The Macon County Conservation District offers many educational programs that kids can enjoy, one of which is an insect program. During one of our many school field trips at Rock Springs Nature Center in mid-May this year, a group of students were out looking for insects during a program. Whenever they would find an insect, we would put it into an observation cup to identify as a group afterwards. As usual, there were a lot of your typically found insects like ants, grasshoppers, and ladybugs that were easy for staff and students to recognize. However, this time the students also found an unusual beetle that the staff were unable to identify.

Using the Seek app on our phones, staff were able to narrow it down to a beetle in the genus Dicerca in the family Buprestidae.

If you haven’t heard of Seek before, it is an app by iNaturalist that pulls information from the millions of wildlife observations on their website using image recognition, with the goal of helping the general public identify wildlife, plants, and fungi. iNaturalist is one of the most popular nature apps that helps to connect people to nature, and it’s a great tool for citizen scientists!

So why are we mentioning this random beetle that was found? Well, after the beetle was photographed by staff and posted onto iNaturalist in hopes that someone else would be able to help identify it, we had some help figuring out what it was from an entomologist that studies this family! It turns out, this beetle was Dicerca mutica. There have only been six documented specimens of this beetle from New York to Texas! We were lucky enough to have located and captured a live example of this rarely-observed beetle, and we hope to capture more evidence of Dicerca mutica on our properties.

If you would like to learn more about iNaturalist and Seek, go to inaturalist.org or check out the apps in your phone’s app store. You never know what you’ll find if you take the time to look closely!

Definitions

- **Entomologist**: a person who studies or is an expert in the branch of zoology concerned with insects.
- **Genus**: a taxonomic category ranking used in biological classification that is below family and above species.
- **Family**: a taxonomic rank in the classification of organisms between genus and order.
Leave No Trace
Beth Lane

Leave No Trace is both a non-profit organization and a set of principles that outline best practices when recreating outdoors. The organization promotes the principles in outdoor education to improve our interactions with the outdoor world, while also having fun. When these practices are used, they help minimize the impact we have on the environment, while also keeping animals, plants, and people safe. For more information about Leave No Trace, visit: LNT.org

The seven principles:

1. PLAN & PREPARE: Even if you know the area. Things like checking the weather (it quickly changes), bringing bug spray, sunscreen, water, phone, and a map. Also, check out our website for a list of awesome events; you never know if you may want to participate.

2. STAY ON TRAILS: Stay on the trails, sometimes you will get a little muddy but you prepared so it’s okay! Going off trail causes erosion to the trail edges, new trails to form, and can damage rare plants and animal’s homes. Many tiny spring wildflowers grow right next to the trail, and can easily be trampled.

3. DON’T LITTER: This is commonly ignored but also the easiest to take care of. Do not litter. If you brought it in, take it out or toss it in the trash cans! Remember, even things that are biodegradable or considered food items like banana peels, pumpkins, paper, and confetti are considered trash and potentially harmful to wildlife.

4. TAKE ONLY PICTURES, LEAVE ONLY FOOTPRINTS: We know our rocks, flowers, mushrooms, and sticks are cool—we like them too, and so do our other visitors and animals who use those as food and homes.

5. MINIMIZE CAMPFIRE IMPACTS: Only start fires in designated fire pits or grills. Fires can be a major hazard, especially in areas where they are uncontrolled and when conditions are dry.

6. RESPECT WILDLIFE: Do not chase, yell at, or unnecessarily touch wildlife. This includes insects. Touching or chasing wildlife can actually alter their behavior, which can put them in harm’s way.

7. BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHERS: Leaving trash, taking nature items, being loud, or not keeping pets in check is actually considered rude in the outdoors. While these can seem harmless, it can actually ruin someone else’s time recreating. Some people are afraid of dogs or offended by their waste. Others want to enjoy the beauty of nature, and do not want to look at the beauty of your wrapper or decoration/confetti colors.
DEER HERD MANAGEMENT
The Macon County Conservation District’s 2023 Deer Herd Management Program will run from November 3 through December 28, 2023. Hunting is allowed at Rock Springs, Sand Creek, Friends Creek, and Fort Daniel Conservation Areas by special permit only. We also have two disabled hunting blinds available, one at Rock Springs and one at Sand Creek.

The goal of the Deer Herd Management Program is to reduce the deer populations on District sites and to provide public hunting opportunities to Macon County. Participants must harvest an antlerless deer first before taking any antlered deer.

