

SUMMER 2023

Prairie Islander

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

A Solid Foundation

Ashton Nunn

We here at the Macon County Conservation District wouldn't be able to do what we do without several vital things that all play major roles in our daily operations, including our amazing volunteer base, our stellar and knowledgeable staff, and of course, the public that we serve.



Rodney Washburn

One other major piece of the puzzle that makes up the Macon County Conservation District is the Macon County Conservation Foundation. As the fundraising arm of the District, the Macon County Conservation Foundation actively works to restore and preserve local natural areas, and to ensure a good quality of life for not only you, but for future generations as well. They are responsible for



Janet Atkins

a lot of the behind-the-scenes operations and dealings that make what we do here possible.

In 1981, two Macon County Conservation District employees, Janet Atkins and Rodney Washburn, founded a non-profit corporation known as the Natural Heritage and Wildlife Foundation, created to receive gifts of land and money on the District's behalf.

The name was later changed to the Macon County Conservation Foundation in 2003. Thanks to the vision of those two employees, we now have a wonderful Foundation that has made it possible for us to restore our natural areas. Thanks to generous donations of land and monetary gifts from the community we serve, the Foundation has been able to plant

over 1,500 trees, seed over 200 acres of prairie, restore wetlands, create the Rock Springs–Fairview Bike Trail, and preserve over 250 acres of wildlife areas in Macon County.

The Macon County Conservation Foundation also hosts fundraisers throughout the year to raise funds for our wild and natural areas, including the Rock Springs Ramble 5K Run/Walk and the upcoming Prairie Pedal bike ride. These events both raise funds for the restoration of our natural areas and wildlife as well as our educational programs.

Are you interested in being more involved with the Macon County Conservation Foundation? You can go to MaconCountyConservationFoundation.org to learn about different ways to get involved and give back to your community. Our mission is impossible without the help from individuals like you, and organizations like our Macon County Conservation Foundation.



Get Involved: MaconCountyConservationFoundation.org



7th Annual Summer Concert Series

Alysia Callison

Our annual Summer Concert Series is back and better than ever this year, and we can't wait to listen to some great music with you!

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 enjoy some great music in the great outdoors!

This year's series kicks off on June 4 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 18, Celtic Whistle will take the stage again to delight us with some Irish music and lovely harmonies, complete with flutes, accordions, and banjos.

New to the series, on July 2 Taylor Steele and the Love Preachers will take the stage. This five-piece band has played all over the state of Illinois, and with Taylor's soulful voice and the group's Americana roots, you won't want to miss this one.

Good Morning Bedlam, another new group to Rock Springs, will play on July 16. This folk group has toured throughout the Midwest and is sure to impress with their lyrical storytelling and energetic stage presence. Be sure to check this one out.

On July 30, our friends The Tangents will join us for an evening of acoustic music. This group is a fun one, with an eclectic sound and crowd interaction. And finally, on August 13, the Hood Family Band will stop by to close out the series with folk, Americana, and bluegrass tunes, complete with beautiful harmonies.

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!

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June 4



Cactus Ranch

June 18



Celtic Whistle

July 2



Taylor Steele and the Love Preachers

July 16



Good Morning Bedlam

July 30



The Tangents

Aug 13



Hood Family Band



Briefs

OGLESBY MANSION



Three-time governor of Illinois, Richard Oglesby and his wife Emma built the Oglesby Mansion in 1874 and lived there until 1882. The home was sold to James Bering and then passed to the Frank Evans, Sr. family who owned it until 1972. The Conservation District purchased the Mansion in 1972 with a state grant, and renovation began in 1976.

The Oglesby Mansion is a historic treasure in Decatur. Much of the funding for the Mansion's care, maintenance, and operating expenses comes from memberships and donations.

If you would like to support the Mansion through a membership or donation, please go to: <https://www.oglesbymansion.org/get-involved/>

SUMMER VAN TRIPS



Join the Macon County Conservation District on three different trips this summer to see fascinating animals from around the world up close, observe native wildlife, and learn about science, space, and more. Trips will visit the Saint Louis Zoo, Wildlife Prairie Park, and the Saint Louis Science Center.

