

Wapsi River Environmental Education Center Dixon, Iowa “A Place For All Seasons”



Field Trip Planner
For schools, youth groups and other organizations

Wapsi River Environmental Education Center

31555 52nd Avenue ~ Dixon, IA 52745 ~ (563) 328-3286

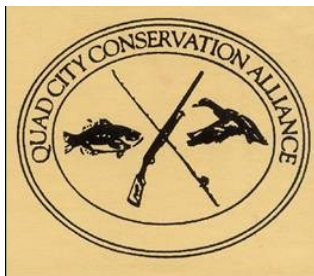
Dave Murcia, Center Director/Naturalist
Scott County Conservation Board
(563) 328-3286

Hello!

The staff of the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center would like to welcome and invite you to take advantage of the environmental education opportunities at the Center. This beautiful area borders the Wapsipinicon River and is diverse in ecosystems and wildlife.

The 225-acre Wapsi River Center is the result of the combined efforts of various organizations. The Center is owned, managed, and operated by the Scott County Conservation Board with programming assistance from area partners. The area was acquired through cooperation of the Clinton and Scott County Conservation Boards, the Quad City Conservation Alliance and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. St. Ambrose University is also involved with the Center through the Monsignor Menke Astronomical Observatory, and are conducting biological field classes and special projects at the Center. These organizations have helped develop an area with numerous educational opportunities.

The primary purpose of the Wapsi River Center is to provide environmental education. Programs for the public, schools and other groups are being held regularly at the Center. This planner will serve as a guide to plan a successful learning experience in the outdoors. Included in this planner are a history, a brief summary of the natural resources and facilities, and some tips on planning a field trip to the Center. This information may be used to plan environmental education programs with the naturalists, or it can be used alone by teachers or group leaders. Outdoor education can be fun and exciting for students, groups, leaders and teachers. Planning ahead can help ensure a rewarding experience.



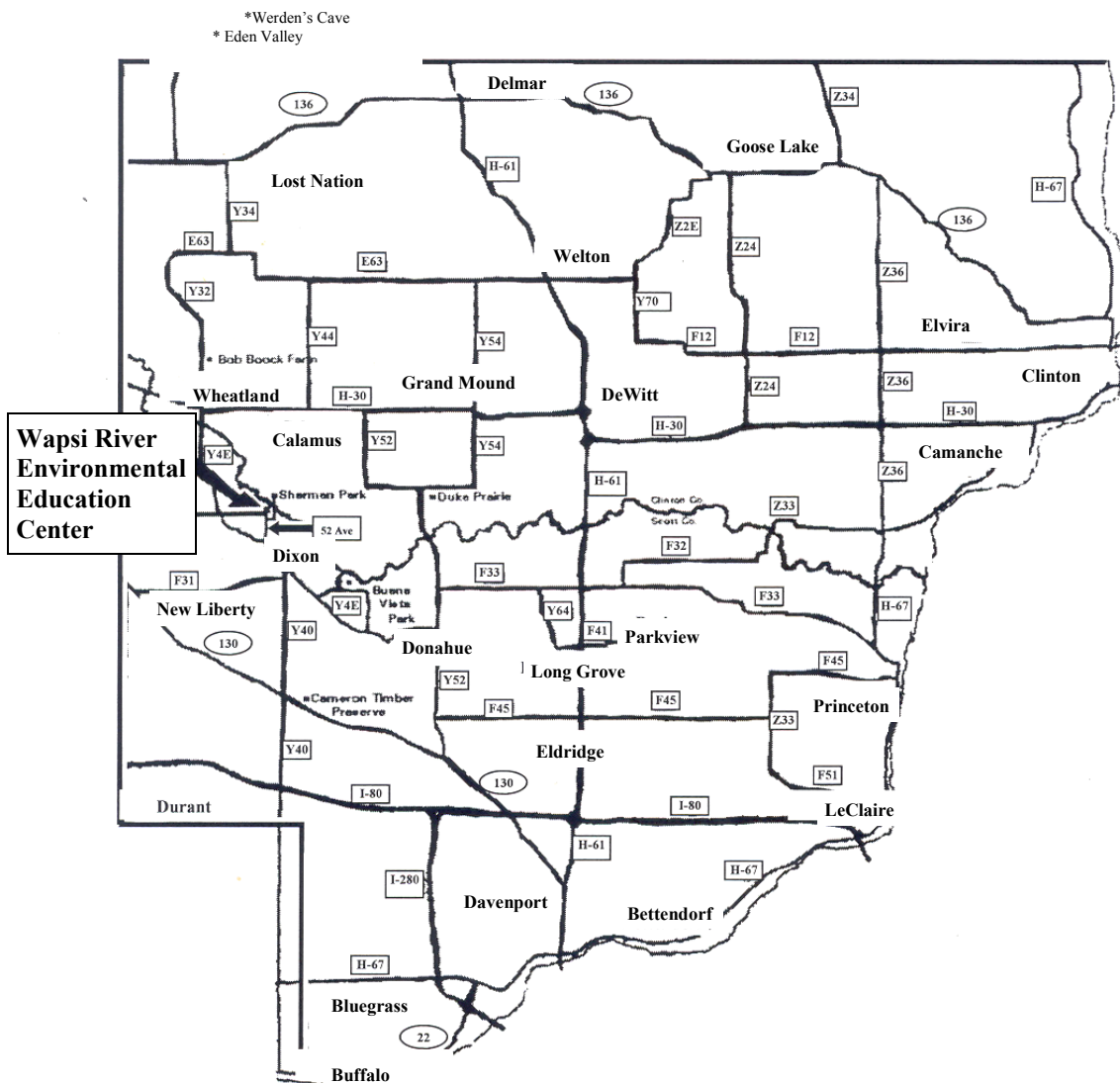
“United to Develop Future Generations of Earth Stewards”

