



Volunteer Quarterly

July / Aug / Sept 2022

Macon County Conservation District
3939 Nearing Lane
Decatur, IL 62521
217.423.7708
MaconCountyConservation.org



Dates to Remember

Volunteer Quarterly Meeting

Rock Springs Nature Center, Auditorium
Friday, July 1, 11:30am-1pm

Hear the latest news in educational programming, Nature Center updates, natural area restoration, Foundation projects, and more. Lunch provided. RSVP by June 28 at 217.423.7708.

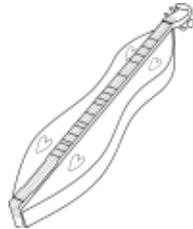


Acoustic Music Jam

Rock Springs Conservation Area,
Information Shelter
Sunday, July 10, August 14 & September 11, 2-4pm

Dulcimer Club

Rock Springs Nature Center,
Auditorium
Saturday, July 9 & 23, 10am
Saturday, August 6 & 20, 10am
Saturday, September 3 & 17, 10am



Rock Springs Quilters

Rock Springs Nature Center
Every Wednesday, 9-11am



Vintage Base Ball

Rock Springs Conservation Area,
Beautiful Trobaugh Field
Sunday, July 10, 11am
Rock Springs Ground Squirrels vs.
Summit Station Signalmen
Saturday, August 20, TBA
Stephen Douglas Cup Tournament
multiple teams
Saturday, September 24, 11am
Rock Springs Ground Squirrels vs.
Summit Station Signalmen



Welcome New Volunteers!

Acoustic Music Jam - Judy Shirley & Vicki Hill
Camps - Felicity Hunt, Connor Lithgow, Alex Richard,
John Schirle & Autumn Whitsel
Desk - Kathy Bledsoe
Gardening - Susan Jones & James O'Donoghue
Photography - Jamey Witmer
Special Events - Ethan Hunt, Laura Hunt
& Michelle Huttes

Remembering Our Volunteers

Betty Ann Davidson (May 1925 - June 2022)



Thank You, Volunteers

Jenny Garver - Volunteer Coordinator

Thank you for being part of the Macon County Conservation District volunteer family! April 23 was our biggest volunteer day of the year so far. Thirty-five volunteers turned out for the Sangamon River Clean-up in the morning and forty-eight volunteers assisted with the Festival of Spring in the afternoon. During the months of January through May, 212 volunteers turned in over 2,800 hours. THANK YOU! If you have any hours to turn in for 2022, send them to Jenny via email, JGarver@MaconCountyConservation.org or mail them to:
Volunteer Coordinator
Macon County Conservation District
3939 Nearing Lane
Decatur, IL 62521.



Dates to Remember (cont.)

Astronomy Jamboree

*Friends Creek Conservation Area,
Saturday, August 20, 8-10pm*

Enjoy a free concert from 8-8:45pm, create a craft to take home, enter a giveaway, and view the stars and visible planets. Snacks and water provided. Bring your telescope and share your knowledge. Free. Register online by August 19.

Hummingbird Festival

*Rock Springs Nature Center
Thursday, August 25, 3-6pm*

Learn all about hummingbirds. Watch as we capture, band, and release wild birds. Co-sponsored by Decatur Audubon. Free. No registration required.



Volunteer Fun & Learning

RSVP for the following programs by contacting Jenny Garver at 217.423.7708.

Rivers & Wetlands Volunteer Training

*Rock Springs Nature Center, Washburn Classroom
Monday, July 18, 1-2:30pm*

Join Naturalist Beth Lane on a hike of the River Trail to learn the characteristics and impacts of rivers and wetlands in Illinois, what wildlife and plants inhabit them, and how they have changed through time. We will discuss current conservation practices being used to preserve and rebuild our aquatic habitats, and find out how we can be good environmental stewards as well. Wear sturdy shoes that could get muddy and be prepared to walk 3.2 miles on varying terrain. RSVP by July 13.

