

The Leaflet

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2024

Experience the Vibrant Fall Colors at the Champaign County Forest Preserves

In Illinois, October brings a breathtaking transformation as leaves shift from vibrant greens to rich autumn hues. This natural spectacle occurs due to decreasing daylight and cooler temperatures, signaling trees to prepare for winter. Chlorophyll, the pigment responsible for the green color in leaves, breaks down, revealing underlying pigments like carotenoids, which give leaves their yellow and orange shades. Anthocyanins, produced in response to light and cold, add red and purple tones to the palette.

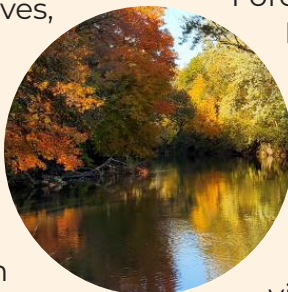
Popular tree species in Illinois, such as maples, oaks, and hickories, offer a stunning variety of colors. Maples turn

brilliant shades of red and orange, while oaks display rich browns and deep reds. Hickories contribute bright yellows to the mix.

For an immersive experience, the Champaign County Forest Preserves, offer perfect viewing locations. Homer Lake

Forest Preserve, Middle Fork River, and Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve are especially popular for their scenic trails and brilliant displays of fall foliage. The fall colors typically peak in mid- to late October, making these preserves ideal destinations for locals and

visitors alike to enjoy the beauty of the season.



PROGRAMS & EVENTS

See the full program descriptions online at champaignforests.org

October

Saturday, October 12

HARVEST FEST

Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 2-5 p.m.

Autumn activities await you! Enjoy the fun traditions of the season, including pumpkin carving and decorating, hay-rack rides, apple peeling, and more! Register by October 9 to reserve a pumpkin for \$5. All other program activities will be free of charge. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Program may be cancelled due to weather. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or cprahl@ccfpd.org.

Cost	Registration Deadline	Code
\$5- Pumpkin	October 9	6759
FREE - No Pumpkin	No registration required	-

Monday, October 14 **FREE**

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' DAY

SEED COLLECTION EVENT (Buffalo Trace)

Museum of the Grand Prairie, Buffalo Trace Prairie, 9:30 a.m.-12 p.m.

Join the forest preserves' Natural Resources staff to recognize and honor Indigenous Peoples' Day. The event will start in the Museum of the Grand Prairie classroom for a small talk from Natural Resources and Museum staff. Then we will move across the road to Buffalo Trace to collect native seed that will be used in future restorations around the preserves. All tools provided. Long pants and closed-toe shoes required. All ages welcome but little ones must be accompanied by an adult. Email ewilliams@ccfpd.org with any questions.

Saturday, October 19 **FREE**

EERIE ILLINOIS (Family, All Ages)

Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 3:30-5 p.m.

The creatures of the night might not be as spooky as they seem... Join us by a fire as forest preserve staff examine cryptozoology and strange phenomena in the Midwest through cultural and environmental perspectives. From sea serpents, giant birds, to local hauntings, you're in for a night of the paranormal! S'mores will be provided. This 3:30 session is family friendly and intended for all ages. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or jbien@ccfpd.org.

Cost	Registration Deadline	Code
FREE	October 12	6754

Saturday, October 19 **FREE**

EERIE ILLINOIS (Adults Only)

Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 6-7:30 p.m.

The creatures of the night might not be as spooky as they seem... Join us by a fire as forest preserve staff examine cryptozoology and strange phenomena in the Midwest through cultural and environmental perspectives. From sea serpents, giant birds, to local hauntings, you're in for a night of the paranormal! S'mores will be provided; additional beverages may be purchased. This 6:00 session is intended for those who are 18+. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or jbien@ccfpd.org.

Cost	Registration Deadline	Code
FREE	October 12	6755

Saturday, October 26 **FREE**

HOOT 'N HOWL: HALLOWEEN FUN AT MIDDLE FORK

Harry L. Swartz Campground, Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, 3-7:30 p.m.

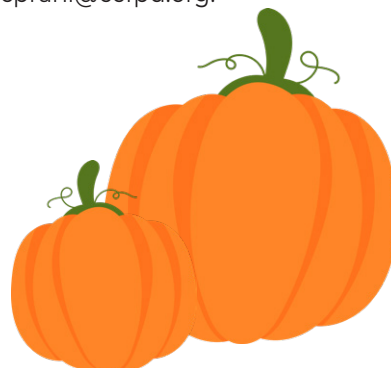
Find many tricks and treats during this all-ages event at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve! Bring your best costume and enter for a chance to win prizes during a costume contest! From 3-5 p.m., enjoy hayrack rides around the campground, hands-on activities. Costume contest winners will be announced at 5:30 p.m. and an outdoor movie for all ages will be screened immediately after. Children must be accompanied by an adult. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or cprahl@ccfpd.org.

