

# Program Guide

SUMMER 2026  
June - August



FOREST   
PRESERVES  
CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

# June 2026

## JUNE - AUGUST

### SUMMER ARTIFACT SHOWCASES

*Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve*

**Free, no registration required.**

Stay tuned on our social media for updates! From mid-June to mid-August, we will provide weekly updates. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or [jbien@ccfpd.org](mailto:jbien@ccfpd.org).

### POP UP: GUIDED FUNGUS HUNT

*Location and Time TBD*

**Free, no registration required.**

Fungi are fickle friends. Many species pop up and are gone within the same day. At a date and location favorable for mushroom spotting, we will take a walk through a forest preserve to explore the wonders of decomposition. To be informed about when and where this Pop-Up Program will happen, scan the code on the back of the guide, check the website, and follow us on social media. For more info: (217) 896-2455 or [mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org](mailto:mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org).



## Monday, June 1

### CULTURAL CRAFTS: CALLING CARDS FAMILY EDITION

*Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 2 - 3:30 PM*

**Free, no registration required.**

Start the summer season with a fun and educational craft activity! Before modern inboxes and DMs, people used calling cards to introduce and express themselves. Come learn about the history behind these unique cards and craft one for yourself. This session is for younger audiences. Children must be accompanied by an adult. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or [jbien@ccfpd.org](mailto:jbien@ccfpd.org).

## Wednesday, June 3

### CULTURAL CRAFTS: CALLING CARDS ADULT EDITION

*Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 6 - 7:30 PM*

**Free, no registration required.**

Start the summer season with a fun and educational craft activity! Before modern inboxes and DMs, people used calling cards to introduce and express themselves. Come learn about the history behind these unique cards and craft one for yourself. This session is for adults. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or [jbien@ccfpd.org](mailto:jbien@ccfpd.org).

## Friday, June 5

### YOUTH NATURE AND HISTORY GUIDE TRAINING

*Champaign Public Library, 6 - 7:30 PM*

**Free, no registration required.**

Designed for curious and motivated youth ages 8-15 who love to share their knowledge about nature or history with an audience. This information session will kick off a collaborative, ongoing partnership between young people and the Forest Preserves' public program department. The goal of the partnership is to provide young people with an opportunity to build confidence, connect with nature and history, and ultimately serve as volunteer guides for nature and history public programs. Join this event to learn about upcoming programs that could use the help of youth guides, brainstorm topics that youth guides could speak about, and determine the next steps for your involvement. Caregivers are required to attend this training and the programs at which the youth guides volunteer. If you are interested in this partnership but cannot make it to the event, or if you have any questions, contact Morgan at (217) 896-2455 or [mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org](mailto:mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org).

## Saturday, June 6

### SUMMER CONCERT SERIES: CANDY FOSTER AND SHADES OF BLUE

*Peninsula, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 5-7 PM*

**Free, no registration required.**

Help us welcome back Candy Foster and Shades of Blue! These talented rhythm and blues musicians have been entertaining crowds together for over 20 years. Legendary front-man, Candy Foster, merges his talents with one of the best blues bands this area has to offer in providing a one-of-a-kind performance! Enjoy the beautiful lake scenery and kick-off summer with a concert you won't want to miss! For more info: (217) 586-2612 or [cprahl@ccfpd.org](mailto:cprahl@ccfpd.org).

**Tuesday, June 9**

**GROWING UP IN THE PRESERVES:  
WETLAND WONDERS**

*Natural Playscape, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 10 - 11 AM*

**Free, no registration required.**

This program is designed for preschoolers ages 3-6 along with their grown-ups to learn as we play outside in nature together. During this session, we will explore hands-on activity stations focused on wetland ecology, and we will hop like frogs over to the nearby wetland with Master Naturalist and dragonfly expert Doug Mills! The play stream, crawdad creek, will be flowing, so dress your child in clothes and shoes that can get wet, and bring a towel and change of clothes for the ride home. Groups with 5 or more preschoolers are welcome with advance notice, please contact Morgan Duerksen-Balk before June 5. For more info: (217) 896-2455 or [mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org](mailto:mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org).

