

Remember to Leash

By Katherine Unruh

Part of the joy of owning a dog is the ability to take them outdoors. They make excellent companions, and the fun of bringing them along on a walk or hike is unlike any other.

Because we recognize this, dogs are welcome on the trails at all of the Macon County conservation areas. However, we also want you and your pet to be safe, and to preserve the natural areas. That's why all dogs are required to be leashed at all times, regardless of their training or obedience level, and owners must pick up after their pets.

Leashing your dog:

- **Helps preserve plants and wildlife.** One dog roaming off-leash may sound insignificant, but the impact is real. Off-leash dogs trample wildflowers and disturb ground nesting birds and other wildlife, even if you don't see it happening.
- **Keeps them safe from the environment.** Off-leash dogs may encounter wildlife that bite back, or have other negative consequences (such as skunks). They are also at risk of picking up fleas, ticks, and other insects that may carry diseases, or come into contact with harmful organic matter, like toxic algae.
- **Reduces risks to fellow visitors.** Not everyone is physically capable of handling an unexpected encounter with your dog. Older adults, pregnant women, people recovering from injuries or surgeries, and young children may be injured by your dog, even if your dog is just trying to be friendly.
- **Keeps you safe.** Dogs wandering off leash will pick up fleas, ticks, and poison ivy on their fur, which may be transferred to the interior of your vehicle, your home, or yourself. (Life is exciting enough, without getting poison ivy from petting your dog.) Leashing pets also avoids dog fights and any resulting injuries to you and others.



Biggie, Rayven and Beau at Rock Springs

But my dog is friendly, well trained, and always stays by my side off-leash? Not all dogs may be as well behaved as yours, and it would be very impractical for the Conservation District to assess the obedience level of each and every dog that visits the conservation areas. In addition, even a well-trained dog can unexpectedly take off after a rabbit or deer, or have an unforeseen reaction toward an unfamiliar dog or person. As a result, the simplest and safest solution is that all pets must be leashed at all times.

We love canine companions, and want you to be able to enjoy the conservation areas with them. Thank you for leashing and picking up after your pet. We hope you enjoy many happy outdoor adventures with them in the years to come.

Remember to pick up after your pet: Leaving dog feces behind spreads bacteria, viruses, and parasites harmful to wildlife, other dogs, and people. Some of these can linger in the soil for years. Besides, no one enjoys stepping in dog poop. You'll find dog waste bags and trash cans available at all of the conservation areas.





ARCHAEOLOGY AT HOMESTEAD PRAIRIE FARM

By Brent Wielt and Stephanie Klaus

You may have noticed an archaeological operation taking place at Homestead Prairie Farm since fall 2018. During a project to strengthen the farmhouse's foundation, a large amount of dirt was removed from under the house to make it easier for the contractors to work. Over probably one hundred and fifty years ago though, most of the dirt was actually part of the yard, before the house was enlarged. Here, normal household activities of work and leisure took place, just as they did inside the farmhouse. In addition, the cellar under the house served as a place for food storage for several decades.

Volunteers and staff are learning about the farm, the farmhouse, and the families that lived there through the many artifacts found. We continue to regularly find nails of all sizes and types plus pieces of wall plaster, masonry blocks, and bricks. Often, we find large and small fragments of metal, glass, dishes, and crockery. Less often, we find bones from wild animals and farm animals and other objects. With almost each bucketful we sift, we continue to discover some clue to life there in the 1800s and 1900s.

Some of the more recent and unique discoveries include: part of a knife blade, a maker's mark from a dish, fragments of various glass objects of several colors, four buttons made of different materials, two marbles, mussel shells, a straight pin, and possibly a musket ball. We will continue to sift for artifacts for the next few years. You are welcome to volunteer and discover some history along with us! If interested in helping, contact Historic Sites Manager, Brent Wielt at 217-423-7708 or BWielt@MaconCountyConservation.org.

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 BIG CREEK

Saturdays, September 18 and October 9, 1-3pm

All equipment is provided for this leisurely exploration of Big Creek. At least one adult required per canoe. Meet at Cannon Park on South Baltimore Avenue. \$20/canoe. Register online by September 17 and October 8. Min/Max: 5 canoes/14 canoes.



CANDLE DIPPING WORKSHOP

Homestead Prairie Farm

Saturday, September 25,
Offered at 1:30pm and 3pm

Learn to make candles like a settler and dip your own to take home. For ages 12 and up. Ages 12-15 must have a parent or guardian to attend. Free. Register online by September 23. Min/Max: 3/6.