Saturday, October 26 **FREE**

MOONLIGHT MOVIE AT MIDDLE FORK: CASPER (1995)

Harry L. Swartz Campground, Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, 7:30-9 p.m.

Join us under the star-studded canopy of Middle Fork River Forest Preserve for an enchanting cinematic experience! After the excitement of the Hoot 'N Howl program, settle in with family and friends as we transport you to the ghostly world of Casper (1995). If it rains, the movie showing will be cancelled. Bring your own chairs and blankets as needed. Children must be accompanied by an adult. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or cprahl@ccfpd.org.



Tuesday, October 29 **FREE**

2024 OWL NIGHT: AN UP-CLOSE EXPERIENCE WITH OUR ROUND-EYED, FEATHERED FRIENDS

Salt Fork Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 5:30-8:30 p.m.

The University of Illinois will be hosting the 2024 Owl Night at Homer Lake Forest Preserve. Students in a field-based course on Northern Saw-whet Owl Ecology will be presenting data on the migration and behavior of owls in central Illinois. The event will feature indoor information stations and kids' activities, plus outdoor demonstrations of the tools used to capture and track owls. Drop in anytime between 5:30-8:30 p.m. on October 29 to learn about owl life history, ecology, behavior, and learn what you can do to help conserve these unique animals. We may even get the chance to see some live owls up-close! All Ages. No registration required. Program may be cancelled due to weather. For more info: (217) 896-2455 or jwick@ccfpd.org.

November

Saturday, November 2 **FREE**

EXPLORE ARCHAEOLOGY OPEN HOUSE

Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 1-4 p.m.

Join museum staff, members of the East Central Illinois Archaeological Society (ECIAS), volunteers from the Illinois State Archaeological Survey in exploring the wondrous field of archaeology. Enjoy special displays, dioramas, films, activities, and artifacts of interest to both adults and children. Both historical and prehistoric archaeology will be covered. At 2 p.m., Dr. Thomas J. Loebel, Assistant Director of the Illinois State Archaeological Survey, will speak on the DeWulf Paleoindian Project. All ages. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or jbien@ccfpd.org.

Sunday, November 10 **FREE**

**17TH ANNUAL LINCOLN LECTURE SERIES
VOICES OF OUR PAST**

Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 2 p.m.

Step back in time with an engaging first-person interpreter as they breathe life into history! Join us for captivating stories from important historical figures during Abraham Lincoln's time! History will be brought to life through compelling storytelling. Don't miss this unique opportunity to connect with the past and gain fresh insights into the legacy of one of America's greatest leaders! For more info: (217) 586-2612 or jbien@ccfpd.org.

Saturday, November 9 **FREE**

OWLS OF ILLINOIS

Activity Center, Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Discover the fascinating world of local owls through expert eyes with the Illinois Raptor Center. By the end of the program, you'll be an owl expert without even realizing it. Jacques Nuzzo's unique blend of humor and education makes learning about owls as enjoyable as a barrel of monkeys. Or, in this case, a parliament of owls. This event will take place indoors and will include a sit-down presentation and live demonstrations. Seating will be limited. All Ages. No registration required. For more info: (217) 896-2455 or jwick@ccfpd.org.

Additional Resources



For disability-related accommodations

for all programs, contact Chelsea at cpahl@ccfpd.org or (217) 586-2612.

Special Programs

Want to schedule a special program for your group? The Champaign County Forest Preserves welcomes all and is happy to provide programs that offer unique, hands-on opportunities to experience nature and history. We are happy to work with you to design a program that fits your needs - visit champaignforests.org to fill out the form to plan your program.

Group Visits and Special Tours

(Educational programming and resources)

These visits can be a club or special interest group. Ex. Scout Group, Retirement community or senior living center, Church group, Library, Bus Tours, and more! Visit champaignforests.org to fill out the form to plan your program.

*Register here
for programs*



Scan the QR Code or go to champaignforests.org.

Programs may be altered or canceled due to weather or health-related concerns.

