

New Online Giving Feature

By Katherine Unruh

Did you know the Macon County Conservation District is supported in part by its own non-profit? Each year, area residents like you donate to the Macon County Conservation Foundation. By putting nature first, they fund the projects and equipment that improve local natural areas, protect wildlife diversity, filter the air and water we rely on, and provide programs for school children.

In fact, building Rock Springs Nature Center and the Rock Springs-Fairview Bike Trail were only possible thanks to people who gave to the Conservation Foundation. In more recent years, gifts have funded the new nature playground at Rock Springs, two paid full-time summer Natural Resources internships, and matched some of the Decatur Audubon Society's school bus transportation grants.

You can make a difference in your community by contributing, too. And now it's easier than before with a new online giving feature. The system is secure and easy to use. Save your paper, postage, and time, by making your donation online.

Visit MaconCountyConservationFoundation.org, and click the big orange "Donate" button. Or browse additional ways to give featured under the Donate tab, such as adopting an area, sponsoring Prairie Pedal, or volunteering your time.



Wildlife Art Contest

By Alysia Callison



Calling all young artists:

Our community is filled with so many talented artists, and for many, art exploration starts at a young age. To celebrate and encourage the talented youth in our area, and bring awareness to local wildlife, Macon County children and teens are invited to participate in a county-wide art contest this winter.



Students in grades K-12 are invited to create an original work of two dimensional art in the medium of their choice (excluding photography) depicting **native** Illinois animal or plant wildlife in their natural habitat. Creativity is highly encouraged.

Entries will be divided into four categories, based on grade level: K-3, 4-6, 7-8, and 9-12. Macon County Conservation District staff will carefully consider all entries and choose a first, second, and third place winner in each age category. All winners will have their art displayed in Rock Springs Nature Center from February through May

in an upcoming exhibit, "Nature through Art," alongside other local artists.

Entries should be mailed or delivered to Rock Springs Nature Center c/o Alysia Callison, 3939 Nearing Lane, Decatur, IL 62521 and are due by Friday, January 25, 2019. When submitting art, be sure to include the artist's name, age, grade, school (if applicable), and a phone number where the artist's parent or guardian can be reached, so we can properly credit the artist and inform those who win the contest. Winners will be notified Monday, February 11, 2019.

For more information, contact Alysia Callison at (217) 423-7708. We look forward to seeing your unique submissions, and invite everyone to stop by and view them during the upcoming exhibit from February through May.

Connect with Us



Find out how you can make a difference
217-423-7708
MaconCountyConservation.org

Briefs

SKI AND SNOWSHOE RENTAL

Enhance your outdoor adventure by exploring the conservation area trails on cross country skis or snowshoes this winter. If you don't have your own, you can rent the equipment from Rock Springs Nature Center. Borrow skis, boots, and poles, or one pair of snowshoes for \$8 for 2 hours or \$20 for 24 hours. Equipment available first-come, first-served. Skis and snowshoes are available for rent and welcome for use on any conservation area trail when 4 or more inches of snow covers the ground.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY: QUILTING

Quilting is a beautiful art form that has been bringing people together for centuries. Historically, people organized quilting bees as a social gathering to connect neighbors, friends, and family. Quilting bees resulted in many beautiful quilts being artfully stitched and passed down through generations.

If you want to try quilting, but are not sure where to start: A group of volunteer quilters is keeping that tradition alive at Rock Springs Nature Center, every Wednesday from 9am-11am. All levels of experience are invited to join the group. The group loves to share their current projects and delights in teaching others how to quilt.

For more information or to sign up, contact Volunteer Coordinator, Jenny Garver at jgarver@maconcountyconservation.org or 217-423-7708. Explore additional volunteer opportunities at MaconCountyConservation.org.

WINTER FACILITIES

The conservation areas are open 365 days a year, but cooler temperatures bring a few changes. Water and electricity has been shut off at pavilions and outdoor rest areas at each of the conservation areas. Pit toilets remain available throughout the winter. Pavilions are available on a first-come, first-served basis during winter months. They will open again for reservations from May 1 through November 1, 2019.



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:

OWL PROWL

Saturdays, January 5 & February 23, 9-10:30pm
Friends Creek Conservation Area

Join us 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 large pavilion at Friends Creek Conservation Area. \$2/person. Register online by January 4 and February 22. Min/Max: 5/30.



TRIP TO STARVED ROCK FOR EAGLE VIEWING

Saturdays, January 19, 26, & February 2, 9am-4pm

Take a trip to this popular state park to look for wintering eagles, check out the visitor's center, and even visit the lock and dam museum. Bring a lunch or purchase one from the restaurant at Starved Rock. Be prepared to go outside. \$25/person. Register online by January 18, 25, and February 1. Min/Max: 5/12.

MAPLE SYRUP PROGRAMS

Saturday, February 16, 11am, 12pm, & 1pm

Come out to Rock Springs Nature Center to learn how sap becomes syrup, why spring is the best time of year to harvest sap, and how people used sap throughout history. Then sample real maple syrup. Free. Register online by February 15. Min/Max: 5/35.