Briefs

MEET THE NEW DIRECTOR

The Macon County Conservation District Board of Trustees announced Jerry Culp as the new Executive Director of the Macon County Conservation District.



“Jerry’s years of experience in management of natural resources, combined with his vision for this District’s future causes us to be very excited for the future of the Macon County Conservation District,” says Board President, Karen Schneller.

For over 25 years, Jerry has helped preserve and maintain open space and natural areas. He has been involved with the acquisition and improvement of over 10,000 acres of land. He has a degree in Landscape Architecture from Iowa State University and a GIS certificate from Ferris State University. Jerry and his wife Jackie, along with a son Jake and daughter Maggie, are excited to join the community in Macon County.

“I want to thank Karen Schneller and the board for giving me the opportunity to bring my passion for preserving and protecting the natural environment to the Macon County Conservation District,” says Jerry Culp, “I am excited to join the team and continue protecting and maintaining the natural resources in Macon County.”

Connect with Us
 Twitter: @MCCD_217
 Facebook: @MaconCountyConservationDistrict

Deer Archery Hunting

To limit the growth of the deer population and keep habitats balanced and healthy, the Conservation District will hold an archery deer season from October 15 to December 9.

Hunting is allowed at Rock Springs, Sand Creek, Friends Creek, and Fort Daniel Conservation Areas by special permit only. Hunting is not allowed November 19-21 or December 2-5.



For more information about the program or an application, visit MaconCountyConservation.org/habitat-restoration/deer-herd-management. The deadline to submit an application is Friday, September 3.

Scouts

WEBELOS: INTO THE WOODS Thursday, September 23, 6-8pm

Learn how to identify trees and plants, and discover how fire effects the forest. \$9/person. Register online by noon on September 22. Min/Max: 5/25.



WEBELOS: INTO THE WILD Thursday, October 21, 6-8pm

Tour the EcoCenter, learn about migration, and identify dangerous plants and animals. \$9/person. Register online by noon on October 20. Min/Max: 5/25.

Happenings

Events located at Rock Springs Conservation Area and open to all ages unless otherwise indicated. Register online at MaconCountyConservation.org by noon, unless otherwise noted.

Hours

Macon County
Conservation District



OFFICES OPEN

Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm

NATURE CENTER OPEN

Monday-Wednesday, Friday, 8am-5pm

Thursday, 8am-8pm

Saturday, 9am-5pm

Sunday, 1-5pm

TRAILS OPEN

Daily, 7am to sunset

Holidays & Closings

OFFICES & NATURE CENTER CLOSED

Thursday, November 25, Thanksgiving Day

OFFICES CLOSED, NATURE CENTER OPEN

Monday, September 6, Labor Day

Thursday, November 11, Veteran's Day

Friday, November 26, Thanksgiving

Open Houses

BETHEL SCHOOL

Saturdays, September 4 & October 2, 1-4pm

See what going to school was like in the early 20th 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

September 26, October 31, & November 28, 2-4pm

Tour the restored home of Illinois Governor Richard J. Oglesby. Explore the lives of its family members and their late 1800s lifestyle. \$2/person. 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. All games will be at Beautiful Trobaugh Field at Rock Springs Conservation Area unless otherwise stated.

Saturday, September 18, 10am

Douglas Cup Tournament

Sunday, October 3, 2pm

Away game vs. the Deep River Grinders in Hobart, IN

Saturday, October 30, 1pm

Good Will Match at Lafayette Park in St. Louis, MO



Follow the team on Facebook for additional games and more information or visit MaconCountyConservation.org

Meetings

MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD MEETINGS

Third Wednesday of each month, 5:30pm
September 15, October 20, & November 17

DECATUR AUDUBON SOCIETY MEETINGS

Sundays, 2:30pm, September 19, October 17, & November 21, Rock Springs Nature Center

ROCK SPRINGS QUILTERS

Wednesdays, 9-11am

NOTE: Programs may be canceled or adapted due to COVID restrictions. Check our website before attending. Per CDC guidelines, face coverings are required for those not vaccinated.

