



*Winneshiek
County
Conservation*

**Environmental Education
and Outdoor Recreation
Programming**

Fall 2019

**Winneshiek County Conservation
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Winneshiek County Conservation (WCC) offers conservation education and outdoor recreation programming designed to create environmentally sensitive, knowledgeable, and dedicated citizens working toward the wise use of our natural resources.

Programming is available **free of charge** and **year-round** to all area schools and youth and adult organizations. Many of the programs are flexible and can be adapted to fit your schedule and audience needs. WCC staff is always willing to work with individual teachers or leaders to create new programs that will help meet your curricular or other objectives.

Locations

Many of our field trip programs take place at Lake Meyer Park, which has a several large picnic shelters/workspaces, a playground, flush and pit toilets, and several miles of hiking trails.

WCC staff will also conduct programs in your classroom, in your schoolyard, or at other natural areas around Winneshiek County, including other WCC land, bike trails, or other public property. Many programs can be conducted indoors, so don't forget to consider what we can offer during winter months.

Field Trip Tips

Planning Responsibilities

- Peak field trip season (April–May and September–mid October) fills quickly. Schedule your trip early to ensure you have a slot. We also try to limit classroom visits during field trip season, especially in May, so we can focus on field experiences.
- Communicate with a WCC educator to discuss topic and activity choices, naturalist and teacher responsibilities, and to let us know if any attendees will require special accommodations.
- If necessary, send out permission slips and arrange for adult helpers. Please make sure you will have enough helpers to maintain discipline and provide support for activities.
- Name tags help us, especially with younger students.
- If you will be bringing sack lunches, please encourage students to bring “green” lunches with as little waste and packaging as possible.
- **Stress proper clothing.** Nothing ruins a field trip more quickly than students that are cold and wet or hot and sunburned. Send notes out ahead of time to parents. If you need clothing guidelines, just ask.

Day-of Responsibilities

- If you have a particular “quiet” signal that you use with your class, please share with WCC staff.
- We ask that all items (except garbage) found on the field trip be left as is. Please help us enforce this guideline with your students.
- Encourage your students to respect the plants, animals, and general environment of Lake Meyer Park or other natural areas. Nothing should be picked, collected or removed without approval of WCC staff.
- **Participate and ask questions!** If you and your parent chaperones lead by example, students will become even more engaged.

Conservation Education Programs

We do our best to match our programming to educational standards, including Iowa CORE and the Next Generation Science Standards. Contact us for more details on each program and how it can help meet your needs.

See something you like but not sure if it will work with your group? Check with WCC staff; we are always happy to adjust programs to better suit your age, schedule, or audience. Make the most of your field trip budget and combine multiple conservation education and outdoor recreation programs when you come to one of our parks. We want your field trip to be a memorable and educational experience!

Some educational equipment is available for checkout for use without WCC staff.

Early Childhood and Pre-K Programs

Our early childhood programs are specially designed to be developmentally appropriate for preschool ages. Program length and activities are flexible, and can include dramatic play, storytime, or art projects. Below are some of the most popular programs, but we can create programs to cover most any topic.

- *Animal Homes*
- *Animals in Winter*
- *Bats*
- *Bird Beak Buffet*
- *Bugs, Bugs, Bugs!*
- *Colors in Nature* (Fall Preferred; Outdoors)
- *Excellent Eggs*
- *Frogs*
- *Senses in Nature*
- *Owls*
- *Signs of Spring* (Outdoors)
- *Tracks*
- *Turtles*
- *What's Wild?*

K–12 Programs

Nature Hikes: Nature hikes around the trails of Lake Meyer Park, with spontaneous guided interpretation provided by a WCC educator. Can be tailored to focus on specific topics.