**Saturday, June 13**

**OUTSIDE IN CHAMPAIGN FORESTS**

*Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 10 - 11:30 AM*

**Free, no registration required.**

Head OUTside in Champaign Forests, every second Saturday of the month where nature and community come together. Our monthly hikes welcome queer-identifying individuals and allies who share a love for the great outdoors. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or [cprahl@ccfpd.org](mailto:cprahl@ccfpd.org)

**Saturday, June 13**

**FUN WITH FOSSILS AT MIDDLE FORK RIVER**

*Interpretive Center, Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, 1 - 2 PM*

**Free, register by June 6, code 6992**

Did you know that in 2018, a 400-year-old bison skull was discovered in Middle Fork River Forest Preserve? Come learn about the bison skull, fossils that can be found in Illinois, and participate in a mock-dig activity. Fossils from the mock-dig can be taken home! Recommended for younger audiences. Children must be registered by June 6 at [champaignforests.org](http://champaignforests.org). For more info: (217) 586-2612 or [jbien@ccfpd.org](mailto:jbien@ccfpd.org)

**Saturday, June 13**

**DARK SKY SERIES: DISNEY AND PIXAR'S ELIO**

*Harry L. Swartz Campground, Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, 8 - 10 PM*

**Free, no registration required.**

Bring your lawn chairs and picnic blankets for a movie under the stars. Park at the Interpretive Center and gather on the lawn near the shower house. A presentation about celestial objects to look for in the sky tonight will begin at 8 PM. The movie will begin at 8:40 PM. Free popcorn provided. Signs will lead you to the Dark Sky Trail to take an independent starlit walk. Children must be supervised by adults. For more info: (217) 896-2455 or [mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org](mailto:mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org).

**Saturday, June 20**

**FISHING FOR BEGINNERS**

*Walnut Hill Shelter, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 9 - 11 AM*

**Free, no registration required.**

Gain a greater appreciation and respect for our underwater neighbors and their unique ecosystem as we practice good angling techniques. Cane poles and bait are available to use, but you are welcome to bring your own. The program begins with a brief presentation and demonstration followed by hands-on fishing with the help of experienced guides. All ages and abilities welcome. All fishing is catch-and-release. Adult supervision of children aged 15 and under is required. SEE BELOW FOR FISHING LICENSE REQUIREMENTS. For more info: (217) 896-2455 or [mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org](mailto:mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org).

*Note: Per the Illinois Department of Natural Resources regulation, a fishing license is required for fishing in all Illinois waters.*

*Licenses are not required for anglers who are under the age of 16, blind or disabled anglers, or residents on active military service. The adult accompanying a child fishing will need a license if they are assisting in fishing. For information on purchasing an Illinois fishing license, visit [takemefishing.org](http://takemefishing.org).*



**Sunday, June 21**

**WELCOME SUMMER GUIDED TRAIL RIDE**

*Kickapoo Rail Trail, Urbana Wal-Mart Access Point, 6 - 8:30 PM*

**Free, no registration required.**

Join us for an engaging 6.7-mile bicycle tour of the Kickapoo Rail Trail as we stop along the way to discuss local natural and cultural history. The tour will begin at the access point at the north-western end of the Urbana Wal-Mart's parking lot, and end near Kolb Park in St. Joseph. Bring your own bike and make your own arrangements to return from St. Joseph. Free bike light for all participants. Recommended age of 10+ for solo bikers. Younger children in trailers or child seats are permitted. For more info: (217) 896-2455 or [mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org](mailto:mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org)

**Tuesday, June 23**

**GARDEN SPEAKER SERIES: POLLINATOR POCKETS**

*Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 4 - 5:30 PM*

**Free, register for virtual session only by June 22, code 6989**

Celebrate Pollinator Week with a presentation about landscaping that supports ecosystem health. We will learn how to design pollinator-friendly spaces at whatever scale you have to work with. Then, take a guided walk through the Mabery Gelvin Botanical Garden to catch a glimpse of some plant-pollinator interactions. In person and virtual option available. Register to receive details about attending virtually. No registration required for in-person. For more info: (217) 896-2455 or [mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org](mailto:mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org).

**For more Pollinator Week Events:**  
<https://publish.illinois.edu/pollinatorweek/>



**Thursday, June 25**

**GENTLE FLOW YOGA**

*Peninsula, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 7 - 8 PM*

**Free, no registration required.**

This is your space to slow down, breathe, and come back home to yourself. We'll move gently and intentionally, releasing tension while creating a sense of ease in the body and mind. No pressure, just soft movement, deep breaths, and time to reset. You'll leave feeling lighter, grounded, and reconnected. Address: 101 N Lake of the Woods Rd, Mahomet, IL 61853. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or [cprahl@ccfpd.org](mailto:cprahl@ccfpd.org)

**Saturday, June 27**

**MEAD AT THE MUSEUM**

*Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 5 - 8 PM*

**Free, no registration required.**

Whether you're a nature lover, history enthusiast, or curious foodie, Mead at the Museum offers a unique and memorable experience as we celebrate Pollinator Week! See honeybees at work in an enclosed beehive, sample delicious honey from The Hive Honey Beetique, purchase mead from TreeHive Meadery, enjoy spirited storytelling rooted in local history, bask in the beauty of pollinator plants with a tour of our botanical garden, and more! This program is crafted to be enjoyed by adults. Stay tuned on our social media for a full schedule of activities. Children must be accompanied by an adult. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or [jbien@ccfpd.org](mailto:jbien@ccfpd.org).

