



FALL 2023

# Prairie Islander

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT



## An Unexpected Find

Taylor Buley

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](http://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](http://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.





Briefs .....

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.

MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES & STAFF

- Nina Bendsen, President
- David Castor, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President
- Mark Allen, Treasurer
- Gussie Reed, Secretary
- Michael Sams, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President
- Jerry Culp, Executive Director
- Philip Julius, Director of Operations
- Alysia Callison, Director of Program Services
- Pam Smith, 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 by noon at [MaconCountyConservation.org](http://MaconCountyConservation.org), unless otherwise noted.

## Hours

Macon County Conservation District



### 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

## Open Houses

### BETHEL SCHOOL

Saturdays, September 2 & October 7, 1-4pm

See what going to school was like in the early 20<sup>th</sup> 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.



## 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 Beautiful Trobaugh Field 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](http://MaconCountyConservation.org).

## 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



## Connect with Us

Follow us on social media!  
[MaconCountyConservation.org](http://MaconCountyConservation.org)



# Special Events



## 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.

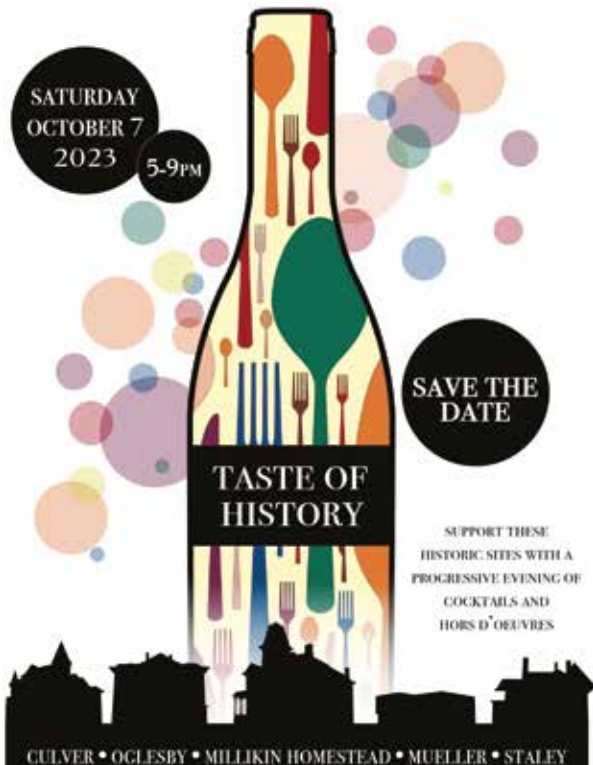


## PRAIRIE PEDAL

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](http://MaconCountyConservationFoundation.org).



## 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.

Macon County Conservation District  
3939 Nearing Lane | Decatur, IL 62521 | 217-423-7708  
[MaconCountyConservation.org](http://MaconCountyConservation.org)



# Special Events



## FALL HARVEST FESTIVAL

Saturday, October 14, 1-4pm

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.



## CANDLELIGHT TOUR

Saturday, November 18, 6:30-8:30pm

Homestead Prairie Farm at  
Rock Springs Conservation Area

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.



## Scouts

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.

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3939 Nearing Lane | Decatur, IL 62521 | 217-423-7708  
[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  
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.



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## September

### ANTIQUÉ 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.





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## 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.

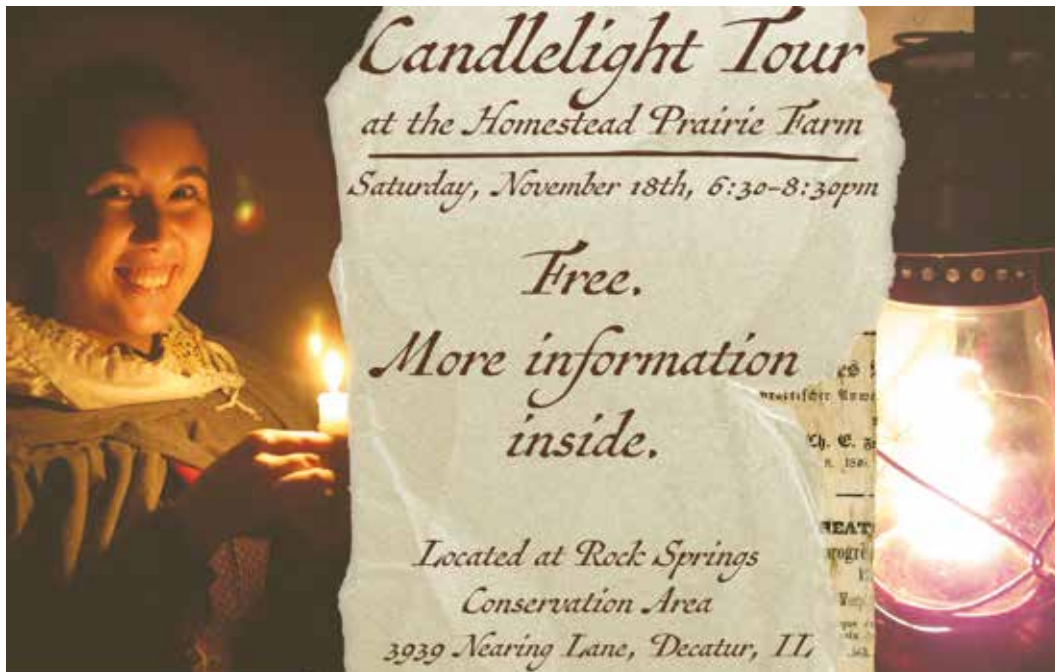


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Conservation District  
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For trail conditions, visit [MaconCountyConservation.org](http://MaconCountyConservation.org).



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Macon County  
Conservation District

