



Prairie Islander

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2024's Summer Soundtrack

Ashton Nunn

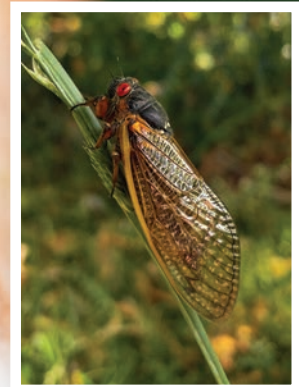
The rhythmic chirping of crickets, the drone of bees buzzing between flowers – these are the sounds people associate with summer. But get ready for a...loud twist this year, because in certain parts of the United States, a far more amplified chorus is about to emerge from the ground. This summer, for the first time since 1803, Brood XIII and Brood XIX, periodical cicadas with synchronized 17- and 13-year life cycles, are due to emerge from their underground slumber together, covering the landscape with their relentless buzzing. This phenomenon won't happen again until 2245!

These fascinating insects spend the vast majority of their lives underground, feeding on tree roots. However, once every 13 and 17 years, a synchronized internal clock triggers a mass exodus. Millions of cicadas, driven by the instinct to reproduce, will dig their way to the surface. Trees

will become covered with them, and the air will thrum with a constant drone that can reach volumes exceeding 100 decibels – louder than a lawnmower!

Despite the noise, the emergence of these periodical cicadas is a remarkable natural phenomenon. Their synchronized life cycle is a marvel of evolution, a strategy to overwhelm predators with sheer numbers. They also play a vital role in the ecosystem, providing a temporary feast for birds, reptiles, and small mammals, enriching the soil as they molt, and helping to prune trees with their feeding habits.

While the constant buzzing might drive some people batty, the cicada emergence is, for most people, a once-in-a-lifetime event and a powerful reminder of the intricate cycles and hidden wonders that exist in our natural world. So, this summer, when the cicadas return, embrace the racket. It's a symphony of nature, and a truly unforgettable experience.



8th Annual Summer Concert Series

By Alysia Callison

Get ready for another year of great music in the outdoors with our 8th annual Summer Concert Series!

This outdoor concert series sponsored by Stifel Investment Services is held every other Sunday in the summer, and features a variety of bands and performers that play Americana, bluegrass, folk, old-time, and more. Bring a lawn chair or a picnic blanket and sit back, relax, and enjoy the show.

This year's series kicks off on June 2 with our friends **Cactus Ranch**, who have opened the series every year so far. They will play some country and bluegrass tunes and set the tone for the rest of the summer.

On June 16, **Celtic Whistle** will take the stage again to delight us with some Irish music and lovely harmonies, complete with flutes, accordions, and banjos.

Another returning favorite, on June 30 the **Hood Family Band** will take the stage. This talented family plays folk, Americana, and bluegrass tunes, complete with beautiful harmonies.

The second half of the series brings some new performers to Rock Springs. On July 14, the husband-and-wife Americana duo **Corn & Cotton** will play for us, bringing harmonies and an acoustic set.

Nick Dittmeier & the Sawdusters will join us on July 28. This group plays a creative blend of Americana, country, and Southern rock, and is sure to please. Finally, on August 11, **Tim Crosby** closes out the concert series. Crosby is a songwriter and performer of Americana and roots music, and will help us finish out the summer.

Each performance begins at 7pm and will be held near the pavilions at Rock Springs Conservation Area. Snacks will be available for purchase. All concerts are free, and in the event of rain, we will move indoors.

We are so excited about this year's lineup, and we hope to see you there!



June 2
CACTUS RANCH



June 16
CELTIC WHISTLE



June 30
HOOD FAMILY BAND



July 14
CORN & COTTON



July 28
NICK DITTMIEIER
& THE SAWDUSTERS



Aug 11
TIM CROSBY

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Briefs

PRAIRIE PEDAL SAVE-THE-DATE



Preparations are underway for the 16th annual Prairie Pedal fundraising event put on by the Macon County Conservation Foundation, so mark your calendars! The Prairie Pedal is an annual bicycle ride fundraiser for the Macon County Conservation Foundation. Held on the last Sunday in September, this event raises funds for natural areas and wildlife in Macon County, Illinois. This year, the date for the Prairie Pedal will be Sunday, September 29. Choose from a 20-mile, 40-mile, or 62-mile ride on quiet Macon County country roads. You'll see vibrant prairie grasses, wildflowers, and likely spot some wildlife as you ride. We're excited to host this event, and we look forward to seeing you there.

OGLESBY 200 BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION



Celebrate Governor Richard J. Oglesby's 200th Birthday on July 25, from 6-9 pm! Join us for an evening of historic exploration with heavy appetizers, special exhibits from the Carolyn Ogen private collection, and Victorian-era games. Dress in period attire for prizes. 21+ event. Tickets \$25, including 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!