**Sunday, June 28**

**SUMMER CONCERT SERIES: CARRIE SUE & THE WOOD BURNERS**

*Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 5-7 PM*

**Free, no registration required.**

Enjoy the beautiful lake scenery and a summer concert you won't want to miss! Carrie Sue & The Wood Burners hail from Urbana, IL and reside at the intersection of songwriting, storytelling, and harmonizing - where they create a unique blend of folk, bluegrass, country and Americana music. Food and alcohol from local food trucks will be available for purchase. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or [cprahl@ccfpd.org](mailto:cprahl@ccfpd.org)

**Tuesday, June 30**

**SUNSET GUIDED PADDLE**

*Possibility Pier, River Bend Forest Preserve,  
7 - 8:30 PM*

**\$10 (kayak) \$20 (canoe),**

**register by 6/26,**

**code 7002 (kayak) code 7003 (canoe)**

Learn about the history and ecology of Champaign County's largest lake via canoe or kayak. All equipment will be provided, but please bring your own water to drink. Lockers on the shore will be provided for keys and cell phones. Instructions on operating the boats will be provided. Minimum age to participate is 8 years old. An adult must accompany participants under 16. Check the registration page online for more details. \$10 per person. Space is limited. For more info: (217) 896-2455 or [mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org](mailto:mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org).

# July 2026

**POP UP: FIREFLY GUIDED HIKE**

*Location and Time TBD*

**Free, no registration required.**

Whether you call them fireflies, lightning bugs, or beetles in the family Lampyridae, these de"light"ful insects create a magical atmosphere on a warm summer night. As near as we can get to the peak of firefly activity, we will gather at a forest preserve to take a twilight walk and learn to identify the flash patterns of local firefly species. To be informed about when and where this Pop-Up Program will happen, scan the code on the back of the guide, check the website, and follow us on social media. For more info: (217) 896-2455 or [mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org](mailto:mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org).



**Wednesday, July 1**

**CULTURAL CRAFTS: RED, WHITE, & BLUE DAISIES**

*Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 2 - 3 PM*

**Free, register by June 27, code 2993**

Continue the summer season with a fun and educational craft activity! With Independence Day right around the corner, one is sure to see a lot of red, white, and blue! But what do these colors mean? What do they symbolize? Come participate in a fun flower-dye activity and learn the history behind America's highly recognized colors! Recommended for younger audiences. Children must be registered by June 27 at [champaignforests.org](http://champaignforests.org). For more info: (217) 586-2612 or [jbien@ccfpd.org](mailto:jbien@ccfpd.org)

**Monday, July 13**

**HOMES ACROSS HISTORY: EARLY SETTLERS OF CHAMPAIGN COUNTY**

*Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 10:30 AM - 12 PM*

**Free, register by July 9, code 6995**

A lot can be learned about the early settlers of Champaign County by examining their homes. What was life like for Champaign County residents over 100 years ago? How have things changed? Join us for an engaging presentation with museum artifacts, and an interactive visit to our one-room schoolhouse! All ages. Adults and children must be registered by July 9 at [champaignforests.org](http://champaignforests.org). For more info: (217) 586-2612 or [jbien@ccfpd.org](mailto:jbien@ccfpd.org)



**Tuesday, July 14**

**GROWING UP IN THE PRESERVES: ANIMAL ADAPTATIONS**

*Natural Playscape, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 10 - 11 AM*

**Free, no registration required.**

This program is designed for preschoolers ages 3-6 along with their grown-ups to learn as we play outside in nature together. During this session, we will explore hands-on activity stations to help us discover the special adaptations that animals use to help them thrive in the Forest Preserves. The play stream, crawdad creek, will be flowing, so dress your child in clothes and shoes that can get wet, and bring a towel and change of clothes for the ride home. Groups with 5 or more preschoolers are welcome with advance notice, please contact Morgan Duerksen-Balk before July 10. For more info: (217) 896-2455 or mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org.

