



Dates to Remember

Volunteer Recognition Dinner

*Richland Community College, Salon I & II
Tuesday, April 11*

Join us for the 42nd Annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner. Registration starts at 5:30pm and a buffet dinner will start at 6pm. RSVP (217-423-7708) by March 31.

Rock Springs Quilters

*Rock Springs Nature Center
Every Wednesday, 9-11am*



Dulcimer Club

Rock Springs Nature Center, Auditorium

Saturday, April 1, 15, & 29, 10am

Saturday, May 13 & 27, 10am

Saturday, June 10 & 24, 10am



Acoustic Music Jam

Rock Springs Nature Center, Auditorium

Sunday, May 14, 2-4pm

Sunday, June 11, 2-4pm

Festival of Spring

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Saturday, April 22, 12-4pm

Celebrate Earth Day and welcome spring with an afternoon of outdoor family activities. Enjoy wagon rides, canoeing, a scavenger hunt, a live bird show from the Illinois Raptor Center, tours of the Homestead Prairie Farm, and learn what other organizations are doing in our community to protect water and wildlife. Co-sponsored by Decatur Audubon Society. Canoeing \$3/person. All other activities are free. No registration required. Visit our website for more information.



Welcome New Volunteers!

Dulcimer- Terry Hogg, Claudia Howard, and John Stedman

Garden- Lucy McNeas

Natural Resources- Josh Hill, Jake Underwood, and Jerry Underwood

Photography- Bill Hoffman

Special Events- Kathleen Jensen

To RSVP or Contact Staff In This Issue

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Tidbits of Information

- Rock Springs Nature Center will be closed for the Easter holiday on Sunday, April 9.
- Congratulations to Ashton Nunn, Taylor Buley, and Phil Julius! In January, Ashton switched from the Animal Care Naturalist position to become our new Marketing Specialist. Taylor jumped from being a Weekend Naturalist to the Animal Care Naturalist in February. We are excited to announce that Phil returned as the new Director of Operations at the end of March. Some of our volunteers may remember Phil from when he was a Site Technician at Sand Creek Conservation Area.
- We provide nametags to volunteers that work with the public, if you need a nametag or a replacement contact Jenny.

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Dates to Remember

Rock Springs Ramble 5K Run/Walk

Rock Springs Conservation Area
Saturday, May 20, 8am



The Macon County Conservation Foundation will host their third annual Rock Springs Ramble this year. This race features a 5K, a 1-mile Fun Run/Walk, a Kid's Fun Run, and new this year, the Rock Springs

Ramble Challenge. It will begin and end at the main parking lot at Rock Springs Conservation Area and utilize portions of the Rock Springs-Fairview Bike Trail. Registration is \$35/adult, \$10/child, and \$70 for the Challenge. In addition to being a great opportunity to exercise and explore nature, participants will receive plenty of swag, including top finisher prizes. Door 4 Brewing Co. will also be onsite with a bloody mary and mimosa bar. All proceeds will benefit Macon County's natural areas and wildlife. Register at RunSignup.com/RockSpringsRamble

Independence Day 1860

Rock Springs Conservation Area,
Homestead Prairie Farm
Saturday, June 24, 1-4pm

Enjoy an Independence Day celebration 1860s style. Tour Homestead Prairie Farm, see the heirloom and herb gardens, and enjoy a Civil War era music concert by the 33rd Illinois Regiment Band at 2pm. Visitors are welcome to bring their own lunch basket and lawn chairs for a picnic on the lawn. Free. No registration required. In case of rain, the concert will be moved inside the Rock Springs Nature Center.



Volunteer Fun & Learning

Spring Volunteer Hikes

Tuesday, April 4, 11am- Friends Creek
Thursday, April 13, 9am- Rock Springs
Wednesday, April 19, 12pm- Fort Daniel
Friday, April 28, 10am- Griswold
Monday, May 1, 1pm- Sand Creek



Volunteers are invited to join us to learn a bit more about the different Conservation Areas while looking for flora and fauna. Meet us at the selected Conservation Area. RSVPs appreciated, but not necessary. If you do register, we will watch for you and contact you if the volunteer hike is canceled due to weather.