Happenings

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



Hours

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

Monday, December 24, Christmas Eve

Tuesday, December 25, Christmas Day

Tuesday, January 1, New Year's Day

NATURE CENTER OPEN, OFFICES CLOSED

Monday, January 21, MLK Day

Monday, February 18, Presidents' Day

MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES & STAFF

Norman Jensen, President

Anne Elliott, Vice 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
MaconCountyConservation.org

Meetings

MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD MEETINGS

Third Wednesday of each month, 5:30pm

December 19, January 16, & February 20

DECATUR AUDUBON SOCIETY MEETINGS

Sundays at Rock Springs Nature Center

December 16 at 4:30pm

January 20 at 2pm

February 17 at 2pm



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.

JINGLE BELLS

Thursday, December 27, 9:30-10:30am

Friday, December 28, 9:30-10:30am

Explore winter past times and traditions involving mittens and snow through hands-on activities and songs. Dress for a short excursion outside. Register online by noon the day before camp.

SHINING PLANETS

Tuesday, January 15, 9:30-10:30am

Wednesday, January 16, 9:30-10:30am

Discover worlds beyond our own as we use our senses to contrast and compare Earth to nearby planets. Register online by noon the day before camp.

SOARING EAGLES

Wednesday, February 20, 9:30-10:30am

Thursday, February 21, 9:30-10:30am

Learn about the National Bird that soars nearby and observe an eagle skull and egg. Register online by noon the day before camp.

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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

December 1, 15, & 29

January 12 & 26

February 9 & 23



BLUEGRASS MUSIC JAM

Sundays, 1-4pm

December 9, January 13, & February 10

CROSS COUNTRY CLASSICS

Thursdays, 6:30-7:30pm

December 6, January 3, & February 7

SHAPE-NOTE SINGING

Sunday, February 24, 2-4pm

Art

NORTH GALLERY ARTISTS

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.

DECATUR CAMERA CLUB

January & February

Enjoy a wide variety of photography, including scenes of trees, birds, landscapes, and more from talented local photographers.

SOUTH GALLERY ARTISTS

David Castor

November & December

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

SUSTAIN OUR NATURAL AREAS

January & February

View an eclectic collection of environmental art created by members of this local group committed to saving green spaces throughout our community.

Special Events

28th ANNUAL HERITAGE AND HOLLY TOUR

Friday, November 23, 4-8pm and Saturday, November 24, 1-5pm

Experience historic Decatur through its architectural treasures, including the Governor Oglesby Mansion. This tour is sponsored by Dove, Inc. and features several historic Decatur homes and buildings all decked out in holiday decor, with discussion focusing on history and community restoration. Tickets can be purchased at All Things Beautiful, Land of Lincoln Credit Union, Novel Ideas, Wildflour Artisan Bakery and Café, and Dove, Inc. \$18/person in advance or \$20/person at the door. Tour starts at Westminster Presbyterian Church.

CHRISTMAS TEA

Sunday, December 2, 1-4pm

Stop by the Governor Oglesby Mansion to enjoy a traditional Christmas afternoon tea. Experience this historic Victorian home all decked out for the holidays. Refreshments will be served. \$2/person. No reservations necessary. The Governor Oglesby Mansion is located at 421 W. William Street in Decatur, IL.



HOMESCHOOL PROGRAM: ANIMALS IN WINTER

Wednesday, January 30, 10am

Homeschoolers are invited to join a naturalist as we talk about what animals do in winter. We will also take a hike outside to look for wildlife in their natural habitat. Free. Register online by January 29. Min/Max: 5/30.

USING PRESCRIBED FIRE IN CENTRAL ILLINOIS

Sunday, February 24, 2pm

Learn about the history of fire in the United States, on the Illinois landscape, and how perceptions of fire have changed over the years. We will also show how prescribed fire is currently used in Central Illinois as a management tool and how the Macon County Conservation District conducts prescribed burns. Guest speaker Ethan Snively is the Natural Resources Specialist for the Macon County Conservation District. Free. No registration required.



Happenings

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

December

ILLINOIS' 200th BIRTHDAY TRIP

Monday, December 3, 11am-4pm

Celebrate the big day by visiting the Illinois State Museum in our state's capital city. We will see their temporary exhibit "Bicentennial and Beyond!" Celebrating the 200th birthday of our state with a variety of rare and rarely-seen artifacts from the museum's collection. We will get lunch along the way. Lunch and admission are on your own. Free. Register online by November 30. Min/Max: 5/12.

FEED THE ANIMALS

Sunday, December 9, 2pm

Get a behind-the-scenes look at how our educational animals are cared for and fed. The snake, turtles, and salamander will eagerly feed from your hands. Each family will receive a "Critters of Illinois" pocket guide to take home and help you identify wildlife. \$2/person. Register online by December 7. Min/Max: 5/30.



GEMINID METEOR SHOWER

Friday, December 14, 9-11pm

Griswold Conservation Area

View the strongest meteor shower of the year. These meteors originate near the constellation Gemini and are usually bright and colorful. We will have hot chocolate and marshmallows available for making s'mores. Wear warm clothing and bring a lawn chair and blanket if you like. Free. Register online by December 13. Min/Max: 5/50.