For more information about the program, please contact Ethan Snively at 217-853-3465, DeerManagement@MaconCountyConservation.org. The deadline to submit an application is Friday, September 15.

FALL TROUT FISHING
Rock Springs Conservation Area will have trout stocked in the Cattail Pond for the fall fishing season. Trout fishing will start at 5am on October 21.

Trout are prohibited from being taken from October 1 until the start of the season on October 21. The season runs until the trout are fished out. There is a daily limit of five fish for the trout season.

An inland trout fishing stamp is required along with a valid state of Illinois fishing license. The stamps are available for $6.50 from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) by going online at https://dnr.illinois.gov, to one of the IDNR offices located in Springfield, Rock Island, Bartlett, and Benton, or at many sporting goods stores and bait shops.

CAMPGROUND OPEN THROUGH OCTOBER
Friends Creek Campground is open through October. The campground welcomes both tent and RV camping. Daily fees for electric sites are $25 for 30 amp sites and $30 for 50 amp sites. A large group campsite is also available for $25 per night for up to 25 people, and $1 per night for each additional person up to 60 people. All reservations have a $5.00 service fee per site, per reservation.

Homeschool Programs
Homeschool children ages 5-15 can join a naturalist and explore nature and history topics through discussion, hands-on activities, crafts, and games. Homeschool students will spend time indoors and outdoors, investigating concepts and engaging with nature. $15/child. Register online by date specified.

INVASIVE SPECIES
Wednesday, September 13, 10am-12pm
Learn what an ‘invasive species’ is and why we’re concerned about them. Then, tackle the problem first-hand as you learn some management techniques. Register online by September 11.

HISTORICAL AGRICULTURE
Wednesday, October 11, 10am-12pm
Before grocery stores, restaurants, and fast-food chains were common, where did people get their food? Learn about early agriculture and food in the 1800s. Register online by October 9.

SEEDS AND NUTS
Wednesday, November 8, 10am-12pm
Fall is the best time of year to find seeds and nuts throughout the forest. Discover why that is, and go on a hunt to see what you can find. Register online by November 6.
Meetings
MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD MEETINGS
Third Wednesday of each month, 5:30pm
September 20, October 18, & November 15

DECATUR AUDUBON SOCIETY MEETINGS
Connect with Decatur Audubon on Facebook.

ROCK SPRINGS QUILTERS
Wednesdays, 9-11am

Ground Squirrels
Vintage Base Ball
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 BeautifulTrobaughField at Rock Springs
Conservation Area unless otherwise stated.

Saturday, September 2, 12pm
Away game at the Steampunk Festival in
Hannibal, MO

Saturday, September 23, 10am
Home Game – Douglas Cup
Tournament

Saturday, October 28, 12pm
Goodwill Match vs. the
Lafayette Square Cyclones in
St. Louis, MO

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

Open Houses

BETHEL SCHOOL
Saturdays, September 2 & October 7, 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 24, October 29, & November 26, 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.

Happenings
Events located at Rock Springs Conservation Area and open to all ages unless otherwise indicated.
Register online by noon at MaconCountyConservation.org, 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, November 23, Thanksgiving Day

OFFICES CLOSED
Monday, September 4, Labor Day
Friday, November 10, Veteran’s Day
Friday, November 24, Thanksgiving
**MONARCH MADNESS**  
Saturday, September 23, 2-4pm

Learn about monarch butterflies from naturalists, then help capture and tag live butterflies. Enjoy crafts, face painting, balloon animals, and more. Co-sponsored by the University of Illinois Extension Office. Free. No registration required.

**TASTE OF HISTORY**  
Saturday, October 7, 5-9pm

The Staley Museum, 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 $40/person through September 24, and $45/person after that. Check the participating museums’ websites and Facebook pages for ticket sales and more information.

**PRAIRIE PEDAL**  
Sunday, September 24, 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 giveaway item, well stocked rest stops along the routes, and food at the finish line. Door 4 Brewing Co. will be onsite serving alcoholic beverages. Registration is $35/rider before August 31, and $40/rider beginning September 1. Learn more and choose how you want to register at MaconCountyConservationFoundation.org.
Celebrate fall at Rock Springs Nature Center with fall-themed activities including archery, canoeing, pumpkin painting, wagon rides, tours at Homestead Prairie Farm, and more. Archery and canoeing are $3 per person, pumpkin painting is $5 per pumpkin, and all other events are free. The Macon County Conservation Foundation will also have a concession stand with snacks for purchase. No registration required.