HISTORY

The Wapsi River Environmental Education Center was previously owned by the Boy Scouts of America. The Boy Scouts began acquiring the land in the 1920s and named the area Camp Minneyata, meaning “beside happy waters.” During the spring of 1995, the Quad City Conservation Alliance and Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation purchased the property from the Illowa Boy Scout Council. Title to the property has been transferred to Scott County. The Wapsi River Center is owned, managed and operated by the Scott County Conservation Board with programming assistance from partners.

LOCATION

The Wapsi River Center is located two miles northwest of Dixon, Iowa, at the north end of 52nd Avenue on the county line between Clinton and Scott Counties. The Center is approximately ten miles north of Interstate 80 (Walcott Exit 284) and 6 miles south of Highway 30 from Wheatland. Directly across the river is Clinton County’s Sherman Park.



**WHAT IS AVAILABLE AT THE
WAPSI RIVER ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER?**

Natural Resources

The Wapsi River Center has been named in the *Iowa Wildlife Viewing Guide* as one of 77 areas in Iowa for premium wildlife viewing. The natural resources available at the Wapsi Environmental Education Center will provide numerous options for education and enjoyment. Approximately 30 acres of bottomland forest are located along the Wapsipinicon River, and there are 120 acres of upland timber, a mixture of predominately oak and hickory trees. Throughout the woodland areas, there is a large variety of woodland wildflowers and ferns. If you are interested in woodland wildflowers, be sure to come in early spring, as most of the flowers bloom before there are leaves on the trees.

Grassland areas occupy approximately 60 acres of the Wapsi River Center. The open grasslands are predominantly brome and blue grass, with some woody plants. Wildlife plantings of pines and shrubs have been established along the edges of the grassland area. Seven acres have been planted with native prairie grass and flowers. A small butterfly garden has also been planted.

Water is another resource available for study at the Wapsi River Center. There is approximately 1 mile of river frontage along the Wapsipinicon River. A major portion of this river has been designated an Iowa Protected Water Area. It has one of the longest natural and scenic corridors in Iowa. There are two ponds at the Center. Both ponds have a leakage problem; however, during the spring, there is usually enough water to attract waterfowl, toads, frogs and aquatic insects.

The Wapsi River Center and Sherman Park (207 acres) form a 432-acre complex with 8 distinct plant communities. These communities are rich in plant and animal diversity. There are 161 bird species, 25 mammal species, 17 reptile and amphibian species, and over 300 plant species that have been identified. Ten plants and 9 animals on the Iowa threatened and endangered species list have been identified. During the winter, up to 28 eagles have been observed on a night roost within 200 feet of the Eagle View Eco Center. This roost provides a unique opportunity for interpretive programs.

For advanced classes and college students, a complete list of flora and fauna is available upon request. Biology, environmental education and other related internships are available at the Wapsi River Center.



Facilities



[The Eagle View Eco Center](#) is the main interpretive building. Various natural history and live animal displays are housed there. Some of the exhibits in the Eco Center include displays on prairies, woodlands, fish and wildlife, reptiles and amphibians, and a touch table. There are a kitchen and a meeting room also. A small laboratory is available for school field trips and other workshops. The Eagle View Eco Center is open to the public 12:30-4:30 P.M. on Saturdays.