**Saturday, July 18**

**UNTOLD STORY OF THE POTAWATOMI TRAIL OF DEATH: IT HAPPENED RIGHT HERE!**

*Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 2 - 3:30 PM*

**Free, no registration required. 15 and Up.**

Dr. George Godfrey, a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, presents a look at Potawatomi life in Illinois. Dr. Godfrey will explore the history and experiences of the Potawatomi people on the Trail of Death, which was a forced march of 850 people from their homes in Northern Indiana to unfamiliar lands in Eastern Kansas, passing right through Champaign County. He will also emphasize the continued presence of the Potawatomi people today. The one-hour presentation will be followed by a Q&A. Recommended for ages 15 and up. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or cprahl@ccfpd.org.

**Sunday, July 19**

**POTAWATOMI STORYTELLING WITH GEORGE GODFREY**

*Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 2 - 3:30 PM*

**Free, no registration required. All ages.**

As a traditional powwow dancer and storyteller, Dr. George Godfrey shares stories from his Potawatomi heritage. He brings history and tradition to life for audiences of all ages. This program features *The Blue Rose* and *The Woods Cry*. The latter is his imagining of a first-person account of experiences on the Trail of Death. The storytelling will last 1 hour, with a short Q&A to follow. A reception with light refreshments will conclude the program. All are welcome. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or cprahl@ccfpd.org

**Thursday, July 23**

**CONSERVATION IN ACTION SERIES: MOSQUITO AMBASSADOR PROGRAM**

*Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 6 - 7:30 PM*

**Free, no registration required.**

You don't want to miss this buzzworthy program! Join Kylee Noel (Illinois Natural History Survey Medical Entomology Laboratory) to learn about a bug who unfortunately sometimes prevents us from enjoying our Forest Preserves: mosquitoes. The Mosquito Ambassador Program is a community science initiative that allows you to contribute to mosquito research from your home. It is great for getting the whole family involved in science. We will also discuss backyard mosquito management, bite prevention, and the ecology of mosquitoes. For more info: (217) 896-2455 or mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org

**Saturday, July 25**

**SUMMER SPLASH!**

*Peninsula, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 9 AM - 2 PM*

**Free, no registration required.**

Join us for an exciting and family-friendly event at Lake of the Woods, brought to you by the Forest Preserves in partnership with the Upper Sangamon River Conservancy. Summer Splash features a variety of activities including fishing, canoeing, kayaking, pedal boats, educational exhibits, live music, and more! Enjoy great food from local food trucks. A detailed event schedule will be posted on the website closer to the event. No rain date. For more info: (217) 586-3360 or cprahl@ccfpd.org. Enjoy live music with Ian Shepherd & Friends from 12 - 2 PM



**Saturday, July 25**

**SUMMER CONCERT SERIES: IAN SHEPHERD & FRIENDS**

*Peninsula, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 12 - 2 PM*

Enjoy a lively blend of 70s funk and blues, seasoned with a touch of New Orleans style that's perfect for getting up and dancing. With infectious grooves and soulful energy, their music is the perfect soundtrack for a summer afternoon.

Bring your friends, relax, and enjoy the music as part of a fun-filled day at Summer Splash.

**Wednesday, July 29**

**FULL MOON GUIDED HIKE**

*Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 7:30 - 9:30 PM*

**Free, no registration required.**

Partake in stunning nighttime views across Homer Lake as we walk the trails while daylight turns into darkness. Gentle elevation change, uneven terrain, and exposed tree roots in spots. Wear sturdy shoes and dress for comfort in the weather and protection from bugs. Approx. 2 miles. Follow the signs to the correct parking lot when entering the preserve. For more info: (217) 896-2455 or mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org.

**Thursday, July 30**

**BEGINNER VINYASA FLOW**

*Peninsula, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 7 - 8 PM*

**Free, no registration required.**

This class is all about building confidence in your flow while staying connected to your breath. We'll move at a steady, supportive pace, breaking things down so you feel strong and comfortable every step of the way. It's energizing without being overwhelming, just a solid, feel good flow to help you grow your practice. Address: 101 N Lake of the Woods Rd, Mahomet, IL 61853. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or cprahl@ccfpd.org.

# August 2026

**POP UP: PRAIRIE PLANT IDENTIFICATION GUIDED HIKE**

*Location and Time TBD*

**Free, no registration required.**

Learn to identify prairie plants in a relaxed, hands-on way along the trails. You'll pick up simple tips for recognizing different species and start noticing how plants change with the seasons. To be informed about when and

where this Pop-Up Program will happen, scan the code on the back of the guide, check the website, and follow us on social media. For more info: (217) 896-2455 or mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org.