Behind the Volunteer Scenes: Homestead Heirloom Garden

*Rock Springs Conservation Area,
Homestead Prairie Farm
Monday, August 22, 9:30-10:30am*



Did you know that we have an heirloom garden at the Homestead Prairie Farm? Join our volunteer gardeners to learn more about what is grown in this garden and how it supports both the Conservation District and the community. RSVP by August 19.

Phenology for Volunteers

*Rock Springs Nature Center, Washburn Classroom
Thursday, September 22, 10-11am*

Animal Care Naturalist Ashton Nunn will talk about the study of the changing seasons in relation to specific plant and animal life. Volunteers will get to see examples of a phenology wheel, then will be given the knowledge on how to create their own nature study phenology wheel. If time allows, there will be a short walk outdoors to see what changes in the season can be observed. RSVP by September 19.



*In every walk with
nature, one receives
far more than he seeks.*

-John Muir



Volunteer Fun & Learning (cont.)



Visit the Sites Volunteer Tour

*Rock Springs Nature Center, Information Desk
Wednesday, September 14, 9am-3pm*

Visit natural areas within the Macon County Conservation District. Our tour will start at the Rodney T. Miller Wetland at Rock Springs Conservation Area. Afterwards, we will head to Bois du Sangamon for some exploration. Our last stop will be Friends Creek Conservation Area for a picnic lunch, short hike, and a chat about natural area restoration. Operations staff will meet us at each location to share current projects and future plans. Lunch is provided, all you need to bring is yourself! Dress for the weather and trail



Volunteer Opportunities

If you are interested in any of the following volunteer opportunities, please contact the individual listed at 217.423.7708.



Astronomy Jamboree

*Friends Creek Conservation Area,
Saturday, August 20, 8-10pm*

Calling amateur astronomers! We are looking for folks to bring and set up their telescopes and share knowledge during this "star party." Contact Alysia Callison if you're interested in bringing your scope.



Archaeology & Artifacts

*Rock Springs Conservation Area,
Homestead Prairie Farm*



After a wet spring, we look forward to more hospitable weather for archaeology at Homestead Prairie Farm this summer and fall. Last year was a productive year with several interesting discoveries and we hope to continue that trend in 2022. 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.

Historical Interpreter

*Rock Springs Conservation Area,
Homestead Prairie Farm*

Share the sights, sounds, and textures of 1860 rural Illinois with others. For as little as an hour or two per month, after some training you will feel the gratification of leading tours and programs through this rare, pre-Civil War homestead. This volunteer opportunity is for ages 13 and up. For more information or to sign up, contact Brent Wielt.



Volunteer Librarian

Rock Springs Nature Center

The new library looks fabulous and we are looking for volunteers to staff the librarian desk and assist the public. Volunteer Librarians will check out, check in, and reshelve books, as well as maintain our library collection. The 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.



Prairie Pedal

*Rock Springs Conservation Area
Sunday, September 25, 6:30am-3pm*

The Prairie Pedal bicycling event raises funds for the Macon County Conservation Foundation. All proceeds support natural areas and wildlife diversity in Macon County. During this event cyclists ride 20, 40, or 62 mile routes. Volunteers can choose from time commitments of 2 to 5 hours. Volunteer stations include: registration, rest stops along the bike routes, photography, and clean-up. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver by September 20.

Program Services Update

Alysia Callison - Director of Program Services

I'm so glad that summer is here! Summer is historically a busy time for the Program Services department, and after two full years of quieter summers due to COVID, this year is abuzz with programs, camps, and more.

The 6th annual Summer Concert Series kicked off on June 5. There are still a few opportunities to enjoy these free Sunday evening concerts at Rock Springs Conservation Area. July 10, July 24, and August 7 will be the final three shows.

Summer camps are in full swing! This year we partnered with the Boys and Girls Club to bring some extra campers to our Earth Adventures summer camp, and we're very excited for the opportunity to share nature and fun with more children from our community. EA campers are learning all about state symbols this year, and it's shaping up to be a fun season. In addition to EA, we also have three other camps that cater to ages 1-15. If you know a child or teenager looking for something fun to do this summer, send them our way!

