

## Digging into the Past

With Brent Wielt

Historic Sites Manager, Brent Wielt tells us about the construction done at Homestead Prairie Farm, and the archaeology work that's ahead for the summer months.

### Tell us a little about the construction work done on the Trobaugh-Good House last fall.

The foundation of the house needed to be strengthened in various places. Also, the northwest corner of the exterior foundation wall needed to be rebuilt. In order to access areas under the house to perform the work, dirt had to be removed to make the crawlspace bigger.

### What makes this kind of work important?

A foundation is one of the more important parts of a house. Its strength and stability is a key factor in the safety and longevity of a structure. Fixing current problems and preventing future ones, enables continued public access to the house for many years to come, and prevents costly future repairs.

### What are staff and volunteers doing with the piles of dirt that were removed from under the home?

We have started sifting the dirt for artifacts through wire mesh screens. So far we have found

pieces of dishes, brick, plaster, glass, various metal objects, small animal bones, and more. Screened dirt will then be used to improve the trail from the main parking lot to Homestead Prairie Farm.

### Is this the first time archaeology has been done at Homestead Prairie Farm?

No, other archaeological digs were done several years ago, including discovering what was in a well. Also, surface collection of artifacts is ongoing when an artifact works its way to the surface or is dug up during gardening or utility work, such as when we installed the new water line to the garden.

### Why is archaeology important?

Unlike some other historic homes, we don't have letters and diaries describing daily life in the past at Homestead Prairie Farm. Archaeological artifacts

give us clues to the unique history of this house. For example, pieces of plates might tell us what china pattern they had, animal bones might tell us what they ate, or glass bottles might tell us what medicines they used.

### Can people help staff sift through the dirt? If so, tell us about this unique volunteer opportunity.

Yes, we are looking for help! We hope to discover more artifacts on various work days. We will be working under the shade of nearby trees. You never know what we will find. Be a part of discovering the past! Anyone interested can contact me (Brent Wielt) at 217-423-7708 or via email at [bwielt@MaconCountyConservation.org](mailto:bwielt@MaconCountyConservation.org).



# Summer Concert Series Returns

By Richie Wolf

The Macon County Conservation District will again offer a free outdoor concert series during June, July, and August.

The success of this series is thanks to participants like you and our financial co-sponsor, Stifel Investment Services. Invite your family and friends to the west lawn of Rock Springs Nature Center and relax to the tunes of yesteryear.

The bands play mostly bluegrass, folk, and old country favorites. This year, Cactus Ranch kicks off the series on June 2. This band is a friend of the Conservation District that often plays at the monthly Bluegrass Music Jams. On June 16, the Burr Oak String Band will entertain with their old fashioned melodies. June 30 brings out the young duo, Stone and Snow. After a few weeks break, we return to the lawn on July 21 with Switchback. July 28 welcomes the Hood Family Band for some down home tunes. Finally, August 11 wraps up the series with our friends, Cross Country Classics, who play at Rock Springs Nature Center year round.

Please consider joining us for these family friendly shows. In case of rain, the concerts will move inside Rock Springs Nature Center. All shows are free and begin at 7pm. Bring a lawn chair or blanket. Refreshments will be available for sale by the Home and Community Education group of the University of Illinois Extension Office.

## STIFEL

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June 2 CACTUS RANCH



June 16 BURR OAK STRING BAND



June 30 STONE & SNOW



July 21 SWITCHBACK



July 28 HOOD FAMILY BAND



Aug 11 CROSS COUNTRY CLASSICS

Briefs

GRANT FOR POND IMPROVEMENTS

The Cattail Ponds at Rock Springs Conservation Area will receive an upgrade to make fishing better and more accessible. The new improvements will include removing the causeway separating the two ponds, reshaping the shoreline, installing two docks, and adding accessible paths and an accessible kayak/canoe launch. This summer, staff will begin clearing some vegetation and lowering the water levels. This two year project will be funded in part by an Outdoor Space and Land Acquisition Development (OSLAD) grant through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.