**Saturday, August 1**

**CULTURAL CRAFTS: RESOURCEFUL ART**

*Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 1 - 3:30 PM*

**Free, register by July 25, code 6996**

As the summer season wraps up, join us for an engaging craft activity using resources found in the natural environment! Our early ancestors expressed themselves and told stories through art. Some of the oldest drawings and paintings were created using sticks, twigs, and reeds. Come learn how early humans created art and craft your own distinct painting. No prior art experience is required. All ages. Adults and children must be registered by July 25 at [champaignforests.org](http://champaignforests.org). For more info: (217) 586-2612 or jbien@ccfpd.org

**Saturday, August 8**

**OUTSIDE IN CHAMPAIGN FORESTS**

*Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, 10 - 11:30 AM*

**Free, no registration required.**

Head OUTside in Champaign Forests, every second Saturday of the month where nature and community come together. Our monthly hikes welcome queer-identifying individuals and allies who share a love for the great outdoors. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or cprahl@ccfpd.org.

**Tuesday, August 11**

**GROWING UP IN THE PRESERVES: COLORS**

*Natural Playscape, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 10 - 11 AM*

**Free, no registration required.**

This program is designed for preschoolers ages 3-6 along with their grown-ups to learn as we play outside in nature together. During this session, we will explore hands-on activity stations to help us explore the colors that make the Forest Preserves vibrant. The play stream, crawdad creek, will be flowing, so dress your child in clothes and shoes that can get wet, and bring a towel and change of clothes for the ride home. Groups with 5 or more preschoolers are welcome with advance notice, please contact Morgan Duerksen-Balk before August 7. For more info: (217) 896-2455 or mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org.

**Saturday, August 15**  
**SUMMER CONCERT SERIES: TWO SHOES**  
**URBANA REVIEW**

*Harry L. Swartz Campground, Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, 5 - 7 PM*

**Free, no registration required.**

Join local musicians Dave Pride, Emily McKown, Nick Stine, Jacob Croegaert and Clayton Burke for an exciting jam session! Their combined talents promise a fun and engaging musical experience. Food and alcohol from local food trucks will be available for purchase. After the concert, stick around for our Dark Sky Series: Space Sounds event at the new Dark Sky Trail! For more info: (217) 586-2612 or cprahl@ccfpd.org.

**Saturday, August 15**  
**DARK SKY SERIES: SPACE SOUNDS**

*Harry L. Swartz Campground, Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, 7:45 and 9:30 PM*

**Free, no registration required.**

After the concert fades into silence, stick around for a guided, meditative soundscape hike along the Dark Sky Trail. Discover the hidden sounds of the galaxy that can only be heard by converting the spectrum of energy produced by celestial bodies into audible sound. The two sessions of the hike begin at 7:45 and 9:30 PM at the Interpretive Center parking lot. The hikes are 1.5 hours long and will cover a distance of 1.5 miles. Terrain is gravel and pavement. For more info: (217) 896-2455 or mduerksen-balk@ccfpd.org.

**Sunday, August 16**  
**HISTORY OF CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FOREST PRESERVES: MIDDLE FORK RIVER**

*Interpretive Center, Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, 2 - 3 PM*

**Free, no registration required.**

Join us for an informative presentation covering the history of Middle Fork River Forest Preserve. Hear about the preserve's early formation, development, and present-day offerings. Ideal for enjoyers of the preserve, or those unfamiliar with Middle Fork. Light refreshments will be provided. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or jbien@ccfpd.org.

**Thursday, August 27**  
**YOGA + PILATES FLOW**

*Peninsula, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 7 - 8 PM*

**Free, no registration required.**

This flow blends strength and intention, combining yoga movement with Pilates-inspired core work. We'll build heat, focus on control, and tap into that deep, steady strength from within. It's challenging in the best way, but always with options or modification so you can make it your own. Expect to feel strong, balanced, and empowered when you leave. Address: 101 N Lake of the Woods Rd, Mahomet, IL 61853. For more info: (217) 586-2612 or cprahl@ccfpd.org.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



### POP UP PROGRAMS

"Pop-Up Programs" are spontaneous, short-notice events created when something exciting in nature or of cultural significance occurs. Scan the code to sign up for email alerts about noteworthy events that spark a "Pop-Up Program".

**Register here for programs**

**Scan the QR Code or go to**  
**Champaignforests.org**



*Programs may be altered or canceled due to weather*

**For disability-related modifications** for all programs contact Chelsea at cprahl@ccfpd.org or 217-586-2612

### Special Request Programs

Want to schedule a special program for your group? The Champaign County Forest Preserves welcomes all and will provide programs that offer unique, hands-on opportunities to experience nature and history. We will work with you to design a program that fits your needs - scan the QR code and fill out the form to plan your program today!

