

# EXPANDING the CLASSROOM

FALL 2025 THROUGH SUMMER 2026

Registration for school programs begins immediately!



## Programs & Information

Welcome and Education Staff.....	2
Registration Information.....	2-3
In-Classroom Programs.....	3
Environmental Programs.....	4-6

Historical Programs.....	7
Educator Resources.....	8
Education Facilities.....	Back Cover

# Registration Information

The Champaign County Forest Preserves provides exciting hands-on learning experiences for your students. Within our preserves or in your classroom, your students can learn about local history and the plants and animals native to Champaign County. Our staff members are eager to serve you and your curriculum!

Our program offerings are designed to closely align with state standards including Next Generation Science Standards, Common Core and IL. Early Learning and Development Standards. The forest preserves strive to provide relevant and engaging programming designed to enhance the educational experience. For more information on this please contact Stacey at [sclementz@ccfpd.org](mailto:sclementz@ccfpd.org).

We're looking forward to many new educational opportunities for you and your students! Our staff offer programs throughout our forest preserve sites and, for some curricula, we'll come right to your classroom. Most of our programs can be adjusted for younger or older audiences.

As always, our staff is available to help you find the right fit for your classroom.

## Scheduling a Program

Before contacting the CCFPD please be prepared with the following information:

- Your desired date
- Alternate date(s)
- Your school's phone number
- Your grade level
- Total number of classes
- Expected number of students
- Lead teacher's contact information: cell phone, email address
- Accommodations needed for students with special needs
- Whether or not you will want to eat lunch before or after your visit if coming out to one of the preserves
- A ratio of 1 adult to 10 students is recommended.

Please also check bus/school schedules before contacting forest preserves staff to avoid holidays and school activities.



## Contact Our Educators

### Environmental Programs

Patrick Ahasic  
[pahasic@ccfpd.org](mailto:pahasic@ccfpd.org)  
(217) 896-2455

### History Programs

Selena Gonzalez  
[sgonzalez@ccfpd.org](mailto:sgonzalez@ccfpd.org)  
(217) 586-1286

## Find us on social media!



Champaign County Forest Preserves



@ChampaignForests



@CCFPD  
@Museumofthegrandprairie

[www.champaignforests.org](http://www.champaignforests.org)

## General Information

Registration for school programs begins in August and can take place anytime during the school year if openings exist. Demand is high; please call early. In order to offer quality programs, class size is restricted to 24 students for preschool classes and 30 students for grades K-12. In most cases, more than one class can be accommodated at a time. Call or email for details.

## Fee Structure

### On-Site and In-Class Programs

Grade	Fee
In County	
Pre-K	\$1.50 per student, minimum fee of \$25
K-12	\$2.00 per student, minimum fee of \$30
Out of County	
Pre-K	\$2.00 per student, minimum fee of \$30
K-12	\$2.50 per student, minimum fee of \$35

*Teachers and chaperones are free.*

## Full-Day Field Trips

For a well-rounded education experience, schedule two programs for your class in one day. For example, in the morning, one class could attend a historical program while the other attends an environmental program. Or, you can schedule a historical program and visit the one-room schoolhouse on the same day. Up to two classrooms (60 students) can be accommodated. Both classes eat lunch, and then switch programs in the afternoon.

Participants must bring their own sack lunches. Fees are \$4 per student in-county (\$5 per student out-of-county) (minimum \$40 fee). Time slots are limited; please call early.

## In-Classroom Programs

If your class cannot come to us for a field trip, consider an in-class program. Our educators can tailor a visit to meet your classroom needs. Presentation length varies from 30 minutes to one hour per classroom. Call to discuss any idea you have for your class. This experience could be scheduled for one class or multiple classes.

## Funding for Field Trips

The Champaign County Forest Preserves provides funds for pre-k to 12th grade field trips in order to give students throughout the county the opportunity to explore more of the world outside the classroom. Please contact Stacey Clementz at [sclementz@ccfpd.org](mailto:sclementz@ccfpd.org), for more information about this opportunity.