We also have a lot of fun programs coming up this summer, including open houses at Homestead Prairie Farm and Bethel School, van trips to the St. Louis Zoo, photography workshops in partnership with the Decatur Camera Club, an informative program on tree removal techniques, and much more. We hope to see you at one or more of these programs this summer!



Volunteer Opportunities (cont.)

Canoeing Volunteers

The public enjoys having the opportunity to canoe along the waterways of Macon County. There is a lot that goes on behind the scenes to make this a successful memory. We are looking for helpers to assist staff during our canoeing events and programs. Duties will include helping a staff member unload and load canoes from the canoe trailer, helping fit the public with life vests and paddles, helping participants in and out of the canoes, and occasionally helping with paperwork and collecting fees. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver.



Volunteers in Action



Many thanks to our awesome volunteers who assisted with the library move!

Pictured here are Debbie Holtfreter and Joan Mochel unpacking books to be shelved in the new library space.

Operations Department Update

Shane Ravellette - Director of Operations

This summer, some of the biggest efforts will be restoration. Staff are busy treating invasive species such as lespedeza, crown vetch, and sweet clover.

At Rock Springs, we are intensely focused on a new 17 acre addition along Dipper Lane. The site has been forestry mowed and the invasive honeysuckle and autumn olive has been treated. The sites around the house and the two outbuildings have been cleared and are ready for demolition. Demolition quotes have been gathered and we will be moving forward. The property was acquired as it is contiguous with Rock Springs and we often attempt to secure these once in a lifetime opportunities. Additionally, it has a very nice oak and hickory edge savannah near the creek. These trees are beautiful additions and they have produced hundreds of viable seedlings to be transplanted and used in other locations.

Also at Rock Springs, we will be working on old hedge rows as part of our long-range restoration plans. "Hedge" trees are actually Osage orange, native to Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. The young trees are tough and produce sharp thorns. As they grow unattended, they are much larger and tougher, but they lose most of their thorns. The tree is considered a "ghost" of evolution, as the fruit is generally not eaten by any animal alive today. It is thought to have evolved for mammoth, mastodon, or possibly giant ground sloth.

The remnant hedge trees do still reproduce, so they are considered invasive. The wood of the Osage orange is among the hardest woods in North America, which makes it difficult to manage. It tears up chainsaws, is resistant to fire, and the limbs and roots are sharp and last decades if not centuries. The mature trees shelter other invasive plants, and land owners often piled stones and equipment under them. This is why we contract to have them removed with heavy equipment.

As always, if you have concerns, ideas, or would like to volunteer on operations related projects, we welcome your involvement. Please feel free to stop by and visit.