Grade: Any Time: Variable Season: Spring–Fall (Outdoor)

Planetarium Presentations: WCC staff have been trained to operate the various planetarium systems available through Keystone AEA. These inflatable, portable planetariums can be used to engage students in everything from constellations and moon phases to Greek and Native American mythology. They offer great opportunities for cross-curricular learning experiences and presentations are highly adaptable to time and curricular restraints. Please contact Lilly Jensen to discuss usage ideas, spacing requirements, and checkout procedures. There are two different planetariums available (classic projector and digital) and both book quickly so we recommend scheduling well in advance.

Grade: Any Time: Variable Season: Any (Indoor)

Pond Study: You never know what you’ll find when you dig down into Lake Meyer! Students use nets and collecting buckets to sample for aquatic invertebrates, tadpoles, minnows, and maybe even a frog or two, all while learning about adaptations, aquatic ecosystems, and the role of aquatic insects in the food chain. A unique opportunity for data collection and analysis for older students, and downright fun for all ages! Great when combined with water quality, canoeing, or fishing programs, and easy to do in a creek or pond near your school. Can also be extended to include in-class time with microscopes for deeper study of aquatic invertebrates.

Grade: Any Time: 60+ minutes Season: Fall–Spring (Outdoor)

Tree-rific!: A flexible tree program that discusses the inner workings of trees, how they benefit humans and wildlife, and basic tree identification. Activities can include tree/leaf art, tree costumes (younger grades), tree skits, “Meet a Tree,” Tree ID hikes or GPS activities, and more. Can be held at any wooded site near your school or at Lake Meyer Park.

Grade: Any Time: Variable Season: Any (Indoor/Outdoor)

Creature Features: Is there an animal, bird, or insect native to Iowa that you’d like to know more about? Let us know and we can create a feature program on it!

Grade: Any Time: Variable Season: Any (Indoor)

Making Sense of Nature: Let’s heighten our awareness of and curiosity about nature by exploring the outdoor world with *all* our senses, not just sight.

Grade: Lower Elem. Time: 60 minutes Season: Any (Outdoor)

Turkey’s Gift to the People: We’ll read a story and look at some turkey items to learn more about the wild turkeys found in Iowa’s woodlands. Perfect for Thanksgiving!

Grade: Lower Elem. Time: 45 minutes Season: Fall (Indoor)

Animals in Winter: We all know how cold it is in Iowa in the winter. How do animals survive? We’ll talk about different strategies animals have for making it through that dark, cold season!

Grade: Lower Elem. Time: 45 minutes Season: Winter (Indoor)

Gyotaku: Students use fish replicas to create prints on paper or flour cloths in the style of the traditional Japanese technique of *gyotaku*, or fish printing. Depending on grade level, lesson can also cover basic external fish anatomy, fish shape/function, and/or fish habitats.

Grade: Any Time: 30–60 minutes Season: Any (Indoor/Outdoor)

Bats: Help your students overcome the many misconceptions people have about these creatures of the night! We'll talk about what makes bats so unique and helpful, illustrate how they find their food in the dark, and talk about ways humans can help protect bats.

Grade: Lower Elem. Time: 45 minutes Season: Any (Indoor)

Insectology: Creepy, crawly, and just plain weird: we'll talk about insects and what makes them so different and special. We'll spend lots of time collecting and observing insects. Program can include dramatic play, storytime, or art projects.

Grade: Lower Elem. Time: 45–75 minutes Season: Fall (Outdoor)

Hiding in Plain Sight: Camouflage is an important survival strategy in the natural world. We'll examine some of the different strategies for camouflage and take part in some activities that demonstrate how it works.

Grade: Lower Elem. Time: 45 minutes Season: Any (Outdoor)

Nature's Superheroes: We all love Batman and Spiderman, but there are some amazing animals in nature that have superhero powers of their own! We'll talk about a few that live right here in Iowa and look at some artifacts that help us see how super they can be!

Grade: Lower Elem. Time: 45 mins. Season: Any (Indoor)

Animal Homes/Habitats: What do animals need to survive? Food, shelter, water, and space! We'll talk about how animals meet those needs, and then head outside to look for some real animal homes!