SAINT LOUIS ZOO

- Monday, June 12, from 8am to 7pm. \$30 per person.

WILDLIFE PRAIRIE PARK

- Monday, July 10, from 9am to 5pm. \$25 per person.

SAINT LOUIS SCIENCE CENTER

- Monday, August 14, from 8am to 6pm. \$30 per person.

Fees for these events cover transportation and/or parking.

Register online by the Friday prior to each trip. For more information, visit MaconCountyConservation.org.

PRAIRIE PEDAL - SAVE THE DATE!

Preparations are underway for the 15th annual Prairie Pedal fundraising event hosted 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 24**. 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 amazing event, and we can't wait to see you there!

Take Your Pick

Below you'll find activities offered at multiple times or locations. Register online by dates listed. Programs held at Rock Springs Conservation Area unless otherwise noted:

CANOE RENTAL

Saturdays, June 17, July 1, and August 19, 10am-2pm

Enjoy an easy canoe ride on the Cattail Pond at Rock Springs Conservation Area. While this is perfect for beginners, canoers of any skill level are welcome! Canoes can be rented in one-hour increments for \$10 per canoe. Canoes are first-come first-served and supply is limited. No registration required.





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.



Macon County Conservation District

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

Tuesday, July 4, Independence Day

NATURE CENTER OPEN, OFFICES CLOSED

Monday, June 19, Juneteenth

Open Houses

BETHEL SCHOOL

Saturdays, June 3, July 1, and August 5, 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 25, July 23, and August 27, 2-4pm

Wednesdays and Saturdays, June-August, 2-4pm

Tour the restored home of Illinois Governor Richard J. Oglesby. Encounter the lives of its residents 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, July 15, 12pm

Home game against the McLean County Prairie Chickens and Champaign Clippers

Saturday, August 5, 12pm

Home game against the Belleville Stags

Saturday, August 26, 12pm

Home game against the Champaign Clippers

Meetings

MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD MEETINGS

Third Wednesday of each month, 5:30pm
June 21, July 19, and August 16

DECATUR AUDUBON SOCIETY MEETINGS

Connect with Decatur Audubon on Facebook.

ROCK SPRINGS QUILTERS

Wednesdays, 9-11am





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
June 10 and 24
July 8 and 22
August 5 and 19



ACOUSTIC MUSIC JAM

Sundays, 2-4pm
June 11, July 9, and August 13

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.



Curt Knapp
July & August

Photographer Curt Knapp presents images of nature, including eagles, wolves, and sunsets.

SOUTH GALLERY ARTISTS

DL Pratt
May & June

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

Dave Castor
July & August

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



Special Events

INDEPENDENCE DAY 1860

Saturday, June 24, 1-4pm

Enjoy an Independence Day celebration 1860s style! Tour Homestead Prairie Farm, see the heirloom vegetable and herb gardens, learn about archaeology, play with vintage toys and games, and at 2pm, enjoy a performance from the 33rd Illinois Volunteer Regiment Band. Visitors are invited to bring lawn chairs and a lunch basket for a picnic on the lawn. In case of rain, the concert will be moved inside the Rock Springs Nature Center. Free. No registration required.

ASTRONOMY JAMBOREE

Saturday, August 12, 8-11pm

Friends Creek Conservation Area

This year's event coincides with the Perseid Meteor Shower! Enjoy a free concert from 8-8:45pm, create a craft to take home, enter a giveaway, and view the stars, visible planets, and meteor shower. Snacks and water provided. Bring your telescope and share your knowledge. Free. Register online by August 11. 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 24, 3-6pm

Learn all about hummingbirds. Watch as we capture, band, and release wild birds. Co-sponsored by Decatur Audubon. 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

Saturday, June 3, 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 June 2. Min/Max: 5/30.