WILD AND WONDERFUL WOLVES

Saturday, December 15, 2pm

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. Free. Register online by December 14. Min/Max: 5/30.

WINTER CRAFT FOR ADULTS

Wednesday, December 19, 2pm

Bring a little bit of the outside in by making a frosted pinecone candle jar. These luminaries are a perfect addition to your winter décor. All craft supplies are provided. Free. Register online by December 18. Min/Max: 5/30.

TOTALLY TOADS

Thursday, December 20, 2pm

Learn how to attract amphibians to your yard and why you might want to. View live frogs and toads, compare the homes they live in, and create a toad house to take home and put in your garden next spring. Free. Register online by December 19. Min/Max: 5/30.



MAMMALS OF ILLINOIS

Thursday, December 20, 6pm

What do our local animals do during the winter? Learn this and more as we identify mounted specimens, learn about and feel real furs, and search for mammal tracks outside. Be prepared for a short hike and dress warmly. Free. Register online by December 19. Min/Max: 5/30.

COLD MOON VIEWING

Saturday, December 22, 7pm

December's full moon is called the 'Cold' moon, and for good reason! Wear warm clothes as we view the moon through our telescope and take a short hike to view the forest illuminated by our only natural satellite. Free. Register online by December 21. Min/Max: 5/30.



DINOS VS. DRAGONS: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Thursday, December 27, 2pm

Why have dragons existed in our imaginations for centuries? Compare fact with fiction as we discuss the difference between mythical dragons and prehistoric dinosaurs, using realistic dinosaur replicas to tell the tale. Free. Register online by December 26. Min/Max: 5/30.

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Register online at www.maconcountyconservation.org by noon, unless otherwise noted.

PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: HOLIDAYS FOR THE BIRDS

Saturday, December 29, 2-4pm

Join us as we learn about our over-wintering birds, take a hike, and then make peanut butter or Crisco pinecone bird feeders. When we're done, we will place our feeders outside so the birds can have a snack. Free. Register online by December 28.
Min/Max: 5/30.

January

BIRD FEEDING BASICS

Sunday, January 6, 2pm

Learn which birds are here during the winter, what to feed them, and whether or not feeding is actually helpful. We will check out the Window on Wildlife to identify some wild birds. Free. Register online by January 4. Min/Max: 5/30.



WINTER BIRD HIKE

Saturday, January 12, 10am

Fort Daniel Conservation Area

Join a naturalist as we walk through the woods and look for woodpeckers, sparrows, cardinals, and more. Meet at the pavilion at Fort Daniel Conservation Area. Free. Register online by January 11. Min/Max: 5/30.

PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: DEER

Sunday, January 20, 2pm

How many species of deer do we have in Illinois? Learn about these resident mammals by touching their fur, viewing an antler, and making a craft. Free. Register online by January 18. Min/Max: 5/30.

PERE MARQUETTE STATE PARK EAGLE TRIP

Tuesday, January 22, 9am-4pm

Visit this state park and venture through river bluffs and woods to get an up-close look at wintering bald eagles along the Mississippi River and lower Illinois River. Bring a lunch or purchase one from the Pere Marquette lodge restaurant. Be prepared to go outside. \$25/person. Register online by January 21. Min/Max: 5/12.

February

PRESERVING YOUR PAST: HOW TO PROTECT OLD LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS

Sunday, February 3, 2pm

Learn how to preserve your family history with these tips and guidelines on how to protect old letters and documents. Attendees are welcome to bring their own items for a personal review after the program. Guest speaker Rachael Ward is a graduate of the Historical Administration Program at Eastern Illinois University. Free. No registration required.

WINTER PHOTOGRAPHY BASICS

Saturday, February 9, 1-4pm

Bring your camera and tripod and join us for a photography workshop! There will be a discussion inside followed by a walk outside to photograph nature in winter. All skill levels welcome.

Sponsored by the Decatur Camera

Club. Free. Register online by February 8. Min/Max: 8/40.



TRIP TO CAHOKIA MOUNDS

Wednesday, February 13, 12-7pm

Explore one of the greatest ancient civilizations in North America. We will stop for a quick bite to eat along the way. Museum admission is free but donations are accepted. \$25/person covers transportation. Register online by February 12. Min/Max: 5/12.

PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: STINKY SKUNKS

Sunday, February 17, 2pm

February is the perfect time of the year for skunks to start making nests and preparing for babies. Learn all about these feisty mammals and make a skunk-themed craft to take home. Free. Register online by February 15. Min/Max: 5/30.

TWILIGHT HIKE

Thursday, February 28, 5-6:30pm

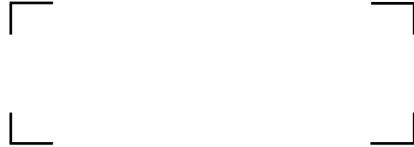
Did you know that some animals are most active during the times between day and night? Tag along on a hike during the dusky hours of the day to search for crepuscular animals as they begin to move around. Free. Register online by February 27. Min/Max: 5/20.

Macon County
Conservation District
3939 Nearing Lane
Decatur, IL 62521



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Macon County
Conservation District

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