Special Events



TASTE OF HISTORY

Saturday, September 25, 5-9pm

The Staley Mansion, Mueller Museum, Culver House, Millikin Homestead, and Oglesby Mansion will again host their fall Taste of History event. Tour these historic sites and enjoy appetizers and beverages along the way (limit 1 alcoholic beverage per person at each location). Tickets are \$30/person from August 1-September 9, and \$40/person after that. Check the participating museums' websites and Facebook pages for ticket sales and more information.

MONARCH MADNESS

Sunday, September 12, 2-4pm

Learn about monarch butterflies from naturalists, then help capture and tag live butterflies. In case of rain, the event will be moved to Sunday, September 19. Co-sponsored by the University of Illinois Extension Office. Free. Register online by September 8 through the University of Illinois Extension. Find the link at MaconCountyConservation.org.



Sunday, September 26, 6:30am-2pm

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Support local wildlife and natural areas by riding your bicycle in this fundraiser event for the Macon County Conservation Foundation. Choose from a 20, 40, or 62 mile route along quiet country roads. Your registration includes a pair of cycling socks, well-stocked rest stops along the routes, and food at the finish line. Registration is \$25/rider on or before September 9, and \$30/rider after. Learn more and choose how you want to register at MaconCountyConservationFoundation.org.



Find us on
Facebook

Macon County Conservation District

3939 Nearing Lane | Decatur, IL 62521 | 217-423-7708

MaconCountyConservation.org

Special Events



History Comes Alive: The Rough Rider Tours Illinois

Sunday, October 17, 4pm

Governor Oglesby Mansion

In spring of 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt visited an astounding 147 towns in 21 states and two territories in only 65 days. One stop was Decatur, IL. Explore President Roosevelt's "Grand Loop Tour" of the Western states with historian Mark Sorensen. In his illustrated presentation, Sorensen will share pictures of Roosevelt's visit to the dedication of Millikin University and speech at the Wabash train depot. Free. For all ages. No registration required.



FALL HARVEST FESTIVAL

Saturday, October 16, 1-4pm

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Celebrate autumn with fall-themed activities including 3-D archery, canoeing, pumpkin painting, a scavenger hunt, wagon rides, tours at Homestead Prairie Farm, and live animals. 3-D archery, canoeing, and pumpkin painting are \$3 each. All other events are free. No registration required.

Candlelight Tour

Saturday, November 13, 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. No registration required.



Macon County Conservation District
3939 Nearing Lane | Decatur, IL 62521 | 217-423-7708
MaconCountyConservation.org



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Register online at MaconCountyConservation.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
September 4 & 18
October 2, 16, & 30
November 13 & 27



ACOUSTIC MUSIC JAM

Sundays, 1-4pm
September 12, October 10, November 14

CROSS COUNTRY CLASSICS

Thursdays, 6-7:30pm
September 2, October 7, November 4

Art

NORTH GALLERY ARTISTS

Brenda Ware
September & October

View the beauty of central Illinois as captured by Brenda Ware, a local photographer.

Barn Colony Artists
November & December

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

SOUTH GALLERY ARTISTS

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.

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: 4/12.

FALLING LEAVES

Wednesday, September 8, 9:30-10:30am
Thursday, September 9, 9:30-10:30am

Explore the textures and colors of fall foliage.
Register online by noon the day before camp.



DINOSAUR STOMP

Tuesday, September 21, 9:30-10:30am
Wednesday, September 22, 9:30-10:30am

We will study dinosaurs through artifacts and creative play.
Register online by noon the day before camp.

PUMPKINS

Wednesday, October 6, 9:30-10:30am
Thursday, October 7, 9:30-10:30am

Dig into a pumpkin and experience this fruit first-hand. Register online by noon the day before camp.

BEAUTIFUL BATS

Tuesday, October 19, 9:30-10:30am
Wednesday, October 20, 9:30-10:30am

Squeak, squeak! Explore bats and their amazing adaptations. Register online by noon the day before camp.



COOL SEEDS

Wednesday, November 3, 9:30-10:30am
Thursday, November 4, 9:30-10:30am

Discover how nature prepares for winter by creating seeds. We'll discover what makes seeds and where to find them. Register online by noon the day before camp.

TURKEY TROT

Tuesday, November 16, 9:30-10:30am
Wednesday, November 17, 9:30-10:30am

Turkeys are one of the biggest birds in our forest. We'll look at feathers and bones to see what we can learn about them. Register online by noon the day before camp.