## Additional Information

### Museum of the Grand Prairie Gift Shop

Gift shop proceeds help fund education programs and projects. Please consider including time to shop in your schedule. We stock a number of educational and program-related items. We are required to charge Illinois sales tax. Groups of 10 student shoppers must be accompanied by at least one adult. Please let us know when you make your program reservation if you would like to visit the gift shop. Please email Selena Gonzalez at [sgonzalez@ccfpd.org](mailto:sgonzalez@ccfpd.org) for more information.





# Environmental Programs

## Preschool

### Reptiles

Learn all about the reptiles of Illinois! Through hands-on activities and interactive learning, children will discover the unique characteristics of snakes and turtles and gain appreciation for these cold-blooded creatures as they meet our resident animals.

Year-Round

Program Length: 1 hour

### Birds

Explore the world of birds! Students will learn through dramatic play as they dress up like birds and participate in flying games! We will make nests, lay eggs and even peck at worms!

Year-Round

Program Length: 1 hour

### Mammals

What warm-blooded, furry creatures can be found near your home, school, or in the park? Mammals! Explore hands-on materials and activities as we learn more about these fascinating animals!

Year-Round

Program Length: 1 hour

### Trees

From birds to squirrels to people, we all need trees! Learn all about these important organisms through movement, hands-on sensory activities, and more!

May-November

Program Length: 1 hour

### Amphibians

Have a hoppin' good time learning all about frogs and toads! From singing in a frog chorus to turning a person into a frog, preschoolers will leave this program knowing a lot about native amphibians!

Mid-April to Mid-October

Program Length: 1 hour

### Insects

Preschoolers will learn about what makes insects unique as we participate in songs, games, and hand-on exploration. We'll even have the chance to dress up and act like bees! Children will gain curiosity and appreciation for these tiny but essential creatures.

April to November

Program Length: 1 hour

### Garden Friends

From seeds to weeds to centipedes, the garden is home to all. Explore the world of gardens and the life within through stories, planting, and hands-on activities.

April-October

Program Length: 1 hour

# Environmental Programs

## Elementary and Middle School

### **Aquatic Ecologist**

Students will discuss how watersheds are related to water quality. Then they will test water quality using simple kits and compare results with the aquatic organisms they collect. Pre-trip review of vocabulary is encouraged for this program.

Mid-April to Mid-October

Grades 3-8

Program Length: 1.5 hours

### **Birds**

Students will learn basic bird identification and explore their amazing adaptations. The program includes a tutorial on using various bird identification tools and culminates in a hike around the preserve as we look for birds.

Year-Round

Grades K-8

Program Length: 1.5 hours

### **Trees of Illinois**

Students will broaden their knowledge about trees as they explore the forest preserve and learn to identify trees through bark, leaves, and other distinguishing characteristics.

May-November

Grades K-8

Program Length: 1.5 hours

### **Amphibians**

Learn all about the frogs and toads of central Illinois. Through interactive lessons and outdoor exploration, students will explore the fascinating world of these amphibians, learning about their unique adaptations, life cycles, and habitats.

Mid-April to Mid-October

Grades K-4

Program Length: 1.5 hours

### **Sights and Sounds of Nature**

Students will uncover the beauty and wonders of nature as they hike and explore the forest preserve. Students will engage in hands-on discovery using their senses during this program.

Year-round

Grades K-8

Program Length: 1.5 hours

### **Hatchet**

This program is designed to complement *Hatchet*, a story of a young boy's adventure in the wilderness by Gary Paulsen. Students will interpret the book and practice basic survival skills through hands-on activities. This program is only available at Homer Lake Forest Preserve.

April-October

Grades 4-6

Program Length: 2 hours

### **Prairie Patterns**

Students will explore the plants, animals, and history of the Illinois prairie as we explore our natural areas during this program. We'll turn a student into a prairie animal and learn about the importance of prairie plants!

May-November

Grades K-8

Program Length: 1.5 hours

## **Illinois Mammals**

What makes an animal a mammal? Students will discover the answer through hands-on activities and a hike to search for clues left behind by area mammals.

