

## Savanna for Rock Springs Entrance

By Katherine Unruh

Just because an area looks green and natural, does not necessarily mean that it is a safe, healthy habitat for wildlife.

In an effort to improve the quality of natural areas, staff will tackle a project that has been waiting to get done for a very long time: addressing the main entrance to Rock Springs Conservation Area, between Brozio Lane and the Rodney T. Miller Wetland.

Although the three acres sandwiched between Brozio Lane and the Miller Wetland look green and lush most of the year, it's actually a tangle of invasive bush honeysuckle and autumn olive. There are also black locust trees, which are not originally native to Central Illinois. By sending up new shoots through their extensive root systems, they easily invade prairies and threaten to encroach on the Miller Wetland. To complicate matters, the area is also an old dump, riddled with broken glass and sharp metal.

"All of the broken glass and metal makes it pretty unsafe for staff and volunteers to work in this section," says Natural Resource Supervisor, Ethan Snively. "This is dangerous not only to people, but also wildlife."

The dump also makes it difficult to bring in equipment, such as a forestry mower to remove the bush honeysuckle. Doing so would risk damage to the equipment and hurl sharp objects through the air.

"Despite all of the challenges with this spot, we can still rescue this as a high quality habitat," says Operations Manager, Shane Ravellette.

Over the next year, staff will return the site to an oak hickory savanna. Such a savanna will be

more appropriate for the location bordering a wetland and prairie, and will be safer and more suitable for wildlife. Although they used to be more common, savanna habitats have become increasingly rare in Central Illinois. Savannas are arguably one of our most "endangered" habitats. Savannas consist of expansive trees loosely dotting a carpet of prairie grasses

and shorter native plants below their shady canopies.

As with most natural area restoration projects, the site will go through an "ugly duckling" phase. It will look "worse" before it gets "better". Funded largely by the Macon County Conservation Foundation, the broken glass and metal will be removed, as well as the invasive bush honeysuckle, autumn olive, and black locust. Then, this fall or winter, the area will be reseeded with native prairie grasses and wildflowers.

This project is scheduled to begin this summer or early fall, and should take about one year to complete. Keep an eye on this highly-visible site: it will be a unique opportunity for you to watch the transformation of a natural area restoration project.



**Broken glass and metal litters the ground**



**A dense wall of invasive Bush honeysuckle overpowers native vegetation**



## Supporting Natural Areas & Wildlife



Prairie Pedal is an annual bicycle ride fundraiser for the Macon County Conservation Foundation. Held annually on the last Sunday in September, this event raises funds for natural areas and wildlife in Macon County, Illinois.

Since it began in 2008, local businesses, generous individuals and families, and cyclists have funded dozens of projects that have improved hundreds of acres of Macon County prairies, wetlands, and forests.

Some of these projects include: funding a paid, full-time internship within the Conservation District's Natural Resources team; removing non-native and invasive plants; and seeding hundreds of acres with native plants, just to name a few.

With extra precautions due to the coronavirus, the Macon County Conservation Foundation looks forward to holding Prairie Pedal again this year:

**Sunday, September 27, 6:30am-2pm**  
**Rock Springs Conservation Area**

Ride your bicycle for habitat restoration! This bicycling fundraiser for the Macon County Conservation Foundation supports local wildlife and natural areas. Choose from a 20, 40, or 62 mile route along quiet country roads. Your registration includes a free sports towel, well stocked rest stops along the routes, and the option to purchase tickets for a 50/50 raffle! Registration is \$25/rider on or before September 10, and \$30/rider after. Learn more and choose how you want to register at [MaconCountyConservationFoundation.org](http://MaconCountyConservationFoundation.org). Should this event have to be cancelled due to COVID-19, you will receive a full refund. Otherwise, we ride rain or shine!



