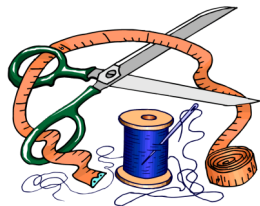


Dates to Remember

Volunteer Quarterly Meeting

Rock Springs Nature Center, Auditorium
Wednesday, July 10, 11:30am-1pm

Hear the latest news in educational programming, Nature Center upgrades, natural area restoration efforts, foundation projects, and more. Lunch provided. RSVP to Jenny Garver by July 5.

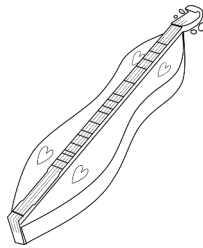


Rock Springs Quilters

Rock Springs Nature Center
Every Wednesday, 9-11am

Dulcimer Club

Rock Springs Nature Center
Saturday, July 6 & 20, 10am
Saturday, August 3, 17, & 31, 10am
Saturday, September 14 & 28, 10am



Acoustic Jam Session

Rock Springs Nature Center
Sunday, July 14, August 11,
& September 8, 2-4pm

Vintage Base Ball

Rock Springs Conservation Area,
Beautiful Trobaugh Field
Saturday, August 17, 12pm

Rock Springs Ground Squirrels
vs. Lafayette Square Cyclones

Saturday, September 21, 12pm

Rock Springs Ground Squirrels vs.
Champaign Clippers

Saturday, September 28, 10am

Douglas Cup Tournament



Thank You Volunteers

Jenny Garver - Volunteer Coordinator

We appreciate you being part of the Macon County Conservation District volunteer family! We want to give a special shout-out to all of the amazing volunteers who helped out on April 27. Sixty-eight volunteers turned out for the Sangamon River Clean-up in the morning and seventy-seven volunteers assisted with the Festival of Spring in the afternoon. We can't forget to mention the twenty-seven volunteers who helped to make the Rock Springs Ramble fundraising event through the Macon County Conservation Foundation a success on May 18. This summer is off to a great start as camp, gardener, and vintage base ball volunteers are super busy. We appreciate every volunteer that walks through our doors. You do make a difference!

January through May, 306 volunteers turned in over 3,645 hours. THANK YOU! If you have any hours to turn in for 2024, send them to Jenny via email or mail them to the Volunteer Coordinator, Macon County Conservation District, 3939 Nearing Lane, Decatur, IL 62521.

Welcome New Volunteers!

Camps- Audra Cottrell, Chloe Elder,
& Sarah Greenwood

Dulcimer Club- Kathy Flewelling

Garden- Angie Ingram, Audrey Ingram, & Jimmy Rade

Nature Center Greeter- Mara Johannes

Prairie Heritage Volunteer- Anna Sielaff

Special Events- Michael Daugherty, Kerry Denison,
& Laura Denison

Trail Monitor- Gillian Greenwood & Emily Hobbs



Dates to Remember

Astronomy Jamboree

Friends Creek Conservation Area
Saturday, August 10, 8-11pm

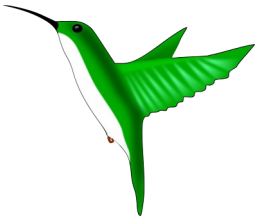
Celebrate 40 years of the Astronomy Jamboree with an event that honors the past and present. Guest speaker Bryan Maple will kick things off this year, followed by a free concert. Create a craft to take home, enter a giveaway, and view the stars, visible planets, and possibly even a shooting star or two. Hot dogs, s'mores, and refreshments provided. Bring your telescope and share your knowledge. Free. Register online by August 9.



Hummingbird Festival

Rock Springs Nature Center
Thursday, August 22, 3-6pm

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



Oglesby 200th Birthday Celebration

Oglesby Mansion (421 W William St, Decatur)
Thursday, July 25, 6-9pm

Join supporters and volunteers of the Governor Oglesby Mansion to celebrate Oglesby's 200th birthday! Indulge in an evening of historic exploration with special exhibits from the Carolyn Ogen private collection, Victorian-era games, and great appetizers. Dress in period attire for prizes. This event is for ages 21+. Tickets are \$25 and include a raffle entry. This fundraiser supports the restoration of Decatur's cherished history. Don't miss this chance to honor Governor Oglesby's legacy and contribute to our community's preservation efforts! For more information go to www.OglesbyMansion.org or visit their Facebook page at Governor Oglesby Mansion.



Operations Update

Phil Julius - Director of Operations

I'm excited to announce that Operations has hired two new full-time staff. Ethan Spain is now a Site Technician at Friends Creek Conservation Area. Ethan started with us in the summer of 2023 as a seasonal. Ethan recently graduated from Millikin University and started his new position with the District soon after. Welcome aboard Ethan. Operations has also filled the open Natural Resource Manager position. Mitch Lovgren filled the position. Mitch is no stranger to the District. He started as a seasonal/intern, then became the Natural Resource Technician, and then held the Natural Resource Manager position before leaving the District to pursue other employment opportunities for several years. We are happy to have Mitch back doing a job that he loves, managing our Natural Resources.