Bringing Learning to Life: The Power of Hands-On Nature and History Education

Years ago, I was teaching a group of fourth graders about the forest ecosystem. The students walked through trails at the Homer Lake Forest Preserve looking for signs that animals left behind and identifying trees by their leaves, bark and seeds. They had been studying forests in school, focusing on their importance, the layers of the forests and plants, and the animals that can be found in them. At one point I took the students off-trail to turn over logs and look for decomposers. When I turned over the first log it was teeming with roly-polies, centipedes, millipedes and a whole lot of fungus. One student who had been quiet up until this point, squatted down to look closer. Their face lit up as they started talking about what they had been learning about in class, decomposers! At that moment, the student understood the connection to what they learned about in school. The forest became an extension of their classroom.

This is the essence of experiential learning, or the process of learning by doing. When students engage in hands-on activities, they become active participants in their learning. This means students form deeper connections with the concepts they've studied, making their education both more meaningful and memorable.

Experiential learning has many benefits for students of all ages including deepening understanding, enhancing engagement, and developing critical thinking skills. This type of learning can take place through field trips, service opportunities, and internships. Many of us have vivid memories of our field trips from elementary or middle school. For example, I distinctly recall visiting the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago, where up I got up close to octopus, jellyfish and sea stars. This visit deepened my existing love for nature and ignited my passion to explore and learn more about the diverse flora and fauna of our world.

At Champaign County Forest Preserves, we're

proud to supplement the outstanding work of educators by offering enriching, hands-on learning opportunities that bring classroom concepts to life. Our forest preserves provide a dynamic environment where students can explore and connect with nature and history in meaningful ways. We align all our school program offerings with state and federal standards, including Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards, ensuring that our programs support and enhance the curriculum educators work hard to deliver. From preschool through twelfth grade, our programs range from studying local flora and fauna to exploring the lives of the early people of Illinois. To learn more about how we can complement your educational efforts, visit champaignforests.org and click on Resources, then School Programs.

The memory of that student's excitement has stayed with me for years, just as my own childhood memories of field trips have. It's moments like these

that highlight the true value of experiential learning. When students can see, touch, and engage with the world around them, their understanding deepens, and their curiosity grows. For that student, the forest became more than just a subject in a textbook—it became a living classroom where knowledge came to life. At Champaign County Forest Preserves, we're dedicated to providing these kinds of experiences for students of all ages. Whether through field trips or weekend visits to

the preserves, we offer countless opportunities to explore, learn, and connect with the natural and historical world. I encourage educators and families to take advantage of these resources. Bring your students or children to our preserves and let them experience firsthand the wonders of the natural and cultural history of our area.

Stacey Clementz is the Youth Programs Manager at the Champaign County Forest Preserve District. She can be reached at sclementz@ccfpd.org.



Above: 4th grade students looking for decomposers under a log. Left: Students using binoculars to look at birds.





Like to Hike?

We're just a little over halfway through the **2024 Trails Challenge!** Enjoy fall breezes and autumn colors while exploring the trails at Champaign County's forest preserves. Look for the "Selfie Spot" on each trail and take your picture. Submit selfies from five different trails each month to be entered in a drawing for a Champaign County Forest Preserves prize package. Hike all 30 trails by November 30 and receive a special Trails Challenge t-shirt! Still plenty of time to register.



SCAN ME



NIGHT LIGHTS returns in November. Enjoy the illuminated Mabery Gelvin Botanical Garden at Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve Friday and Saturday evenings from 4-8 p.m. starting November 29 through December 21 with a special viewing on Tuesday, December 24. This year visitors can enjoy strolling carolers from local high schools while exploring the festive garden. Watch our social media pages to find out when other fun events including smores and hot chocolate will happen.



BUFFALO TRACE WHISKEY WALK!

Raise a glass to your local forest preserves! The Forest Preserve Friends Foundation and Watson's Shack & Rail want to see you at the Whiskey Walk.

October 20, 2-4 p.m. at Buffalo Trace, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve

775 N. Lombard St.,
Mahomet, IL
(east Entrance)

Tickets are \$55
per person.

Stay tuned for the
link to purchase
your ticket.

*All proceeds go to
the Forest Preserve
Friends Foundation.*

BUFFALO TRACE WHISKEY WALK
A whiskey-tasting fundraiser benefitting your local forest preserves!

OCTOBER 20
Buffalo Trace, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve
2-4PM

Illustration of two hands clinking glasses of whiskey. The left hand holds a bottle of Buffalo Trace whiskey. The right hand is next to a rooster logo for Watson's Shack & Rail.

Forest Preserve Friends Foundation
Watson's Shack & Rail

FOREST PRESERVE FRIENDS FOUNDATION
CHAMPAIGN COUNTY