## A Closer Look

### Thank You, Sponsors!

Prairie Pedal isn't just a cycling event! Local businesses, generous individuals and families, and people like you proudly support this fundraiser for natural areas and wildlife. Thank You to those who have sponsored so far this year:



**Busey Bank**

**Decatur Bicycle Club**

**Dunker Electric Supply**

**Dunn Company**

**Darrel & Joanna Parish**

**The Rathje Family**

**Jensen Properties**

**Skeff Distributing**

**Wallender-Dedman Printing**

To join these sponsors in supporting natural areas and wildlife, visit [MaconCountyConservationFoundation.org](http://MaconCountyConservationFoundation.org).

Briefs .....

**DEER ARCHERY HUNTING**

The Conservation District’s 2020 archery deer season will run October 16 through December 11. This program limits the growth of the deer population on District sites and provides a public hunting opportunity in Macon County.

Hunting is allowed at Rock Springs, Sand Creek, Friends Creek, and Fort Daniel Conservation Areas by special permit only. Hunting is not allowed November 20-22 and Dec. 3-6.

For more information about the program or an application to participate, visit [MaconCountyConservation.org/habitat-restoration](http://MaconCountyConservation.org/habitat-restoration). The deadline to submit an application is Friday, September 11.

**VOLUNTEERING**

Last year, 471 local residents generously donated over 10,700 hours of their time. These volunteers range in age from one year old to ninety-five. What an amazing group! While we had to suspend many of the District’s volunteer activities this spring, some activities have resumed, such as trail monitoring and gardening, and we are still accepting new volunteers. The status of what volunteer activities are permitted will depend on what phase we are in the Restore Illinois Plan. Learn more at [MaconCountyConservation.org](http://MaconCountyConservation.org). Thank you to everyone in our community that has volunteered to make our world a better place!



**CAMPGROUND OPEN THROUGH OCTOBER**

Friends Creek Campground is open through October. The campground welcomes both tent and RV camping:

- Daily fees for electric sites are \$17 for Macon County residents, \$20 for non-residents.
- Non-electric sites are \$10 for Macon County residents, \$12 for non-residents.



Due to COVID-19, you may only camp at the campground with a reservation, and there is an additional \$5 non-refundable reservation fee for doing so. At this time, campsites are not available first-come, first-serve upon pulling into the campground. Make reservations in advance by calling 217-423-7708.

*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:

**CANOE THE SANGAMON**

Saturdays, August 29, September 19, and October 17, 1-4pm

All equipment is provided for this leisurely exploration of the Sangamon River. One adult required per canoe. Meeting location will be determined prior to the date. \$25/canoe. Register online by August 28, September 18, and October 16. Min/Max: 5 canoes/14 canoes.

**NATURE DAY CAMP**

Saturdays, August 8, September 12, and October 10, 9am-4pm

Itching to get outside after being home? Children ages 6-12 are invited to join a naturalist for fun themed days including “End of Summer Bash,” “Camping for the Day,” and “Changing Seasons.” Attend one or all three. Bring a sack lunch and a bottle of water. \$20/child. Register online by August 7, September 11, and October 9. Min/Max: 5/20.



**OUTDOOR MOVIES**

Saturdays, August 15 and September 5, 7pm

Bring a blanket or a lawn chair and enjoy a family-friendly movie in the great outdoors. In August we will watch Disney’s *Moana* and in September we’ll check out *The Lorax*. The movie screen will be set up near the pavilions at Rock Springs Conservation Area. Free. Register online by August 14 and September 4. Min/Max: 5/45.

# Happenings

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



Macon County  
Conservation District

## Hours

### OFFICES OPEN

Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm

### NATURE CENTER OPEN

Monday-Wednesday, Friday, 8am-5pm

Thursday, 8am-8pm

Saturdays, 9am-5pm

Sunday, 1-5pm

### TRAILS OPEN

Daily, 7am-Sunset

## Holidays & Closings

### OFFICES & NATURE CENTER CLOSED

Thursday, November 26, Thanksgiving Day

### OFFICES CLOSED

Monday, September 7, Labor Day

Tuesday, November 3, Election Day

Wednesday, November 11, Veteran's Day

Friday, November 27, Thanksgiving

## Meetings

### MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD MEETINGS

Third Wednesday of each month, 5:30pm

August 19, September 16, October 21, & November 18

### DECATUR AUDUBON SOCIETY MEETINGS

Sundays, 2pm, September 20, October 18, & November 15



## Connect with Us

Facebook:  
[@MaconCountyConservationDistrict](https://www.facebook.com/MaconCountyConservationDistrict)

Twitter: [@MCCD\\_217](https://twitter.com/MCCD_217)

## Open Houses

### BETHEL SCHOOL

Saturdays, August 1, September 5, & October 3, 1-4pm

See what going to school was like in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century at this historic one-room schoolhouse.