Year-round

Grades K-8

Program Length: 1.5 hours

## **The Nature of Winter**

Take a break from being indoors and gain a new appreciation for this surprisingly active time of year. Students will explore physical and behavioral adaptations that allow local flora and fauna to survive winter and hike to observe these adaptations in action.

December to March

Grades K-5

Program Length: 1.5 hours

## **Insects**

Discover what makes insects unique and where to find them. Students will explore insects with hands-on activities and search for these six-legged creatures in different areas around the preserve.

April-November

Grades K-5

Program Length: 1.5 hours

## **Reptiles**

Learn more about the anatomy and adaptations of these ancient creatures. Students will engage in hands-on exploration and meet our resident reptiles.

Year round

Grades K-8

Program Length: 1.5 hours

## **Seed Safari**

Students will enjoy a day exploring the plant life cycle from seeds to greens. This hands-on experience will include seed sowing and seed ID, and a garden hike.

Year-Round

Grades: K-2

Program Length: 1.5 hours

## **Changing Landforms**

Glaciers changed the landscape of Illinois thousands of years ago, and we can still find evidence of that today! Explore geological features and learn how glacial erosion transformed Illinois into the Prairie State.

April-October

Grades 2-5

Program Length: 1.5 hours

# **Middle School and High School**

## **Illinois Ecosystems**

Students will explore three ecosystems of Illinois: forest, prairie, and wetland. Together we will learn some of the natural history of these ecosystems, how humans have impacted them, and what plant and animal species are thriving in these special habitats today.

Year-Round

Grades 6-12

Program Length: 1.5 hours

## **Tree ID**

In this program, students will learn how to identify trees by their features. Together we will discover how to use a dichotomous key and take a hike to identify some of Illinois' most common tree species.

April-October

Grades 6-12

Program Length: 1.5 hours

## **Mammal Morphology**

We will explore the body structures of Illinois mammals, the relationship between the form and function, and how adaptations aid survival through the use of skulls, pelts, and bones.

Year-Round

Grades 6-12

Program Length: 1.5 hours



# Historical Programs

at the Museum of the Grand Prairie

## Preschool

### Museum Discovery

Children will learn about the early inhabitants of the area through hands-on activities, interactions with artifacts and a walk through of our Discovering Home exhibit.

Program Length: 1 hour

## Elementary and Middle School

### Early People of Illinois

Discover the histories of the Indigenous Nations and French explorers who inhabited East Central Illinois between 1673 and 1763, and how they interacted with each other and the land. Students will go on an interactive experience to gain a deeper understanding of these communities and their connection to East Central Illinois.

Grades: 2-8

Program Length 1.5 hours

### Life on the Grand Prairie

Students will uncover the stories of those who lived in East-Central Illinois and gain insight into the daily challenges and hard work that shaped their lives through hands-on, immersive experiences.

Grades: 2-5

Program Length 1.5 hours

### The One Room Schoolhouse Experience

Step back to 1890 and see the similarities and differences of school between then and now. Explore daily life from this time period through hands-on lessons and games. This program is available from September to October and April to May.

Grades: 1-5

Program Length: 1 - 1.5 hours

### Immigration in Champaign County

Learn about the stories of immigrants that came to Champaign County throughout the centuries. Students will understand why people settled in certain areas, their struggles, and who they developed into as a settling immigrant.

Grades: 3-8

Program Length: 1.5 hour

### The Industrial Revolution in Illinois

Through hands-on activities and artifacts, students explore how life and work changed during the Industrial Revolution. By examining tools, trying out historical roles, and comparing handmade and machine-made goods, they'll discover how innovation transformed industries, agriculture, and communities right here in East-Central Illinois.

Grades: 4 -8

Program Length: 1.5 hours

### The Civil War Through Illinois Eyes

Experience the Civil War through the eyes of local soldiers by exploring the personal items they carried. Discover the stories of African Americans who migrated to Champaign County before, during, and after the war. Students will also investigate Illinois' role in the Underground Railroad by mapping real escape journeys across the state.