**FALL HARVEST FESTIVAL**  
Saturday, October 14, 1-4pm

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.

**CANDLELIGHT TOUR**  
Saturday, November 18, 6:30-8:30pm  
Homestead Prairie Farm at Rock Springs Conservation Area

The Macon County Conservation District offers badge workshops for Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and other scouting organizations. Workshops typically last 2-3 hours and cover a variety of nature- and wilderness-related badges. Cost is $9/scout for a two-hour workshop and $12/scout for three hours. Visit our website or contact us for more information.
**Happenings**

Events located at Rock Springs Conservation Area and open to all ages unless otherwise indicated. Register online by noon at MaconCountyConservation.org, 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 2, 16, & 30
October 14 & 28
November 11 & 25

**ACOUSTIC MUSIC JAM**
Sundays, 2-4pm
September 10, October 8, November 12

**Art**

**NORTH GALLERY ARTISTS**
Earth Adventures Flower Art
September & October
These talented young artists had the opportunity to learn all about our native Illinois habitats this year, and wanted to bring some inside to show you all.

**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**
The Friends of Lincoln Trail Homestead State Park
September & October
The Friends of Lincoln Trail Homestead State Park and Memorial will share impressions from the “first home of Abraham Lincoln in Illinois” through photographs and mixed media.

**Decatur Camera Club**
November & December
Enjoy a wide variety of photography, including scenes of trees, birds, landscapes, and more from talented local photographers.

**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. $8/child. Online registration required. Min/Max: 4/12.

**I SPY BEES**
Wednesday, September 6, 9:30-10:30am
Thursday, September 7, 9:30-10:30am
Discover why busy bees are nature’s helpers through hands-on-activities and fragrant smells.

**I SPY TREES**
Tuesday, September 19, 9:30-10:30am
Wednesday, September 20, 9:30-10:30am
Observe leaves, bark, and roots through sight, touch, and play.

**I SPY COYOTES**
Wednesday, October 4, 9:30-10:30am
Thursday, October 5, 9:30-10:30am
Delve into the nocturnal world of coyotes and view a pelt, track, and skull.

**I SPY STARS**
Tuesday, October 17, 9:30-10:30am
Wednesday, October 18, 9:30-10:30am
Dabble in the colors and designs of the night sky canvas above our heads.

**I SPY OWLS**
Wednesday, November 1, 9:30-10:30am
Thursday, November 2, 9:30-10:30am
Explore the world of owls and owlets through our senses and movement.

**I SPY DEER**
Tuesday, November 14, 9:30-10:30am
Wednesday, November 15, 9:30-10:30am
Get a close up look at fur and antlers as we learn about Illinois’ largest plant eater.
**September**

**ANTEQUINE PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE 1800s**
Saturday, September 9, 2pm
Need help deciding how old a photograph is? Join us to learn about common photograph types of the 1800s. Attendees are welcome to bring an antique 1800s photograph for our guest speaker to determine its approximate date by the type of photographic process. Free. No registration required.

**CANOE BIG CREEK**
Saturday, September 16, 10am-12pm
All equipment is provided for this leisurely exploration of a local waterway. At least one adult required per canoe. Meet at Cannon Park on S. Baltimore Ave. $25/canoe. Register online by September 15. Min/Max: 4/13 canoes.

**PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: PRAIRIE PATHS**
Sunday, September 17, 2pm
What is a prairie and why is it special? Discover this and more as we discover one of Illinois’ most special habitats through a craft, story, and outdoor exploration. Free. Register online by September 15. Min/Max: 5/20.

**VAN TRIP TO KINMUNDY LOG CABIN VILLAGE**
Saturday, September 30, 9am-5pm
Head south to Kinmundy, IL to discover their historic Log Cabin Village during their Fall Festival. Explore a dozen 1800s-era log cabins, learn from costumed interpreters dressed in period clothing, and enjoy the vendor and craft fair. Bring a lunch or purchase one onsite. $25/person. Register online by September 29. Min/Max: 5/12.

**October**

**RAG DOLL WORKSHOP**
Saturday, October 7, 10am or 2pm
Rag dolls have been one of the most popular forms of children’s toys throughout history. Create and personalize your own old-fashioned rag doll. All supplies provided. For all ages, but children 13 and under must be accompanied by an adult. Free. Register online by October 5. Min/Max: 5/20.