CANOE THE SANGAMON

Saturday, June 10, 9am-12pm

Adults are invited to paddle a canoe down one of our local waterways as part of the annual Homecoming Celebration hosted by the Friends of Lincoln Trail Homestead State Park. Bring a drink, snack, and clothes that could get wet. Due to the many trees down on the river, registrants must be confident paddlers and should be prepared to carry their canoes in a few spots. We will put in at the Wyckles Road Canoe Launch and get out at Lincoln Trail Homestead State Park. Participants can enjoy a free hot dog lunch at the end of the trip. \$20/canoe. Register online by June 9. Min/Max: 2/5 canoes.

VAN TRIP TO THE SAINT LOUIS ZOO

Monday, June 12, 8am-7pm

Observe wildlife from around the globe, including cheetahs, hippos, and sea lions. Admission to the zoo is free. Meet at Rock Springs Nature Center. \$30/person covers transportation and parking. Register online by June 9. Min/Max: 5/12.

PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: FISHING FRENZY

Sunday, June 18, 2pm

Learn about the types of fish you can find in our local waterways, then, with help from your adult buddy, cast your fishing pole and see if you can catch anything! Meet at the pavilion by the pond. Free. Register online by June 16. Min/Max: 5/20.

July

VAN TRIP TO WILDLIFE PRAIRIE PARK

Monday, July 10, 9am-5pm

Observe a variety of animals that are or were native to Illinois in this 1,800-acre zoological park just outside of Peoria. Animals on site include bison, wolves, bobcats, and many more. Admission and additional activities are on your own. \$25/person covers transportation. Register online by July 7. Min/Max: 5/12.



UNPLUG ILLINOIS DAY

Saturday, July 15, 1-4pm

Ditch your electronic devices and enjoy an afternoon "unplugged" at Rock Springs! Play yard games, make a giant bubble, go on a scavenger hunt, take a hike, and more. Some activities may have a small fee, but most are free. Visit MaconCountyConservation.org to learn more. No registration required.

PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: SLITHERING SNAKES

Sunday, July 16, 2pm

Learn all about these misunderstood critters, then make a pipe cleaner snake, meet a real snake up close, and go outside to try to find some wild ones. Free. Register online by July 14. Min/Max: 5/20.



NIGHT HIKE

Saturday, July 22, 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 21. Min/Max: 5/30.



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Register online by noon at MaconCountyConservation.org, unless otherwise noted.

MEET OUR EDUCATION ANIMALS

Sunday, July 23, 2pm

A variety of education animals call Rock Springs Nature Center home, including snakes, turtles, frogs, and more. Learn about their wild counterparts, discover the day-to-day lives of our animals, and help staff with an animal feeding. \$5/person. Register online by July 21. Min/Max: 5/30.

ALL ABOUT MONARCHS

Saturday, July 29, 2pm

Monarch butterflies are a captivating species, and their recent designation as Endangered on the IUCN's Red List for Threatened Species has made them even more enigmatic. Learn what this designation means for monarchs as we learn about their natural history and explore ways to help these delicate insects. Free. No registration required.

August

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A ZOOARCHAEOLOGIST

Sunday, August 6, 2pm

Zooarchaeology is the study of animal remains recovered from archaeological sites. Learn what it's like to be a zooarchaeologist through hands-on activities and a presentation. Free. Register online by August 4. Min/Max: 5/30.



VAN TRIP TO THE SAINT LOUIS SCIENCE CENTER

Monday, August 14, 8am-6pm

Discover dinosaurs, space, STEM activities, and much more at this engaging science museum in downtown St. Louis. Museum admission is free, but some experiences may have an additional fee. \$30/person covers transportation and parking. Register online by August 11. Min/Max: 5/12.

PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: BUZZING BEES

Sunday, August 20, 2pm

What's so special about bees? Learn about some of our native bee species and the important work they do, make a bee hotel to take home, and go outside to peruse the flowers in search of wild bees. Free. Register online by August 18. Min/Max: 5/20.



INTRO TO FORAGING

Sunday, August 27, 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 25. Min/Max: 5/30.

MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES & STAFF

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Contact Us

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Macon County
Conservation District

