- Conservation

##### Boy Scouts (3 hour workshops) Ages 10+

- Forestry
- Fish & Wildlife Management
- Soil & Water Conservation
- Indian Lore
- Astronomy (partial)
- Birds Study
- Reptiles & Amphibian Study
- Mammal Study

##### Webelos (2 hour workshops)

- Into the Woods
- Into the Wild
- Earth Rock

##### Girl Scouts (2 hour workshops) Ages 10+

- Between Earth and Sky
- WOW! Wonders of Water
- Get Moving