The campground at Friends Creek has opened for the season. We have many reservations already lined up for the camping season. The first few weekends were well attended with the campground being only a site or two from being full. Staff worked hard before opening day to get three new tent sites put in. They have already had several tent campers use them.

All locations have started turf mowing for the season. With some of the stormy weather comes broken tree limbs and even blown down trees. Keeping trails clear and safe has been a priority the past few months with the storms we have had. Operations appreciates the trail monitors who are an extra set of eyes for us. Trail monitors let us know if there is a downed tree or other issues they see on the trail. This saves Operations time in knowing exactly where issues are on the trails. Thank you, trail monitors.

Volunteer Opportunities

Native Garden Workdays

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Thursday, July 25, TBA

Thursday, August 22, TBA

Thursday, September 26, 9am

Macon County Master Naturalists are looking for assistance maintaining the native tier garden in front of the Nature Center. These morning workdays will be one to two hours depending on the amount of work to be done in the garden. The start time for the July and August workdays will either start at 8am or 9am depending on the heat and will be announced a few days before the event. Volunteers are asked to bring along their own tools: work gloves, hand trowel, shovel, bucket, and hand pruners. The tier garden features native prairie and woodland species that attract a variety of insect life for all to enjoy. RSVP to either Jenny Garver or head gardener Linda (lindasuehendricks@gmail.com) at least one day before each workday so we know who to expect.



Remembering Our Volunteers & Staff

Dave Banfield (April 1937 – May 2024)- Desk
Sharon Belue (September 1946 – June 2024)- Staff
Winnie Brewer (October 1939 – April 2024)- Desk
Pauline Conyer (January 1938– June 2024)- Desk
Al Denier (August 1941 – March 2024)- Hike Leader
Joanne Forrest (May 1930 – May 2024)- Oglesby
Sandra Lindberg (October 1956 – May 2024)- Library



Astronomy Jamboree

Friends Creek Conservation Area

Saturday, August 10, 8-11pm

Calling amateur astronomers! We are looking for folks to bring and set up their telescopes and share knowledge during this “star party.” Contact Alysia Callison if you’re interested in bringing your scope. We are also looking for volunteers to assist with fire tending, children’s craft, and snack station. Contact Jenny Garver if you are interested in these opportunities by August 6.



Prairie Pedal

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Sunday, September 29, 6:30am-3pm

The Prairie Pedal bicycling event raises funds for the Macon County Conservation Foundation. All proceeds support natural areas and wildlife diversity in Macon County. During this event cyclists ride 20, 40, or 62 mile routes. Volunteers can choose from time commitments of 2 to 5 hours. Volunteer stations include: registration, rest stops along the bike routes, photography, and clean-up. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver by September 20.

Volunteer Fun & Learning

Plants: More Than Meets the Eye

Rock Springs Nature Center, Auditorium

Friday, July 5, 10-11:30am

Plants are often taken for granted during nature exploration and study. Join Volunteer Coordinator Jenny Garver to learn how to make plants fun and relatable for a wide range of audiences. Expand your knowledge through techniques, hands-on-activities, and a bit of imagination. We will head outside to explore plant life for a portion of the class. Dress for the weather and trail conditions. RSVP to Jenny by July 2.



Hummingbirds

Rock Springs Nature Center, Auditorium

Friday, July 19, 1-2pm

Join Naturalist and Decatur Area Audubon 1st Vice President, Melody Arnold, to learn about these tiny, "Gems of the Air" and their amazing abilities. The program will begin inside in the cool, then we will venture out to observe hummingbirds around the Nature Center. RSVP to Jenny by July 17.



Hike Leader Training

Rock Springs Nature Center, Washburn Classroom

Thursday, August 8, 6-7:30pm

Do you enjoy nature and working with kids? Volunteer hike leaders are an



essential part of our educational team throughout the year. A typical educational walk occurs at a leisurely pace and lasts approximately one hour, covering less than ½-mile in distance. We provide you with training, a packet of information for educational topics, and the opportunity to observe another experienced hike leader in action. This opportunity is for ages 18 and up and requires a background check. RSVP to Alysia via email by August 7.



Visit the Sites Volunteer Tour

Rock Springs Nature Center, meet at the Information Desk

Wednesday, August 28, 9am–3pm

Visit natural areas within the Macon County Conservation District. Our first stop will be Leiby Hall Conservation Area. We will learn some history about this site and take a short exploratory jaunt. Next we will head over to Sand Creek Conservation Area to observe a new restoration project along one of the trails. Our last stop will be Friends Creek Conservation Area to take a hike along the Friends Creek Trail, have a picnic lunch, and take a tour of Bethel School. Operations staff will meet us at each location to share current projects and future plans. Lunch is provided; all you need to bring is yourself! Dress for the weather and trail conditions. We will be hiking at each location and the ground can be uneven in some places. Space is limited. RSVP to Jenny by August 23.