Located at Friends Creek Conservation Area, 13734 Friends Creek Park Rd., Cisco, IL. Free.

### HOMESTEAD PRAIRIE FARM

Saturdays & 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

For times, visit [OglesbyMansion.org](http://OglesbyMansion.org)

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

### MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES & STAFF

Doug Johnson

Karen Schneller

Nina Bendsen

David Castor

Richie Wolf, Executive Director

Shane Ravellette, Operations Manager

Alysia Callison, Nature Center Manager

Pam Smith, Finance & H.R. Manager

### Contact Us

Macon County Conservation District • 217-423-7708

[mccd@maconcountyconservation.org](mailto:mccd@maconcountyconservation.org)

[MaconCountyConservation.org](http://MaconCountyConservation.org)

# Special Events

## Perseid Meteor Shower

Wednesday, August 12, 10pm  
Friends Creek Conservation Area

Experience the Perseid Meteor Shower at its peak! Bring a blanket or a lawn chair and enjoy a truly dark sky. Free. Register online by August 11. Min/Max: 5/45.

## ASTRONOMY JAMBOREE

Saturday, August 22, 7-9pm  
Griswold Conservation Area

Enjoy a free concert from 7-7:45pm, create a craft to take home, enter a giveaway, and view the stars and visible planets. Pre-packaged snacks and water provided. Bring your telescope and share your knowledge. Free. Register online by August 21. Min/Max: 5/40.



## Hummingbird Festival

Thursday, August 27, 4-7pm  
Rock Springs Conservation Area

Learn all about hummingbirds. Watch as we capture, band, and release wild birds. Some participants will get to help with a release. Co-sponsored by Decatur Audubon. Free. For registration, check [MaconCountyConservation.org](http://MaconCountyConservation.org).



Macon County Conservation District  
3939 Nearing Lane | Decatur, IL 62521 | 217-423-7708  
[MaconCountyConservation.org](http://MaconCountyConservation.org)

# Special Events



## MONARCH MADNESS

Sunday, September 13, 2-4pm

Learn about monarch butterflies from naturalists, then help capture and tag live butterflies. Co-sponsored by the University of Illinois Extension Office. Free. No registration required.



Sunday, September 27, 6:30am-2pm

Rock Springs Conservation Area

This bicycling fundraiser for the Macon County Conservation Foundation supports wildlife and natural areas. Choose from a 20, 40, or 62 mile route. Registration includes a free sports towel, and well stocked rest stops along the routes. \$25/rider on or before September 10, and \$30/rider after. Learn more and choose how you want to register at [MaconCountyConservationFoundation.org](http://MaconCountyConservationFoundation.org).

## Candlelight Tour

Saturday, November 14, 6:30-8:30pm

Homestead Prairie Farm at  
Rock Springs Conservation Area

Electricity and modern conveniences were not always at our fingertips. Glimpse what an evening in the 1860s was like at Homestead Prairie Farm, lit by candlelight and lamplight, as guides in period clothing walk you through the home. Free. Register online by noon on Friday, November 13.



Macon County Conservation District  
3939 Nearing Lane | Decatur, IL 62521 | 217-423-7708  
[MaconCountyConservation.org](http://MaconCountyConservation.org)



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## Ground Squirrels Vintage Base Ball Games

Due to COVID-19, the Rock Springs Ground Squirrels are suspending the 2020 season. Check back in 2021 for games. New players are welcome too!