Grades: 5 -8

Program Length 1.5 hours



# Educator Resources

For more information on educator resources or to reserve them, contact Stacey Clementz, [sclementz@ccfpd.org](mailto:sclementz@ccfpd.org).

## **Bird Adaptation Loan Box**

Enhance your lessons on bird adaptations by exploring the types of beaks, eggs, and feet that help birds survive! This kit includes replicas of bird skulls, eggs, and tracks, as well as hands-on activities, and is appropriate for grades K-12. Refundable deposit required. Loan kit provided by the Champaign County Audubon Society ([www.champaigncountyaudubon.org](http://www.champaigncountyaudubon.org)).

## **IDNR Field Trip Pack**

The Field Trip Pack includes many items to assist your children/students as they explore nature. Hands-on equipment includes field guides, dip nets, compasses, trowels, and a whole lot more which will encourage self-initiated learning. Suggested grades: preK-3. *This loan box requires a refundable deposit.*

## **Insect Backpacks**

Do you want to look for insects but don't know how or don't have the tools? Come out to the forest preserve and borrow an insect backpack. It includes a how-to guide, up to 4 insect sweep nets, bug boxes and insect identification guides.

## **Water Quality Loan Box**

This kit is available to teachers and groups interested in learning about water quality in lakes and streams. Each kit contains equipment to test and measure the temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen, and nitrogen of the water. Also included are pond-dipping nets to investigate the macro-invertebrates of the water, and a binder with indoor and outdoor activities. This loan box is appropriate for 3rd grade to adults. *There is a \$10 fee, and a refundable deposit is required.*

## **IDNR Reptiles and Amphibians Field Pack**

Amphibians and reptiles are fascinating creatures! The Illinois Department of Natural Resources' Division of Education has developed an educational tool to help you learn about and observe these animals in their natural environment. Binoculars, magnifying glasses, field guides, observation equipment, a headlamp, frog call recordings, and many other hands-on items are included in the pack. *This loan box requires a refundable deposit.*

## **Educational Videos**

Visit our YouTube channels, @ccfpd and @museumofthegrandprairie, for many environmental and history/cultural videos to supplement your classroom curriculum. Some videos directly support our loan kits! If you see a video on our YouTube channel that intrigues you, give us a call and we can collaborate to create some in classroom activities!

# Education Facilities

**MUSEUM OF THE GRAND PRAIRIE**  
950 N. Lombard St., Mahomet, Illinois  
at the Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve in Mahomet offers dynamic exhibits rich in local cultural and natural history and a chance to visit our 1896 one-room schoolhouse.

**MABERY GELVIN BOTANICAL GARDEN**  
is adjacent to the Museum of the Grand Prairie and offers the perfect site for plant science programs.

**HOMER LAKE INTERPRETIVE CENTER**  
2573 S. Homer Lake Rd, Homer, Illinois  
at Homer Lake Forest Preserve in Homer features live animals, a wildlife-viewing area and interactive exhibits. A visit to the center can be scheduled along with your program through December 2025. In 2026, the Interpretive Center will be closed for construction.

**Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve**  
is 10 miles west of Champaign-Urbana on I-74 at Mahomet, may be reached by exit #172 or #174. Busses must use exit #172 to reach the Museum of the Grand Prairie and the Botanical Garden.

**Homer Lake Forest Preserve**  
is 15 miles southeast of Champaign-Urbana near Homer. From I-74, take the Ogden exit, go south on Route 49 about two miles and follow the signs.

**Middle Fork River Forest Preserve**  
is located on County Road 2700 E, about five miles north of Penfield and U.S. Route 136 in northeast Champaign County.

**To see all seven of our preserves**  
**Visit [www.champaignforests.org](http://www.champaignforests.org)**



Champaign County  
Forest Preserves  
P.O. Box 1040  
Mahomet, IL 61853

[www.champaignforests.org](http://www.champaignforests.org)