Trail Monitor Training

Rock Springs Nature Center, East Conference Room

Saturday, September 7, 10-11:30am

Trail monitors play a vital role in keeping an eye on trail conditions throughout the Conservation Areas. We will talk about what volunteer trail monitors do and then head outside to monitor a trail. Dress for the weather and trail conditions. This leisurely walk will be approximately 1 hour. RSVP to Jenny by September 5.

Tidbits of Information

- Rock Springs Nature Center will be closed on Thursday, July 4. Enjoy your holiday!
- We would like to express a few fond farewells for staff that have left the District. During the month of April, Pam Smith retired from the Conservation District and Ethan Snively left for a position with the Bloomington Fire Department.
- There are a lot of new faces around the Nature Center and the Conservation District. Nicky Besser has filled the Director of Finance and Human Resources role. Maddie Bemisderfer is the Historic Sites Intern. Hope Moore is the Intern Interpreter. Emma Fawley, Lauren Kyburz, Emily Morthland, and Kasper Sturtz are new Summer Camp Counselors. Our returning Summer Camp Counselor is Terri Dawson. We also have two summer interns through the Decatur Civic Leadership Institute: Amaia Jones and Sam Risby. New weekend staff include Eliseo Briceno, Saramanda Hall, and Carson McNamara. Welcome to all of our new staff!

Volunteer Partner Spotlight: Retired and Senior Volunteer Program

Are you a volunteer who is 55 or better? Consider joining the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program at Dove, Inc. You can count your volunteer hours for MCCD and also help Dove – without double-dipping by reporting your time to both agencies. AmeriCorps Seniors, one of RSVP's main funders, tracks how many active senior volunteers are in Macon and DeWitt counties to get a better picture of the impact they're making in the communities. Plus, we have some neat benefits including secondary insurance (free to you!), and you get invited to RSVP volunteer events throughout the year at no cost! That's in addition to helping two non-for-profits by documenting your volunteer hours! If this sounds interesting and you want more information, please call or email Angie Williams at 217-428-6616 or awilliams@doveinc.org. Thanks for all you do!

Volunteers in Action



A huge thank you to the volunteers who are running the concession stand this summer during the Summer Concert Series!

The More You Know

Did you know that you can walk in the footsteps of Abraham Lincoln at one of our Conservation Areas? If you head over to Sand Creek Conservation Area you can walk along a portion of the Paris-Springfield Road. This dirt road connected Paris, Illinois to Springfield, Illinois and was a major thoroughfare through this area before the railroads came. The road was laid out in 1825 and provided an important route through the diverse habitats that make up Central Illinois. Settlers, merchants, farmers, and others traveled the road with destinations both local and to the western lands beyond Illinois' border. Abraham Lincoln, his parents, and other relatives traveled on the Paris-Springfield Road to Decatur and Macon County in 1830. Macon County was Lincoln's first home in Illinois. Later in life, Lincoln traveled along this same road as a politician and circuit-riding lawyer. Wow! Sand Creek Conservation Area is located just south of Decatur off Franklin Street Road. If you stop by to visit, check out the kiosk board at the trailhead to learn more about this road and Abraham Lincoln's time in Macon County.



Program Services Update

Alysia Callison - Director of Program Services

What a whirlwind the past couple of months have been! Between school field trips and prepping for summer camps and programs, our department has been very busy. In the months of April and May, hundreds of children attended educational programs at Rock Springs Nature Center, from schools in Macon County and beyond. Now, we are jumping head-first into the summer!

Summer brings with it camps, concerts, library programs, and much more. Camps are off to a great start, with several of our camps filling up well in advance. Kids ages 1-15 have camp opportunities here, so if you're still looking for something for a kiddo in your life to do this summer, check us out!

The Summer Concert Series kicked off on June 2. We will have six concerts – occurring every other Sunday through August 11 – with great bands, both new and seasoned. These concerts are held on the lawn near the pavilions at Rock Springs, and are

totally free. Bring the family and your lawn chairs, and listen to some tunes in the great outdoors!

Throughout the summer, many libraries hold Summer Reading Programs for kids. As part of those, they often book programs and presentations for their patrons to attend. As such, we will be doing programs at lots of different libraries throughout central Illinois! Look for us in Maroa, Riverton, Cowden, Sherman, Newman, and many more.

Homestead Prairie Farm opened for the season over the first week in June. In their first weekend, our new Interns Hope and Maddie welcomed 18 guests through the farmhouse. Make sure you take some time to visit the homestead this summer – it will be open every weekend from 1-4pm, all the way through the end of October.

To stay up-to-date with all of our programs, camps, and more, visit our website at MaconCountyConservation.org. We look forward to seeing you this summer!



To RSVP or Contact Staff In This Issue

Rock Springs Nature Center: 217-423-7708

Alysia Callison: ACallison@MaconCountyConservation.org; 217-542-5538

Jenny Garver: JGarver@MaconCountyConservation.org; 217-542-5536

Phil Julius: PJulius@MaconCountyConservation.org; 217-542-5528

Brent Wielt: BWielt@MaconCountyConservation.org; 217-542-5525