Follow the team on Facebook:  
[Facebook.com/GroundSquirrels](https://www.facebook.com/GroundSquirrels)

## Music

The following programs are free and open to the public at Rock Springs Conservation Area.

### DULCIMER CLUB

Saturdays, 10am-12pm  
August 8 & 22  
September 5 & 19  
October 3, 17, & 31  
November 14 & 28

### BLUEGRASS MUSIC JAM

Sundays, 1-4pm  
August 9, September 13,  
October 11, November 8

### CROSS COUNTRY CLASSICS

Thursdays, 6-7:30pm  
August 6, September 3, October 1, November 5

### SHAPE-NOTE SINGING

Sunday, November 29, 2pm



## Art

### NORTH GALLERY ARTISTS

Sue Watts

July & August

Experience nature themed watercolor paintings featuring landscapes, barns, birds, and butterflies.



Curt Knapp

September & October

Photographer Curt Knapp will display beautiful pictures of nature, including bears, eagles, flowers, and sunsets.



Barn Colony Artists

November & December

Discover works in watercolor, pastels, oil, and mixed media depicting subjects from nature to portraits by this talented group of artists in our community.

### SOUTH GALLERY ARTISTS

Robert Reed

July & August

Discover exotic and local wildlife photography featuring polar bears, elk, raccoons, foxes, birds, butterflies, and flowers.

Barb Stobaugh

September & October

Enjoy nature photography, including flowers and wildlife.

David Castor

November & December

View photographs of white-tailed deer, great blue herons, and plants through the lens of photographer David Castor.

# Happenings

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## August

### SUNSET PRAIRIE HIKE

Sunday, August 16, 7pm

Experience the beauty of the prairie in the evening on this naturalist-led hike. Learn about the different kinds of plants and animals that this unique habitat supports. Free. Register online by August 14. Min/Max: 5/20.

### CREEK WALK

Fort Daniel Conservation Area

Sunday, August 23, 2pm

Discover the different kinds of life that live in the creek as you walk along, explore, and search for critters in this aquatic habitat. Wear shoes that you don't mind getting wet. We will start our walk at the pavilion. Free. Register online by August 21. Min/Max: 5/20.



### PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: FRIENDLY FISH

Sunday, August 30, 2pm

What fish can you find in Macon County's ponds? Learn about the lives of fish, make a fishy craft, and walk to the pond to look for some. Free. Register online by August 28. Min/Max: 5/10.

## September

### LET'S GO FLY A KITE!

Sunday, September 6, 2pm

Make a homemade kite out of everyday materials, then see if you can get it to fly. We will meet in the small parking lot at the Rodney T. Miller Wetland at 1400 Brozio Lane, across from Nearing Lane. Free. Register online by September 4. Min/Max: 5/20.

### PAWPAW HIKE

Sand Creek Conservation Area

Sunday, September 20, 2pm

Join a naturalist on a walk through wooded habitats at Sand Creek Conservation Area, searching for fruiting pawpaw trees along the way. Free. Register online by September 18. Min/Max: 5/20.

## October

### PRESCHOOL PEEPERS:

### VINTAGE TOYS AND GAMES

Saturday, October 3, 10am

What toys did children play with in the 1800s? Try your hand at games like graces, jacks, ring-toss, and more. Free. Register online by October 2. Min/Max: 5/10.

### ARCHAEOLOGY OPEN HOUSE

Homestead Prairie Farm

Sunday, October 4, 2-4pm

Stop by to discover the treasures found beneath the Trobaugh-Good house during recent repairs to the foundation of this 1860s-era farmhouse. Then try sifting for more! Free. No registration required.



### BIRD MIGRATION HIKE

Fort Daniel Conservation Area

Saturday, October 17, 10am

In fall, hundreds of bird species journey to warmer weather and more plentiful food sources. Join a naturalist on a hike to see what birds are moving through the forest. Free. Register online by October 16. Min/Max: 5/20.