Grade: Lower Elem. Time: Variable Season: Any (Indoor/Outdoor)

Animal Architecture: From bird nests to beehives, termite mounds to prairie dog burrows: animal architecture is amazing! We'll explore some of the most unique of these impressive undertakings! If possible, we'll head outside to look for examples of impressive architecture.

Grade: Lower Elem. Time: Variable Season: Any (Indoor/Outdoor)

Spring Wildflowers: Visit Lake Meyer to see what's blooming in late spring. Take a guided tour of the Lake Meyer nature trails, where a naturalist will point out spring wildflowers and explain some of their unique characteristics and uses.

Grade: Lower Elem. Time 60-90 minutes Season: Late April/Early May

Nature's Engineer: Beavers have many adaptations that help them thrive in their watery environment. We'll use a variety of props and artifacts as a springboard to discuss beaver adaptations, life cycle, and how beaver behavior changes the world around it.

Grade: Lower Elem. Time: 45 minutes Season: Any (Indoor)

Minerals, Crystals, and Rocks: We'll share samples of minerals, crystals, and rocks, discuss how and where they are formed, and participate in a hands-on activities and models.

Grade: Lower Elem. Time: 45 mins, depending on group size Season: Any

Fossils: How do we know that Iowa was once under an ocean? Fossils! We'll discuss how fossils are formed and study some of our different local fossils.

Grade: Lower/Upper Elem. Time: 45 mins Season: Any (Indoor)

Natural Art: We can do any number of arts and crafts projects with natural materials, whether you want self-expression through general nature creations or a more guided experience like flower pressing. Project choice will depend on grade level.

Grade: Lower/Upper Elem. Time: Variable Season: Project dependent

NEW! *Owl Pellet Dissection:* Owl pellets offer a unique and fun opportunity to explore the feeding habits of owls, discuss the food web, and do a little hands-on scientific analysis. Materials charge of \$3/pellet if we provide the pellets; pellets may also be available through Keystone AEA.

Grade: 3rd Grade and Up Time: 90 minutes Season: Any

Papermaking: Paper is everywhere and we often take it for granted. Students will discover the science and history of paper making as they create their own beautiful handmade paper. Offers unique insights into natural resources, renewable resources, and the role they play in our lives.

Grade: 4th Grade and Up Time: Depends on Group Size Season: Any

The Incredible Journey: Students become water molecules on an incredible journey through the water cycle in this hands-on, active model of how and why water moves throughout the Earth.

Grade: Lower/Upper Elem. Time: 45-60 minutes Season: Any (Indoor)

Building Birdhouses: Students are introduced to Iowa birds that live in birdhouses and build a birdhouse they can hang in their own backyard. Schools or students will need to provide their own wood, or WCC can for a small fee. Generally requires two sessions, an introduction and a building day. Highly recommended that teacher recruits one adult helper per student.

Grade: Lower/Upper Elem. Time: Introduction, 60 minutes; Building 2–3 hours
Season: Any (Indoor/Outdoor)

Nature's Slime Machines: Explore the slimy, slippery, oozy, goopy world of slimes found in nature, and why animals and plants make and use slime. Be prepared to get messy.

Grade: Upper Elem. Time: 45 mins. Season: Any

Fill the Bill: Could a hummingbird eat a mouse? Or an owl sip nectar from a flower? Students will use various food-gathering tools representing different bird beaks to gather "food," learning how birds have adapted to have unique beaks that allow them to do certain "jobs" (gather specific foods) and make their living.

Grade: Upper Elem. Time: 45 minutes Season: Any (Indoor)

What Would Laura Eat?: When we see a dandelion, we think “weed.” When Laura Ingalls Wilder and saw it, she thought “dinner”! Find out the many different ways that early pioneers and settlers used the plants around them to survive in a time before electricity, cars, and neighborhood grocery stores.