SUMMER VAN TRIPS



Join the Macon County Conservation District on three different trips this summer to visit museums and a zoo to see animals from all over the world. Trips will visit Conner Prairie, Wheels O' Time Museum, and the Indianapolis Zoo.

- **Conner Prairie**
Tuesday, June 11, 7:30am-7pm
\$30 per person.
- **Wheels O' Time Museum**
Monday, July 8, 10am-6pm
\$25 per person.
- **Indianapolis Zoo**
Monday, August 12, 8am-6pm
\$30 per person.

Charges for these events cover transportation and/or parking. Admission and lunch are on your own. Register online by the Friday prior to each trip. For full list of details and information, visit MaconCountyConservation.org.

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

Nina Bendsen, President
 David Castor, 1st Vice President
 Mark Allen, Treasurer
 Gussie Reed, Secretary
 Michael Sams, 2nd Vice President
 Jerry Culp, Executive Director
 Philip Julius, Director of Operations
 Alysia Callison, Director of Program Services
 Nicky Besser Director of Finance & H.R.

Contact Us

Macon County Conservation District • 217-423-7708
mccd@MaconCountyConservation.org
MaconCountyConservation.org



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

OFFICES OPEN

Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm

NATURE CENTER OPEN

Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm

Saturday, 9am-5pm

Sunday, 1-5pm

TRAILS OPEN

Daily, 7am to sunset

Holidays & Closings

OFFICES & NATURE CENTER CLOSED

Thursday, July 4, Independence Day

NATURE CENTER OPEN, OFFICES CLOSED

Wednesday, June 19, Juneteenth



Open Houses

BETHEL SCHOOL

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

See what going to school was like in the early 20th 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. \$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 home games are played at Beautiful Trobaugh Field at Rock Springs Conservation Area, near the Rodney T. Miller Wetland.



Saturday, June 29, 12pm

Home game against the Belleville Stags

Saturday, July 13, 12pm

Away game against the St. Louis Brown Stockings in Nokomis, IL

Saturday, August 17, 12pm

Home game against the Lafayette Square Cyclone

Meetings

MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD MEETINGS

Third Wednesday of each month, 5:30pm

July 17, and August 21

DECATUR AUDUBON SOCIETY MEETINGS

Connect with Decatur Audubon on Facebook.

ROCK SPRINGS QUILTERS

Wednesdays, 9-11am



Connect with Us

Follow us on social media!
MaconCountyConservation.org





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.

Music

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

DULCIMER CLUB

Saturdays, 10am-12pm

June 8 and 22

July 6 and 20

August 3, 17, and 31



ACOUSTIC JAM SESSION

Sundays, 2-4pm

June 9, July 14, and August 11

Art

NORTH GALLERY ARTISTS

Celestino Ruffini

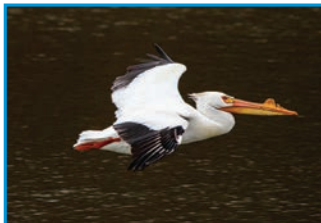
May & June

Artist Celestino Ruffini uses many mediums to capture the beauty of nature, including coal, paint, pen, and wood.

Dave Castor

July & August

Explore animals, nature scenes, and landscapes through the lens of photographer Dave Castor.



SOUTH GALLERY ARTISTS

DL Pratt

May & June

Enjoy photography of wildlife and landscapes from local photographer Danny Pratt.

Brock Rowland

July & August

This exhibit is all about arthropods. What does that mean? Animals without a backbone! Insects, crustaceans, spiders, and more are what we can expect as we journey into their microscopic world.



Special Events

INDEPENDENCE DAY 1860

Saturday, June 29, 6-8pm

Enjoy an Independence Day celebration 1860s style! Tour Homestead Prairie Farm, see the heirloom vegetable and herb gardens, play with vintage toys and games, and at 6:30pm, enjoy a performance from the Rock Springs Dulcimer Club. Visitors are invited to bring lawn chairs. In case of rain, the concert will be moved inside Rock Springs Nature Center. Free. No registration required.



ASTRONOMY JAMBOREE

Saturday, August 10, 8-11pm

Friends Creek Conservation Area

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. Min/Max: 5/100.

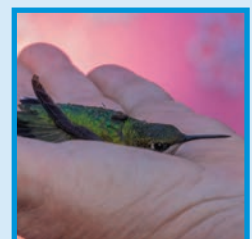
Calling amateur astronomers! We are looking for folks to bring and set up their telescopes and share knowledge during this "star party" at Friends Creek Conservation Area. Call Alysia at 217-423-7708 if you're interested in bringing your scope.

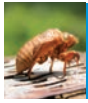


HUMMINGBIRD FESTIVAL

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.





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.