BIKE TRAIL RENOVATION UPDATE

The three bridges along the Rock Springs-Fairview Bike Trail are set for a major renovation, funded in part by a Federal Recreational Trails Program grant administered by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. While still sound, the three bridges are showing their age and require work. Technical plans are being finalized, and Conservation District staff have started removing trees and undergrowth along the old construction access lanes. Once construction begins, the bike trail will be closed for its duration. For your safety, heed all trail closures. Stay up to date by following us at:

- [Facebook.com/MaconCountyConservationDistrict](https://www.facebook.com/MaconCountyConservationDistrict)
- [Twitter.com/MCCD\\_217](https://twitter.com/MCCD_217)
- Trail conditions hotline: 217-421-7493

SUMMER CAMPS

Enjoying fresh air, exploring nature, and learning about the world around us are hallmarks of summer camps at Rock Springs Conservation Area. You and your children or grandchildren are invited to join us for a summer of fun and learning. This year's camp season runs from June 3 to August 9. During those weeks, you'll find many activities to choose from:



- **Mini Camp:** Ages 1-5 explore Rock Springs Conservation Area with their adult buddies in these hour-long camps. \$6/child each camp.
- **Earth Adventures:** Ages 6-12 hike, swim, canoe, and discover the world around them in this full-day, week-long nature camp with optional Before and After Child Care. \$120/camper each week.
- **Adventure Club:** Ages 5-12 join Earth Adventures nature camp on Tuesday mornings. \$12/camper each day.
- **X-treme Camp:** Ages 10-15 pack up for exciting daytrips, including horseback riding. \$60/camper.

Online registration is open now. [MaconCountyConservation.org](http://MaconCountyConservation.org).

Take Your Pick

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

SNAKE & TURTLE SHOWS

Thursdays, June 6, July 11, and August 8, 6-7pm

Meet, feel, and learn about resident animals and their ways of life, plus learn what makes snakes, turtles, lizards, and alligators alike. We have several live species to show you. Free. Register online by June 5, July 10, and August 7. Min/Max: 5/30.



ST. LOUIS ZOO TRIPS

Tuesdays, July 16, August 13, and August 20, 10am-6pm

Observe wildlife from around the globe, including cheetahs, hippos, and sea lions. Admission to the zoo is free. Meet at Rock Springs Nature Center. All ages. \$25/person covers transportation and parking. Register online by July 15, August 12, and August 19. Min/Max: 5/12.

# 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, July 4, Independence Day

## Open Houses

### BETHEL SCHOOL

Saturdays, June 1, July 6, and August 3, 1-4pm

See what going to school was like in the early 20<sup>th</sup> 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 30, July 28, and August 25, 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. 421 W. William Street, Decatur, IL. \$2/person. Members are free.



## 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.

Sunday, July 14, 1pm

Nokomis Memorial Park, Nokomis, IL –

Away game against the Springfield Long Nine and Bloomington Prairie Chickens during Nokomis' Homecoming Celebration

Saturday, August 24, 1pm

Kennekuk County Park, Danville, IL –

Away game against the Vermilion Voles

Follow the team on Facebook for additional games and more information, or visit [MaconCountyConservation.org](http://MaconCountyConservation.org).

## Meetings

### MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD MEETINGS

Third Wednesday of each month, 5:30pm

June 19, July 17, & August 21

### DECATUR AUDUBON SOCIETY MEETINGS

Sunday, August 18, 6:30pm, Rock Springs Nature Center

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

Norman Jensen, President

Doug Johnson, Secretary

David White, Treasurer

Karen Schneller, Second Vice-President

Paul Marien, Executive Director

Shane Ravellette, Operations Manager

Richie Wolf, 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)

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## Music

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

### DULCIMER CLUB

Saturdays, 10am-12pm  
June 1, 15, and 29  
July 13 and 27  
August 10 and 24



### BLUEGRASS MUSIC JAM

Sundays, 1-4pm  
June 9, July 14, and August 11

### CROSS COUNTRY CLASSICS

Thursdays, 6-7:30pm  
June 6 and August 1

### SHAPE-NOTE SINGING

Sunday, August 25, 2-4pm

## Art

### NORTH GALLERY ARTISTS

Alan and Chris Perry  
May & June

Enjoy scenic photos of a variety of nature subjects including wildlife, flowers, and landscapes from photographers Alan and Chris Perry.