**ARCHAEOLOGY OPEN HOUSE**
Sunday, October 8, 1-4pm
Due to a construction project, dirt was removed from under the farmhouse at Homestead Prairie Farm where it was undisturbed for over 100 years. The dirt came from areas that were once part of the yard but as the house grew, it was built over and protected. Stop by Homestead Prairie Farm to see what artifacts we have found by sifting so far this year. Free. No registration required.

**NATIVE AMERICAN LIFEWAYS**
Monday, October 9, 2pm
Discover the lifestyles of the Native Americans who inhabited Illinois several hundred years ago as we celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day. Free. Register online by October 6. Min/Max: 5/30.

**SNAKE AND TURTLE SHOW**
Saturday, October 21, 2pm
Learn about some of the unique adaptations of reptiles, and meet some up close for Reptile Awareness Day! We have several species to show you. $5/person. Register online by October 20. Min/Max: 5/30.

**CREATURES OF THE NIGHT**
Friends Creek Conservation Area
Sunday, October 22, 7-9pm
The forest comes alive at night! Visit Friends Creek Conservation Area to meet one of our nocturnal education animals, take a night hike to engage the senses and look for nocturnal wildlife, and enjoy a hot dog or veggie dog and s’mores over the fire. $5/person. Register online by October 20. Min/Max: 5/30.
VAN TRIP TO TANNERS ORCHARD
Tuesday, October 24, 8am-5pm
Venture to Speer, IL to visit Tanners Orchard, and pick apples, play games, explore a corn maze, meet a goat or a llama, and more. $25/person. Admission and activities are on your own. Bring a lunch or purchase one onsite. Register online by October 23. Min/Max: 5/12.

FULL MOON HIKE
Griswold Conservation Area
Saturday, October 28, 8pm
Meet at Griswold Conservation Area in Blue Mound to look at the full moon and take a walk around the mound, illuminated only by the moon itself. $5/person. Register online by October 27. Min/Max: 5/30.

FAIRYTALE FROGS
Sunday, October 29, 2pm
Dress as your favorite fairytale character, prince, or princess and meet some of our frogs! No kissing required. Participants will learn about frogs, decorate your own royal frog puppet, and meet some of our froggy friends up close. $5/person. Register online by October 27. Min/Max: 5/20.

November

FALL FOLIAGE TOUR
Saturday, November 4, 2pm
Join a naturalist to take a walk around Rock Springs Conservation Area and check out the fall foliage. Learn about some of our native tree species and why they change colors in the fall, and enjoy some warm apple cider and cookies. Free. Register online by November 3. Min/Max: 5/30.

THE STAGECOACH ERA IN DECATUR AND MACON COUNTY
Sunday, November 5, 2pm
Often overshadowed by their use in the Old West and portrayals in movies, stagecoaches were also a part of life in Central Illinois in the 1800s. Discover the sometimes forgotten local history of this mode of travel. Free. No registration required.

MEET OUR EDUCATION ANIMALS
Sunday, November 12, 2pm
Our education animals are invaluable members of our education team! Meet some of them, help us feed them, and learn about their lives – both in the wild and at Rock Springs Nature Center. $5/person. Register online by November 9. Min/Max: 5/30.

VAN TRIP TO PEORIA MUSEUMS
Tuesday, November 14, 8:30am-6pm
Discover the Peoria Riverfront Museum, which features five permanent exhibits and twelve smaller spaces for rotating exhibits, as well as a planetarium. Then, head across the street to the Caterpillar Museum, where you will learn about the history and innovation of Caterpillar through unique, interactive exhibits. $25/person. Admission and activities are on your own. Bring a lunch or purchase one nearby. Register online by November 13. Min/Max: 5/12.

PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: FABULOUS FALL
Sunday, November 19, 2pm
Fall brings many changes to the plants and animals outside! Discover some of these changes through a story, leaf art, and outdoor exploration. Free. Register online by November 17. Min/Max: 5/20.

FALL DAY CAMP
Tuesday, November 21, 9am-4pm
Children ages 6-12 can join Nature Center staff for a day of activities, games, crafts, and outdoor fun. Snacks will be provided, but bring your own sack lunch. Dress for the weather, as we will be spending time outside. $30/person. Register online by November 17. Min/Max: 5/25.
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.

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Candlelight Tour
at the Homestead Prairie Farm
Saturday, November 18th, 6:30-8:30pm
Free.
More information inside.
Located at Rock Springs Conservation Area
3939 Nearing Lane, Decatur, IL