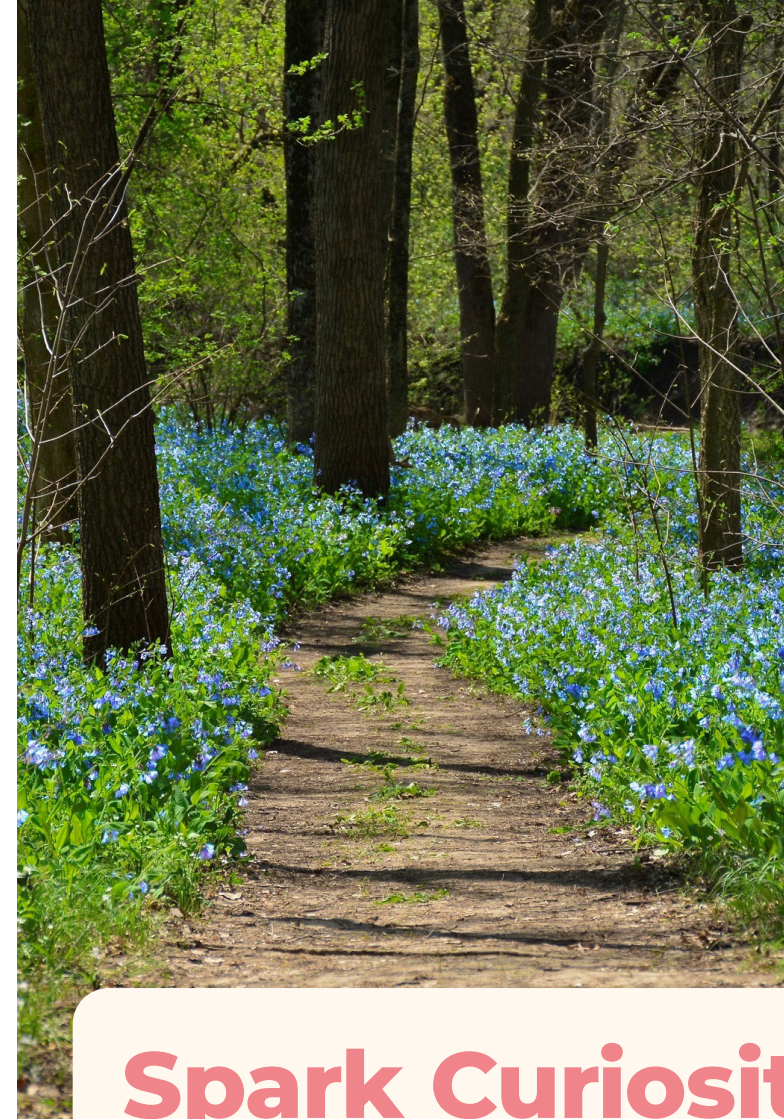


The Leaflet



Spring is Here ~ the Egg Hunt Begins

As the days get longer and the temperature warmer, nature is on full display, with the awakening of plants and animals. Birds are taking center stage and enchanting sounds of whistling, chirping, and warbling can be heard.

When you are out and about in your yard, neighborhood, or forest preserve, keep your eyes out for signs of nesting amongst certain species of birds. One bird is the Eastern Bluebird, a smaller bird with blue on their back and head and reddish brown on their chest. They begin building nests in late March into April in tree cavities and nest boxes. They will lay two to seven pale blue (sometimes white) eggs which will hatch in as few as eleven days.

It is important to recognize that not all birds adhere to the same nesting timeline. American Goldfinches, for instance, don't begin their nesting rituals until July, assuring



the availability of the fluffy down of milkweed and thistle to create their nest. Additionally, some birds, like the American Robin, have multiple broods over the course of a year. They can have up to three broods a year, with each nesting cycle lasting up to a month.

This year as you explore the preserves for the concrete eggs, April 1 – May 12, keep an ear out for the enchanting melodies of birds and look for the signs of nesting activities amongst various bird species.

Spark Curiosity and a Sense of Adventure This Summer

As winter's chill lingers, we can't help but dream of warmer days and the excitement that summer brings. The Champaign County Forest Preserves are thrilled to share with you the amazing line-up of this year's summer camps.

This summer, our camps invite explorers to dive into the wonders of both nature and history. From "Historical Roots and Garden Shoots" that fuses both history and the vibrant world of gardening to "Eco-adventures" where campers will explore the natural world around them. Through interactive experiences that blend exploration, creativity, and education, we aim to inspire a lifelong love for learning and a deep appreciation for both local history and the environment.

Register for summer camps now!

For more information and to register visit <https://bit.ly/CCFPDcamps24>.

Join us this summer to create memories and a deeper connection to our world!



• APRIL •

Saturday, April 6
KRT SPRING CLEAN UP
Kickapoo Rail Trail, meet at the Northwest corner of the Urbana Walmart parking lot. 10 a.m. - Noon

Join your neighbors in keeping this high-use, multipurpose trail and adjacent areas trash free! This annual clean up of winter trash along the KRT is great for all ages, and all skill levels. Most trash is off-trail, so prospective volunteers should feel comfortable walking on uneven ground. Rubber boots may be helpful, and closed toes shoes are necessary. Equipment provided. Sign in at the Northwest corner of the Urbana Walmart parking lot anytime between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. Check social media for weather-related changes. Contact Sue for more details sgallo@ccfpd.org, (217) 586-3360 or just come out!