Sue Watts

July & August

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

### SOUTH GALLERY ARTISTS

Kattina Williams  
May & June

View photography of wildlife, flowers, and exotic birds in this display from Kattina Williams.

Robert Reed

July & August

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

## Special Events

### INDEPENDENCE DAY 1860

Saturday, June 29, 12-4pm

Enjoy an Independence Day celebration 1860s style! Tour Homestead Prairie Farm, try old-time toys, enjoy a music concert by the Rock Springs Dulcimer Club, and an ice cream social. Visitors are invited to bring a lunch basket for a picnic on the lawn. In case of rain, the concert will be moved inside Rock Springs Nature Center. Free. No registration required.

### PERSEID METEOR SHOWER

Saturday, August 10, 10pm-12am  
Griswold Conservation Area

Experience the Perseid Meteor Shower near its peak, make s'mores, and enjoy a truly dark sky. Bring a blanket or a lawn chair. Free. Register online by August 9. Min/Max: 5/60.

### ASTRONOMY JAMBOREE

Saturday, August 24, 7-9pm  
Friends Creek 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. Hot dogs, marshmallows, and water provided. Bring your telescope and share your knowledge. Free. Register online by August 23. Min/Max: 5/300.

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



### HUMMINGBIRD FESTIVAL

Tuesday, August 27, 4-7pm

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



# Happenings

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

## June

### ART EXHIBIT OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, June 1, 2pm

Artists and art lovers are invited to view the exhibit, *Nature through Art*, before it closes. View art from talented local artists as well as submissions and winners of the children and teens' Wildlife Art Contest. Refreshments will be provided. Free. No registration required.

### PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: PLAYTIMES PAST

Saturday, June 8, 10am

Learn about the games and toys that pioneers played with and try your hand at them. Free. Register online by June 7. Min/Max: 5/30.



### TRIP TO WILDLIFE PRAIRIE PARK IN PEORIA, IL

Saturday, June 15, 10am-6pm

Ride with us to Peoria to observe a variety of species native to Illinois, including bison, wolves, and river otters! Lunch and admission to the park are on your own. \$20/person covers transportation and parking. Register online by June 14. Min/Max: 5/12.

### STRAWBERRY MOON HIKE

Monday, June 17, 9pm

The full moon in June signaled Native Americans that it was time to gather ripe strawberries from the fields. Discover the seas and craters of the moon through our telescope, then head out on a short hike lit only by the moon itself. Free. Register online by June 14. Min/Max: 5/30.

### LET'S ROCK!

Saturday, June 22, 2pm

Griswold Conservation Area

Rock hounds are invited to Griswold Conservation Area to learn about rocks and how they are formed, then search through a glacial kame and see what you can find. Free. Register online by June 21. Min/Max: 5/30.

### THE ORPHAN TRAINS IN ILLINOIS

Sunday, June 23, 2pm

The Orphan Trains brought about 200,000 children from the East Coast to homes in the Midwest from the 1850s to the 1920s. Some children suffered extreme hardships while others found loving families, but most kept their stories secret. Guest speaker Rochelle Gridley, a Central Illinois librarian and volunteer at the McLean County Museum of History, will tell the stories of several local children, including some from Decatur and Macon County. Free. No registration required.

### WALLEYE FISHING TRIP TO LAKE ERIE

Sunday-Tuesday, June 23-25

Join staff on a trip to Lake Erie to fish for walleye on a charter boat. Price includes two day charter, fishing equipment, transportation, and lodging. Meals and license not included. Meet at the Information Desk at Rock Springs Nature Center. For all ages. \$465/person. Register online by June 14. Min/Max: 5/11.

## July

### TRIP TO WORLD BIRD SANCTUARY

Saturday, July 6, 10am-6pm

Visit this raptor education and rehabilitation center outside of St. Louis and see a variety of birds of prey, including owls, vultures, and eagles. Admission to the sanctuary is free. We will stop for lunch along the way. \$25/person covers transportation. Register online by July 5. Min/Max: 5/12.

### PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: RIVER OTTERS

Saturday, July 13, 2pm

Where can you find river otters in Macon County? Learn about their habitat, diet, and more, then make a craft to take home. Free. Register online by July 12. Min/Max: 5/30.

### PRAIRIE ECOLOGY HIKE

Sunday, July 14, 2pm

Take a hike through one of our restored prairies and learn about the plants and animals within, and their relationship with this special habitat. Free. Register online by July 12. Min/Max: 5/30.

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## BATS IN THE BARN

Saturday, July 20, 7-9pm

Determine fact from fiction in this two-hour program about nature's only flying mammal. After meeting at Rock Springs Nature Center for an indoor program, we will carpool to Sand Creek Conservation Area to watch wild bats fly out for a night of hunting. Free. Register online by July 19. Min/Max: 5/30.

## DENDROCHRONOLOGY: APPLICATIONS IN HISTORIC AND PREHISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGY

Saturday, July 27, 2pm

Dendrochronology, also known as tree ring dating, relates to archaeology, climatology, and ecology. This presentation shows the tools used, the collection and analysis of cores, and applications in historic and prehistoric archaeology. Guest speaker Dr. Glen Freimuth, a retired archaeologist and Professor Emeritus at Richland Community College, has conducted archaeological field work in the United States and Caribbean Basin and helped establish a dendrochronology lab at the Illinois State Museum. Free. No registration required.

## August

## PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: INSECT HUNT

Saturday, August 3, 2pm

Fort Daniel Conservation Area

Look for insects in the air and in the water at Fort Daniel Conservation Area. Nets and magnifying boxes will be provided. Wear sturdy shoes that could get muddy. Free. Register online by August 2. Min/Max: 5/30.



## RAILROADS IN THE CIVIL WAR

Sunday, August 4, 2pm

Find out how an industry in its infancy helped end the Civil War. In the early 1860s, railroads did not yet connect the entire nation but were pivotal in the outcome of the war. Guest speaker and retired teacher Don Chamberlain shows the role of railroads in moving men and supplies, ultimately shaping America's largest conflict of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Free. No registration required.

## ADULT WREATH CRAFT

Sunday, August 11, 2pm

Adults are invited to make a wreath bird feeder to take home. The birds in your backyard will love snacking on this edible wreath! All supplies are provided. Free. Register online by August 9. Min/Max: 5/20.

## CONSERVATION IN YOUR BACKYARD

Saturday, August 17, 2pm

Learn what you can do in your own backyard to help local wildlife. Each registered family will receive a free bluebird nest box to take home! Free. Register online by August 16. Min/Max: 5/30.



## EXPLORING CENTRAL ILLINOIS 200 YEARS AGO

Sunday, August 18, 2pm

In the late summer of 1819, a German settler newly arrived in Illinois set off with a guide to explore Central Illinois and the Sangamon River Valley. Retrace their path and learn what they saw and the people they met as they crossed several present-day counties. Free. No registration required.

## CANOE THE BIKE TRAIL POND

Sunday, August 25, 2pm

Step inside a canoe and take a relaxing ride on our bike trail pond. Wear clothes and shoes that could get wet. All equipment provided. Meet at Rock Springs Nature Center. \$15/canoe. Each canoe must have at least one adult. Register online by August 23. Min/Max: 3/8 canoes.



## PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, August 31, 2pm

View photographs taken by talented local photographers as well as the winners of the Children's Photography Contest. Refreshments will be provided. Free. No registration required.

Return Service Requested



# Rooms and Pavilions

Rooms for rent in Rock Springs Nature Center

Pavilions at Rock Springs, Friends Creek,  
Fort Daniel, and Griswold Conservation Areas

[Reserve Online](#)

For updated trail conditions, call 217-421-7493.



The Prairie Islander is a free quarterly publication. Call or email for additional copies. "Go Green" by reading it online at [MaconCountyConservation.org](http://MaconCountyConservation.org).