Grade: Upper Elem. Time: 45–90 minutes Season: Spring preferred

Flower Reproduction: Students will explore how flowers reproduce through hands-on dissection of flowers. We’ll cover different types of flowers, examine pollen and other structures under microscope, and work to identify the various structures involved in a flower’s reproduction.

Grade: Upper Elem./Middle Time: 60-90 mins Season: Late Spring-Early Fall

NEW!

Skull Science: Use a diverse collection of replica animal skulls to explore age-appropriate concepts including how to identify animals based on their skulls, how skull structure relates to an animal’s behavior, and evolution.

Grade: Upper Elem./Middle Time: Variable Season: Any (Indoor)

Nature and Science Journaling/Writing/Observation: Students explore how nature served as inspiration for writers throughout history and create personalized field or nature journals. Use a park or schoolyard to hone observation, description, and writing skills. Unit length can vary and can include multiple stages of the writing process.

Grade: Upper Elem./Middle Time: Varies Season: Any (Outdoor)

Seed Dispersal Models: Plants have developed some unique ways to ensure their seeds are planted in new areas. Student will create models of seed dispersal methods using craft and building materials and their imagination! Fun and engaging for everyone from 2nd graders to middle schoolers.

Grade: Upper Elem./Middle Time: 75 minutes Season: Any

Seed Discoveries: Seeds are amazing things. Students will explore seed parts and the different ways seeds are dispersed, preferably by gathering fruits, pods, and seed heads from their own schoolyards and gardens. We’ll dissect them all to identify the various seed structures and note the differences between seed structures and dispersal methods.

Grade: Upper Elem./Middle Time: 60-90 mins Season: Fall Only

NEW!

Lichen Exploration: Lichens can be found almost anywhere (from a schoolyard to a park) and offer great opportunity for building skills in close observation, classification, and understanding symbiotic relationships and growth and succession patterns.

Grade: Upper Elem./Middle Time: 60 mins Season: Any

Symbiosis/Goldenrod Gall Dissection: Goldenrod forms the base of a hidden ecosystem full of interesting relationships between plants, insects, and animals. Using simple tools, students will dissect goldenrod galls to discover the surprising diversity of life found in such a small system, a fascinating illustration of how and where symbiotic relationships exist.

Grade: Upper Elem./Middle Time: 75 minutes Season: Fall/Winter

What Good is a Wetland?: What's a wetland and why is it valuable? Students create and test models of wetlands to discover how wetlands work and why the ecosystem services they provide are so valuable to human and non-human life.

Grade: Upper Elem./Middle Time: 45 minutes Season: Any

Enviroscape: Students use a landscape model to discover the ways that human use can alter land, water, and natural resources. A particularly good illustration of the concepts of erosion and how it can affect water quality, and great when paired with local field visits. We borrow the Enviroscape model from Luther College, so advance planning is recommended.

Grade: Upper Elem./Middle Time: 45 minutes Season: Any

Lake Restoration: Lake Meyer is a fascinating, local case study of how our water and other natural resources can be affected—positively and negatively—by humans. We'll walk students through the history of Lake Meyer and what we've been doing to improve the lake's water quality and fish habitat. Many options to extend and integrate the learning, including pre- and post-classroom activities (Enviroscape modeling, wetland modeling, etc.), tours of other local water quality and sustainability projects, water quality testing, pond study, and more.

Grade: Middle Time: Variable Season: Fall (preferred) or Spring

Water Quality: Students use IOWATER sampling equipment to collect data on the chemical and physical health of a body of water. We'll discuss how land use in watersheds can affect water quality, and what it means for human and aquatic populations. Perfect for science or math classes looking for some data to analyze and ideal for semester-long projects with multiple samplings. Match this up with our pond study, canoeing, or fishing programs for an integrated experience!