June

PRAIRIE WALK

Friends Creek Conservation Area
Saturday, June 1, 10am

Celebrate National Prairie Day and National Hike Day with a guided walk through a restored prairie. Learn what makes this habitat so unique and increasingly rare throughout Illinois. Free. Register online by May 31. Min/Max: 5/30.

SUMMER OF CICADAS

Saturday, June 8, 2pm

This summer brings the emergence of two cicada broods to Illinois: 17- and 13-year cicadas. Learn about the natural history of this insect, then go outside to try and find some. Free. Register online by June 7. Min/Max: 5/30.



VAN TRIP TO CONNER PRAIRIE

Tuesday, June 11, 7:30am-7pm

Hop in the van and join us on a trip to Conner Prairie, a living history museum in Fishers, Indiana. Explore the welcome center, an 1800s Prairietown, the Lenape Indian Camp, and much more. Admission and lunch are on your own. \$30/person covers transportation. Register online by June 10. Min/Max: 5/10.



PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: POLLINATOR POWER

Sunday, June 16, 2pm

Bees, beetles, and butterflies - oh my! Discover some of the many pollinators in our area and learn what they do for the environment through a craft, story, and outdoor exploration. Free. Register online by June 14. Min/Max: 5/20.

July

VAN TRIP TO WHEELS O' TIME MUSEUM

Monday, July 8, 2024, 10am-6pm

Discover antique locomotives and vintage cars at the Wheels O' Time Museum in Dunlap, IL. Admission and lunch are on your own. \$25/person covers transportation. Register online by July 5. Min/Max: 5/10.



REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS OF MACON COUNTY

Saturday, July 13, 2-4pm

Celebrate Unplug Illinois Day by learning about some of our native reptiles and amphibians. Meet some of our education animals up close, then go outside to search for some wild ones. \$5/person. Register online by July 12. Min/Max: 5/30.



NIGHT HIKE

Saturday, July 20, 9pm

How do our other senses compensate when our eyesight is limited? Find out through fun, sensory activities on a night hike along the Rock Springs - Fairview Bike Trail. \$5/person. Register online by July 19. Min/Max: 5/30.

PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: MAGICAL MOTHS

Sunday, July 21, 2pm

What makes a moth different from a butterfly? Discover this and more as we learn about the lives of moths through a craft, story, and outdoor exploration. Free. Register online by July 19. Min/Max: 5/20.





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BACKYARD CONSERVATION

Saturday, July 27, 2pm

Join a naturalist to learn how you can make an impact on conservation in your own backyard. Learn about different ways to enhance your garden, including rain gardens, berms, and pollinator patches. Free. Register online by July 26. Min/Max: 5/30.



NATURE EXPLORATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE: SEEK AND INATURALIST

Sunday, July 28, 2pm

The 21st century has ushered in many technological advancements, and the field of nature exploration is no exception! Discover two popular apps for wildlife identification – Seek and iNaturalist – then go outside and put them to the test. \$3/person. Register online by July 26. Min/Max: 5/20.

August

NEW MOON HIKE

Saturday, August 3, 9pm

Experience the forest in total darkness as we venture down the Rock Springs - Fairview Bike Trail on a moonless night. Listen to night sky stories and put your senses to the test. \$5/person. Register online by August 2. Min/Max: 5/30.



A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN MACON COUNTY

Sunday, August 4, 2pm

In the 1830s and 1840s, a Connecticut-born man bought thousands of acres of Illinois land and made his home in Macon County late in life. Find out who this mystery man was and his connections to local history and the Conservation District. Free. No registration required.

VAN TRIP TO THE INDIANAPOLIS ZOO

Monday, August 12, 8am-6pm

Observe wildlife from around the globe, including orangutans, tigers, and dolphins. Admission and lunch are on your own. Prepurchase admission at the zoo's website to save money. \$30/person covers transportation and parking. Register online by August 9. Min/Max: 5/10.



PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: SPINNING SPIDERS

Sunday, August 18, 2pm

Discover the important role that spiders play in the environment, and learn what makes them special. We will do a fun craft, read a story, and go outside to look for spiders. Free. Register online by August 16. Min/Max: 5/20.

THE BUZZ ABOUT BEES

Saturday, August 24, 2pm

Did you know that honeybees are not native to North America? Learn about the important role our native bees play in the ecosystem, and the role that honeybees play in agriculture. Free. Register online by August 23. Min/Max: 5/30.



INTRO TO FORAGING

Sunday, August 25, 2pm

Venture into the woods to learn the basics of foraging, and learn how to identify a variety of species that can be found right here in Macon County. \$5/person. Register online by August 23. Min/Max: 5/30.

Macon County
Conservation District
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Decatur, IL 62521

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**Celebrating 40 Years of the
Astronomy Jamboree!**

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

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!

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 or subscribing to our email newsletter at MaconCountyConservation.org.

Macon County
Conservation District 