### HALLOWEEN HIKE

Saturday, October 31, 2pm

Bring your ghouls and goblins on a hike as we learn about Halloween traditions and how wildlife have inspired some of our spookiest tales. Costumes are welcome. Free. Register online by October 30. Min/Max: 5/20.

## November

### CAMPFIRE LEGENDS AND STORIES

Saturday, November 7, 7pm

Gather 'round the campfire with a naturalist and hear stories about wildlife and Native American legends. Meet on the west lawn of the Nature Center and dress for the weather. Free. Register online by November 6. Min/Max: 5/20.

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## **SNAKE AND TURTLE SHOW**

**Sunday, November 15, 2pm**

Meet and learn about our education animals and their ways of life. We have several species to show you!



\$2/person. Register online by November 13. Min/Max: 5/20.

## **PREDATORS OF THE PRAIRIE**

**Saturday, November 21, 2pm**

Join a naturalist to learn about the animal predators found in our prairies, then journey outside and try to find some! Dress for the weather. Free. Register online by November 20. Min/Max: 5/20.

## **PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: SEEDS**

**Sunday, November 22, 2pm**

Why do plants make seeds and when is the best time to find them? We will take a walk outside to search for some, then come inside and make a craft with seeds. Free. Register online by November 20. Min/Max: 5/10.

## **NATIVE AMERICAN SKILLS AND GAMES**

**Saturday, November 28, 2-4pm**

What was life like for the Native Americans who inhabited Illinois over 200 years ago? Learn about their cultures and lifestyles, then discover the art of beading and try your hand at 3D archery. \$2/person. Register online by November 27. Min/Max: 5/20.

## **FULL MOON ASTRONOMY**

**Sunday, November 29, 7pm**

Why is November's full moon sometimes called the 'Beaver Moon'? Discover this and more as we view the moon through a telescope, then take a short hike lit only by the moon itself. Free. Register online by November 27. Min/Max: 5/20.

## *Mini Camps*

Children ages 1-5 explore nature with an adult buddy through crafts, activities, songs, and stories. These camps are a great stepping stone for little ones to spend time with other children with the comfort of a loved one nearby. \$6/child. Online registration required. Min/Max: 4/10.

### **FLUTTERING WINGS**

**Wednesday, September 9, 9:30-10:30am**

**Thursday, September 10, 9:30-10:30am**

Flutter into the world of butterflies as we take nets into the great outdoors on a butterfly hunt. Register online by noon the day before camp.

### **HATS OFF TO ACORNS**

**Tuesday, September 22, 9:30-10:30am**

**Wednesday, September 23, 9:30-10:30am**

Explore how nature prepares for winter by creating seeds like the acorn. Register online by noon the day before camp.

### **CHIPPING SQUIRRELS**

**Wednesday, October 7, 9:30-10:30am**

**Thursday, October 8, 9:30-10:30am**

Glimpse acrobatic squirrels and learn about their habitat through song, fur, footprints, and a playful game. Register online by noon the day before camp.



### **NIGHTTIME OWLS**

**Tuesday, October 20, 9:30-10:30am**

**Wednesday, October 21, 9:30-10:30am**

Discover the world of owls and owlets through our senses and movement. Register online by noon the day before camp.

### **HOWL DO YOU DO**

**Wednesday, November 4, 9:30-10:30am**

**Thursday, November 5, 9:30-10:30am**

Delve into the nocturnal world of coyotes and wolves as we compare pelts, tracks, and skulls. Register online by noon the day before camp.

### **SHINING STARS**

**Tuesday, November 17, 9:30-10:30am**

**Wednesday, November 18, 9:30-10:30am**

Dabble in the colors and designs of the night sky canvas above our heads. Register online by noon the day before camp.

Return Service Requested



***Conservation  
Areas are Open***  
For News & Updates:

- Visit [MaconCountyConservation.org](http://MaconCountyConservation.org)
- Like Us on Facebook:  
[@MaconCountyConservationDistrict](https://www.facebook.com/MaconCountyConservationDistrict)
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For trail conditions, visit [MaconCountyConservation.org](http://MaconCountyConservation.org).