Volunteer Trail Monitor Training

Rock Springs Nature Center, East Conference Room
Saturday, May 13, 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 by May 11.



Summer Camp Volunteer Training

Rock Springs Nature Center, Auditorium
Friday, June 2, 1-2:30pm



Helping with summer camps is a very rewarding experience. We offer opportunities to assist camp counselors with children ages 5-15. Volunteers help with activities, games, hikes, field trips, and more. RSVP by May 31.

Volunteer Fun & Learning

Mail in the 1800s for Volunteers

Rock Springs Nature Center, Auditorium

Thursday, June 29, 2-3pm

For the residents of Homestead Prairie Farm and the Governor Oglesby Mansion, letters and other forms of mail



were a common and shared part of their everyday lives. Discover how mail changed over the century in regards to its new forms, technology, cost, style, and more. RSVP by June 28.

Remembering Our Volunteers

Wayne Tetley (October 1937—March 2023)



Volunteers in Action: Millikin students, along with Dr. Horn, have been at our Conservation Areas with Ethan Snively and Mitch Ward this winter making a difference. In January, they helped spread native prairie seeds over 15 acres at Fort Daniel Conservation Area. In February, the class removed bush honeysuckle and fencing at Rock Springs Conservation Area. In March, they learned about prescribed fire and assisted in a burn at the Rodney T. Miller Wetland. We are thankful for our community partnerships and our continued connection with Millikin University.

Program Services Update

Brock Rowland— Program Specialist

As the last remnants of winter blow behind us, we are once again reminded of the warm embrace of Mother Nature's most lively season: spring. Last spring dawned a new era for the Program Services department as field trips and programs burst out of hibernation after their long COVID dormancy. As I write, I have booked two birthday parties and a school program, so I'd say the trend will hopefully stay the same!

It wouldn't be spring without our annual Festival of Spring! This year's festival will be held on April 22 and we have even more fun activities planned. In the morning, you can help with the river cleanup, learn about bird banding, or go on a hike. In the afternoon, enjoy activities like wagon rides, canoeing, and the Raptor Center's live bird show. Local organizations with displays and goodies will also be attending the event. And of course, everyone is welcome to participate in our scavenger hunt, farm and garden tours, and more!

Looking at the rest of spring, we've got a lot of exciting programs planned. Bringing back our van trips has been a hit so we are keeping the ball rolling and offering a trip to the Missouri Botanical Garden on April 19 from 9am-5pm. If you want to keep your feet planted in Illinois, we are offering a forest bathing and meditation workshop on May 7 where we will be taking the time to explore mindfulness. Or if you're looking for a little more adventure, paddle away with us down Big Creek May 26 for an exciting guided canoe tour.

And just like this update is coming to an end, one day so will spring, and that means summer programming is coming your way. We are always looking for more volunteers to help us during our summer camp season! This year our theme is Conservation Superheroes, where we will be talking about professions that are responsible for keeping our world a brighter, greener place. Thank you all for everything that you do for the District and we hope to see you out here soon!



Volunteer Opportunities

Griswold Restoration Day

Griswold Conservation Area,
Meet at the large pavilion
Saturday, April 15, 9am-11am

Volunteers are requested to assist natural resources staff with bush honeysuckle removal at Griswold Conservation Area. This workday will involve cutting shrubs while walking over uneven terrain through woodlands. Wear long pants, sturdy shoes like boots or tennis shoes, and prepare to get dirty. Tools and work gloves will be provided. Contact Ethan Snively to RSVP for the restoration day by April 13.



Sangamon River Clean-up

Rock Springs Conservation Area,
Meet at Information Shelter
Saturday, April 22, 10am-12pm



Help clear trash from the banks of the Sangamon River to make it a safer and more beautiful place for wildlife and people. Dress to get dirty and bring your own gloves. Bags will be provided. Come by yourself or bring the whole family. Co-sponsored by the Community

Environmental Council. No registration required.