Grade: Middle/HS Time: 60–90 minutes Season: Spring–Fall (Outdoors)

Outdoor Recreation Programs

Outdoor recreation can be a fun way to engage your students in learning and physical activity at the same time. WCC can transport most of our outdoor recreation equipment to other sites and can often extend these programs easily into full units, particularly in PE or science classes. Some equipment is available for checkout for use without WCC staff.

Team Building

Help students build confidence and positive relationships through a variety of hands-on activities designed to prompt communication, teamwork, and problem solving. Can be held at Lake Meyer or another park, or at your schoolyard, gym, or even the classroom. Great for helping students develop bonds early in the school year.

Grade: Upper Elem. and Older

Time: Variable. Minimum 45 minutes.

Fishing

Available as single-day fishing field days up to full Fish Iowa! units covering everything from fish biology and habitats to proper lure selection. Fishing can be spincasting or fly-casting. Can include fly-tying, fish painting, aquatic invertebrate sampling, water quality testing, and more.

Grade: Spin: Upper Elem. and Older (younger possible with enough adult helpers)

Fly: Upper Elem and Older

Time: 45-60 minutes per group

Canoeing and Kayaking

Come paddle around Lake Meyer as you learn canoe/kayak safety and basic paddling techniques. Canoes can hold up to 14 people; kayaks can hold up to 12 people.

Grade: Upper Elem. and Older

Time: 45-60 minutes per group

Using GPS Technology and Geocaching

Explore the engaging sport of geocaching, an outdoor adventure scavenger hunt using GPS technology. Programs will introduce GPS technology, and can include basic Geocaching, GPS navigation challenges, GPS Amazing Races, or incorporating GPS/geocaching into existing activities or units. Contact us—possibilities are endless with this one!

Grade: Upper Elem. and Older

Time: 60-90 minutes

Orienteering

Want a more traditional navigation technique? Try orienteering! Participants will learn the basics of compass use and will put their new skills to test in a variety of navigation activities. Combine with GPS Navigation and Geocaching for a full spectrum of navigation techniques.

Grade: Upper Elem. and Older

Time: 45 minutes

Archery

Introduce students to target archery with a focus on safety, technique, and skill development. Equipment includes 11 full-size and 3 mini compound bows with variable draw resistance, arrows, backdrop curtain, and moveable targets. We recommend 3-5 sessions for student success. Must be led by WCC staff. Contact us to discuss gym requirements.

Grade: Upper Elem. and Older

Time: 35-40 minutes/session

Hunter Education

WCC staff are certified Hunter Education instructors and can bring Hunter Ed to your classroom. The Iowa DNR Hunter Education program is designed to promote hunter safety and ethics. Students will receive their Hunter Education certificate, which is required for purchasing a hunting license. Students must be at least 12.

Grade: Upper Elem. and Older

Time: 10 hours minimum

Snowshoeing

Students get a kick out of walking around on oversized snowshoes as they explore the park or their schoolyard in a whole new way. We have 30 sets of snowshoes that will support a wide range of weights. Great activity to combine with winter ecology, nature art, or history.

Grade: Elem. and Older

Time: 45 minutes

Survival and Outdoor Skills

Create your own combination of winter or summer survival skills, including shelter building, water collection, basic first aid, outdoor cooking (**now with Dutch ovens!**), fire starting/building, orienteering, and more. These extended field experiences work well in cross-teaching environments with multiple ages. Match up with your reading of *Hatchet*, *My Side of the Mountain*, or another survival book for cross-curricular support.

Grade: Upper Elem. and Older

Time: Variable

Cross-Country Skiing

Explore a frozen Lake Meyer, or your own schoolyard, on skis and get your heart pumping at the same time. Traditional 3-pin skis are easy to use. Boot size quantities vary.

Grade: Upper Elem. and Older

Time: Recommended 45 minutes per group)

Winneshiek County Conservation has been fortunate to receive supplemental funding from several organizations to support and expand our conservation education and outdoor recreation programming. We extend heartfelt thanks to the following wonderful organizations!