Happenings

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September

SEARCH FOR BIGFOOT

Saturday, September 11, 2pm

Join a naturalist on a hike through the forest as we search for a mythical creature and learn about animals that use camouflage to survive. Free. Register online by September 10. Min/Max: 5/30.



PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: AUTUMN ACORNS

Sunday, September 19, 2pm

Learn why acorns are important and where they come from, do a craft, and go on a short hike searching for them. Free. Register online by September 17. Min/Max: 5/30.

October

TRIP TO THE GREAT PUMPKIN PATCH

Saturday, October 2, 10am-3pm

Did you know that Illinois is the top producer of pumpkins in the country? Join us as we travel to Arthur, IL to visit The Great Pumpkin Patch! Enjoy a corn maze, farm animals, try some pumpkin ice cream, or find the perfect pumpkin to take home. \$10/person covers transportation. Admission is on your own. Register online by October 1. Min/Max: 5/24.



ARCHAEOLOGY OPEN HOUSE

Homestead Prairie Farm

Sunday, October 3, 1-4pm

Discover the treasures found beneath the Trobaugh-Good House during repairs to the foundation of this 1860s-era farmhouse. Become an archaeologist yourself by trying your hand at sifting for more artifacts. Free. No registration required.

SNAKE AND TURTLE SHOW

Thursday, October 14, 6pm

Meet and learn about our education animals and their ways of life. We have several species to show you! \$3/person. Register online by October 13. Min/Max: 5/30.



PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: SILLY SCARECROWS

Sunday, October 17, 2pm

Why do farmers put scarecrows in their fields? Discover the history of scarecrows, make one out of a paper bag to take home, then go outside to search for the crows they're meant to scare! Free. Register online by October 15. Min/Max: 5/30.

FULL MOON HIKE

Wednesday, October 20, 7pm

See the moon through the lens of our telescope, then take a walk on the Rock Springs-Fairview Bike Trail illuminated only by the moon itself. Free. Register online by October 19. Min/Max: 5/30.

DECOMPOSER HIKE

Friends Creek Conservation Area

Saturday, October 23, 2pm

Decomposers are an important and often-overlooked part of the food chain. Discover the role that fungi, earthworms, and even turkey vultures play in the health of the environment. Free. Register online by October 22. Min/Max: 5/30.



Happenings

Events located at Rock Springs Conservation Area and open to all ages unless otherwise indicated.
Register online at MaconCountyConservation.org by noon, unless otherwise noted.

ADULT CRAFT: PEBBLE ART

Saturday, October 30, 10am

Adults are invited to try their hand at creating an artistic scene using only pebbles, then take it home to display. All supplies will be provided. Free. Register online by October 29. Min/Max: 5/20.



HALLOWEEN HIKE

Sunday, 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 29. Min/Max: 5/30.

November

TEDDY BEAR WALK AND CAMPFIRE STORIES

Saturday, November 6, 5pm

Bring your favorite stuffed animal as you learn about the changing seasons on the Rock Springs-Fairview Bike Trail, then make s'mores together and listen to stories around a campfire. Bring a blanket or a lawn chair to sit on. Free. Register online by November 5. Min/Max: 5/30.

OWL PROWL

Sand Creek Conservation Area

Saturday, November 20, 6pm

Join a naturalist to learn about these forest-dwelling nocturnal predators. We will discuss what makes them special, then take a hike to find some. Dress for the weather. Meet at the entrance to Sand Creek Conservation Area. \$3/person. Register online by November 19. Min/Max: 5/30.



PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: PERFECT PUMPKINS

Sunday, November 21, 2pm

Learn about these versatile fruits, make a craft with colorful pumpkin seeds, and take a tiny pumpkin home. Free. Register online by November 19. Min/Max: 5/30.



NATIVE AMERICAN SKILLS AND GAMES

Sunday, 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, discover the art of beading, and try your hand at 3D archery. \$3/person. Register online by November 24. Min/Max: 5/20.



MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES & STAFF

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Contact Us

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Macon County
Conservation District
3939 Nearing Lane
Decatur, IL 62521



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Monarch Madness

With the University of Illinois Extension

Saturday, Sept 12, 2-4pm

at Rock Springs Nature Center
3939 Nearing Lane, Decatur, IL

Free. More information inside.



Macon County
Conservation District



For trail conditions, visit MaconCountyConservation.org.



The Prairie Islander is a free quarterly publication. Call or email for additional copies. "Go Green" by reading it online at MaconCountyConservation.org.