Festival of Spring

Rock Springs Conservation Area
Saturday, April 22, 12-4pm

Volunteers are wanted to help in a variety of areas during the annual Festival of Spring. Volunteer stations include: canoe rodeo, wagon ride narrators, activity stops, farmhouse tours, and more! This volunteer opportunity is for ages 13 and up.

For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver by April 12.



Rock Springs Ramble

Rock Springs Conservation Area
Saturday, May 20, 6am-12pm

The Macon County Conservation Foundation is hosting a fundraising event featuring a 5K run, a 1-mile Fun Run/Walk, a Kid's Fun Run, and the Rock Springs Ramble Challenge. Volunteer opportunities include registration, assisting with the children's race, assisting with the 5K race, food service, photography, and more. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver by May 10.



Independence Day 1860

Rock Springs Conservation Area,



Homestead Prairie Farm
Saturday, June 24, 1-4pm
Volunteers are needed to help celebrate our nation's birthday 1860s style. We are looking for volunteers to lead tours. This opportunity is for ages 13 and up. For more information, contact Brent Wielt by June 16.

Summer Camp Volunteers

Rock Springs Conservation Area
Monday, June 5 – Friday, August 11

Volunteers assist trained camp counselors leading hikes, helping with crafts, and more! This volunteer activity is for ages 13 and up. For more information contact Jenny Garver by May 26.



Volunteer Opportunities

Archaeology & Artifacts



Homestead Prairie Farm

A rare archaeological volunteer opportunity has been unearthed. We are looking for volunteers to help screen through dirt for artifacts from the 2018 excavation under the farmhouse. This opportunity is for ages 13 and up. For more information, or to sign up, contact Brent Wielt.

Volunteer Librarian

Rock Springs Nature Center

The library relocation project has wrapped up and we are looking for volunteers to help out in our new location. Volunteers assist with checking out and reshelving books as well as maintaining our library collection. Our library is a great resource for educational programming and is open to the public. Morning and afternoon shifts are available. This opportunity is for ages 18 and up. For more information, or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver.



Thank You Volunteers

Jenny Garver - Volunteer Coordinator

Did you know that April is Volunteer Appreciation Month? We have two appreciation events scheduled during April.

#1- The 42nd Annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner will be on April 11. This year we have 16 volunteers that will be honored for their service. Awards are given for every 4 years of active service.

#2- Volunteer Goodie Day will be on April 22 during the Festival of Spring. Drop by the Information Desk during the Festival of Spring to pick up a little goodie as our token of appreciation for all that you do. Limit one goodie per volunteer.

Thank you to everyone that took the time to fill out the 2023 Volunteer Satisfaction Survey. We received 33 surveys back and appreciate hearing what matters to you all. I loved reading the answers

to the question "What do you enjoy the most about your volunteer work for the Macon County Conservation District?" I have collected a list of ideas to explore as we continually work



to improve the volunteer program. Here are a few great suggestions that we received: Investigate using volunteer stories during volunteer quarterly meetings, in social media, and through community outreach. Reassess special event volunteer station handout sheets to make sure that information is accurate and covers needed information. Continue to investigate ways to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the volunteer program.

The January Volunteer Program Short Survey was pretty awe inspiring. Volunteers answered the question, *What three words do you think describe our organization?* Here are the words that we received: caring, community, conserve, educate, educational, environment, fun, helping, informative, invaluable, knowledgeable, protect, social, tranquil, and treasured. Wow! I am really enjoying seeing the answers from these surveys. The April Volunteer Program Short Survey is now up. Visit <https://tinyurl.com/yt6ayshb> to answer the question, *In your opinion, what is the most important aspect of your volunteer job?* This survey will be active until April 28.

In 2022, 352 volunteers donated over 9,500 hours of time. Wow! The year 2023 is off to a good start; during the months of January and February 100 volunteers have turned over 915 hours. Thank you for being part of the Macon County Conservation District volunteer family!