Sericea Lespedeza, *Lespedeza cuneate*

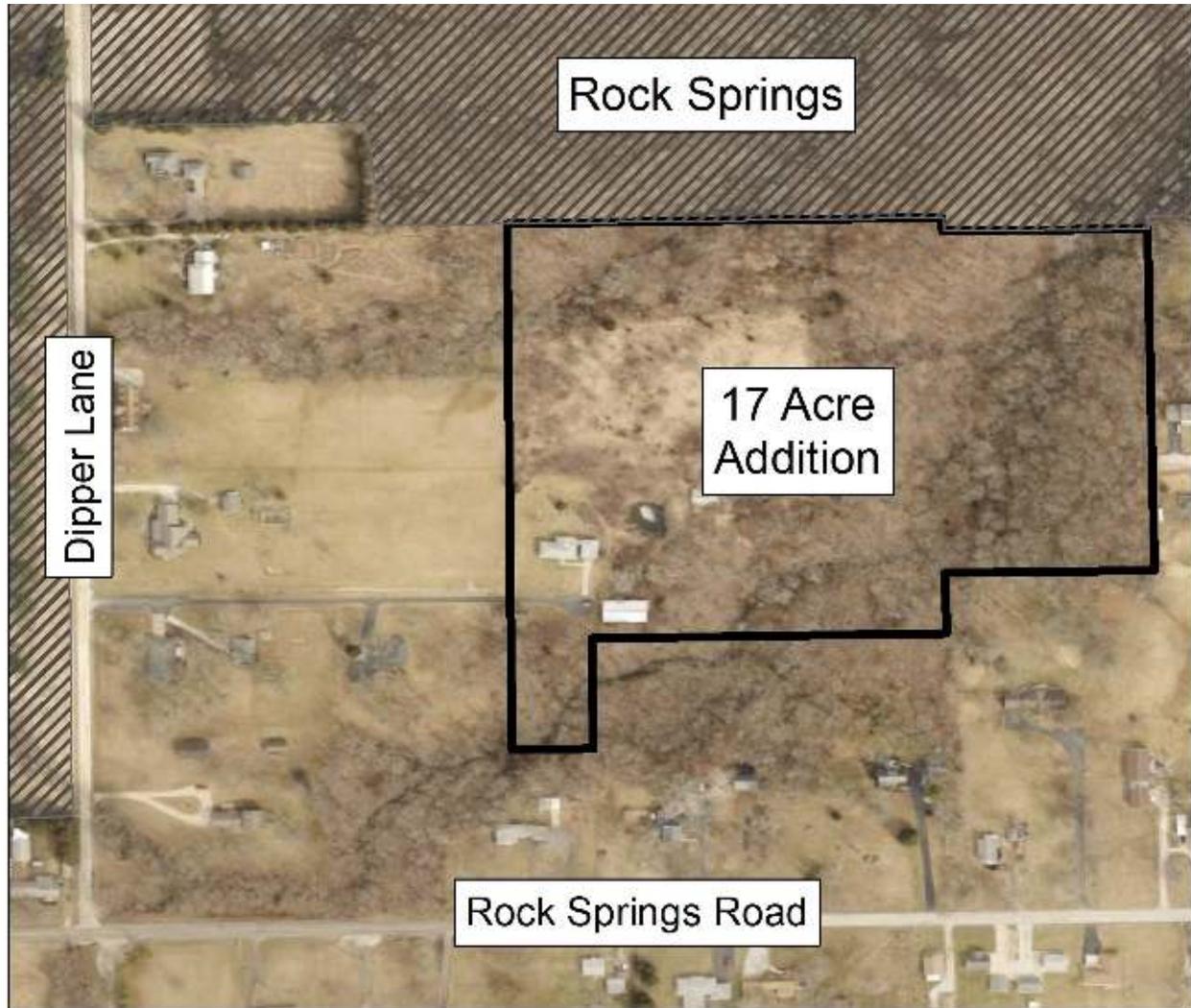


Crown Vetch, *Securigera varia*



White Sweet Clover, *Melilotus alba*

Map of New 17 Acre Addition along Dipper Lane



Tidbits of Information

- There are a lot of new faces around the Nature Center. Abby Garrett is the Historic Sites Intern. Jonathan Crocker, Eli Crockett, Breanna Gallagher, Brittany Huff, and Matthew Morgret are new Summer Camp Counselors. Our returning Summer Camp Counselor is Terri Dawson.
- The Master Gardener program will be holding a fall in-person training. Classes will be held on Wednesday evenings (5:30-8:30pm), September 14 - December 14. Registration is required by September 5. Contact the U of I Extension Office at 217-877-6042 or uie-dmp@illinois.edu for more information and to register.
- Have you joined the MCCD Volunteers Facebook group? It is a great way to get up-to-date information, reminders about upcoming volunteer events, and behind the scenes photos. Join the group today!
www.facebook.com/groups/MaconCountyConservationDistrictVolunteers
- We provide nametags to volunteers who work with the public; if you need a nametag or a replacement, contact Jenny.