Saturday, April 6
INTERPRET THE PAST, EDUCATE THE PRESENT: MUSEUM DOCENT WORKSHOP/TRAINING
Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 2-3:30 p.m.

Do you have a passion for history and want to pass it on to others? Attend this training session and workshop to learn foundational skills necessary to become a great docent! Museum docents are tour guides who offer educational context to museum exhibits. Participants will receive useful

resources, as well as tips & tricks to lead an engaging museum tour. This workshop is highly encouraged for beginners and anyone interested in the field of public history. Later this spring, there will be an optional meeting to discuss ideas and questions on May 17. Ages 16 and up. FREE. Register by April 3 at ccfpd.org.

Saturday, April 20
BONEYARD CREEK COMMUNITY DAY
Kickapoo Rail Trail, meet at Northwest corner of the Urbana Walmart parking lot. 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.

We are partnering with the Boneyard Creek Community Day and hosting a clean-up site on the KRT. Please go to the Boneyard Creek website for more information and registration, boneyardcreek.org. Lunch is provided at Scott Park after the clean up.

Sunday, April 21
RELICS AND REVELATIONS: CIVIL WAR STORIES
Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 2-3:30 p.m.

The Civil War began in April of 1861 and would end in April of 1865. During that time frame, more than 250,000 Illinois residents joined the fight. There were even enlistees from Champaign County! It has been over 150 years since the end of the war, yet stories of its soldiers continue to live on. Come and interact with some Civil War era artifacts while learning about

their historical context. This is a drop in program, so come and go as you please! Children must be accompanied by adult. FREE.

• MAY •

Saturday, May 11
WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY MIST NETTING DEMO
Interpretive Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, 9-11 a.m. Rain backup date: May 18

May 11th is World Migratory Bird Day, and we are celebrating at the Homer Lake Interpretive Center! From 9-11 a.m., learn more about the birds that live in this region with avian biologists from the University of Illinois. They will capture and band live birds with mist-nets, and talk about unique traits of each species as well as the importance of bird banding for conservation. Rain backup date: May 18. FREE. All ages. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Friday, May 17
MUSEUM DOCENT WORKSHOP/TRAINING: FOLLOW-UP FORUM
Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, 6-7:30 p.m.

This optional training session is intended for those who attended the museum docent training/workshop session earlier in March or April, and are looking for additional guidance and strategies ahead of leading their own tours. Participants will have an opportunity to ask questions or share any ideas they may have. We will begin

with a brief review of content pertaining to the previous workshops in March and April, followed by an open discussion about general thoughts, ideas, or questions pertaining to public-history related work. FREE. Register by May 14 at ccfpd.org.

Saturday, May 25
TAKE ME FISHING: MIDDLE FORK
Willow Pond, Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, 9-11 a.m.

Join us for a morning of free fishing fun for the whole family! Ages 15 and under will have the chance to win awards and prizes. Basic fishing instruction will be available for beginners. Cane poles and bait will be available to use, but you are welcome to bring your own. All event fishing is catch-and-release. Anglers 16 and over must possess a valid fishing license. FREE. All Ages. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

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



PRESCRIBED BURNS: Cultivating Nature's Balance

The Champaign County Forest Preserves engage in prescribed burns during spring (March-mid April) and fall (November-early December) seasons, fostering ecosystem health and biodiversity. All burns help add nutrients to the soil, reduce leaf litter/duff, promote native plant growth, and push back invasive species. Spring burns are good at controlling invasive herbaceous species, while fall burns are particularly good for killing woody plants.

There are many conditions that must be met before we begin: wind speed/direction, relative humidity, how quickly the smoke with lift into the air, and how quickly it will dissipate. If these conditions are not met, we will not burn. Wind is essential for a safe burn. Without wind, fire can be unpredictable. It is especially important for woodland burns because it helps push the fire in the right direction. We monitor weather conditions before and during the entire burn.

We use several different types of fire breaks. A fire break is something that will stop the fire from moving into an area where we don't want it. We use paved roads, mowed trails, lakes/ponds/streams, and sometimes we make our own with mowers,

rakes and leaf blowers. We often have to close roads and trails during these times. We ask that you PLEASE pay attention and abide by the signs this time of year.

The Natural Resources department, and Homer Lake and Middle Fork River operations staff conduct these prescribed fires. Most of the staff are Certified Wildland Firefighters and there must always be a Certified Illinois Burn Boss on the crew.

What about wildlife? Wildlife has natural instincts to run from fire. Our burns start off slow giving animals plenty of time to head out of an area. We always leave unburned habitat in close proximity so wildlife can easily stay safe.

Prescribed burns by the Champaign County Forest Preserves exemplify responsible stewardship, balancing environmental conservation with community safety. After a burn, we can appreciate nature's regenerative power as it showcases the beauty emerging from the ashes.

Keep an eye out on our **FB** or **Instagram** (**champaignforests**) page for updates on where and when we will be burning!

International Dark Sky Week

International Dark Sky Week is a worldwide celebration of the dark and natural night.

For many, the dark night is often misunderstood, unfamiliar, and frightening. But the natural night is filled with wonder and awe, and is critical to the health and wellbeing of our planet.

We invite you to join us as we discover the night together and learn about the harmful effects of light pollution and what we can do to embrace the dark and save the night.

<https://bit.ly/CCFPD-DarkSkyWeek24>



INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY WEEK
 April 2-8, 2024