[The Monsignor Menke Astronomical Observatory](#) is available for educational programs and will be open to the public on special occasions. If you are interested in setting up an observatory program, contact the Wapsi River Center. The observatory houses three telescopes and a classroom. St. Ambrose University is also conducting astronomy classes at the facility.



[The Osprey Aquatic Lab](#) offers many hands-on learning experiences. Originally, the site was a swimming pool, which has since been filled with agricultural limestone to create a “natural” pond setting. The shower house has been converted into an aquatic learning lab. Microscopes, dissecting scopes, water sampling and pond study equipment will give “up close” opportunities to investigate this unique aquatic habitat. The lab may be open to the public on special occasions.



A [twelve-station teams course](#) provides excellent teamwork/community building and problem-solving opportunities. The course may be utilized by groups with staff supervision.

A [twelve-station rifle range](#) is used for hunter safety education classes. It can also be used for special events such as rendezvous.





The Owl's Nest Dormitory provides overnight sleeping accommodations (bunk beds) for up to 52 people. Visitors may also rent portions of the dorm to suit smaller group sizes.

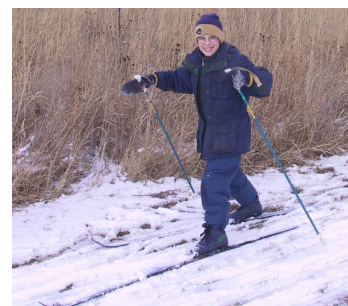


Redtail Lodge has a rustic meeting room and can be rented for meetings and group activities. It also has a small kitchen and rest rooms. Groups renting the Owl's Nest Dormitory commonly rent the Redtail Lodge for meals and special programming options.



The Kestrel Cabin is available for rent at the Wapsi River Center. The ADA accessible cabin sleeps 6 and has a kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, living area. Covered porch, grill, and fire pit with wood supplied.

There are approximately 2.5 miles of trails throughout the Wapsi River Center. Approximately 1.5 miles of trails are suitable for cross-country skiing and will be groomed when there is a sufficient snow base. During the warmer months, the pine ring provides an excellent outdoor lunch area with plenty of picnic tables, a fire pit and running water.



**For reservations, rates or additional information,
please call the Wapsi River Center at
(563) 328-3286.**

The Wapsi River Staff and the Friends Group

The Wapsi River Staff

Dave Murcia is the director of the Wapsi River Center and the naturalist for the Scott County Conservation Board. Before serving at the Center, Dave worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as an Assistant Refuge Manager and a Supervisory Park Ranger in the National Wildlife Refuge System. Dave graduated from Muscatine Community College with an Associate of Science degree in conservation and St. Ambrose University with a Bachelor of Science degree in biology with an emphasis in Midwest ecosystems.

Mike Granger is a Naturalist for the Wapsi River Center. Mike graduated from the University of Northern Iowa with a natural history interpretation degree. Mike was an Interpretive Naturalist for the Putnam Museum of History and Natural Science in Davenport, Iowa.

Rebecca Horton is a Naturalist for the Wapsi River Center. Becky graduated from the University of Illinois with a B.S. in Animal Science and Chemistry minor, and a M.S. in Biology/Zoo and Aquarium Studies from Western Illinois University. She served as a Seasonal Naturalist since 2013 at the Center, and had worked at the Niabi Zoo as Seasonal Zookeeper and as an Education Intern at Nahant Marsh Education Center.

Resident Caretaker for the Center.

Friends of the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center, Inc.

The Friends of the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center, Inc., is a volunteer organization dedicated to encouraging public use and enjoyment of the Center. They are involved in the preservation of the area's natural resources for present and future generations.

The volunteers are involved in almost all aspects of the Wapsi River Center. They have been trained as trail guides to lead groups through the Center. They assist with programs and events, as well as help staff the Eco Center.

If you enjoy nature and would like to help, there is a spot just waiting for you. Bring yourself and your ideas because the possibilities are endless. Let us know how you would like to help by contacting the Wapsi River Center at (563) 328-3286. Visit <https://www.scottcountyiowa.com/conservation/wapsi/friends> for more information.

FIELD TRIP PLANNER

1. To begin planning your day or overnight field trip, you should contact the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center (563) 328-3286. At this time, you will be able to select possible dates for your field trip.
2. The naturalists will help you plan activities, and develop a schedule for your field trip. Some of the teacher's responsibilities include:
 - a. arranging transportation to the field trip site, where the naturalist will meet the group.
 - b. organizing students into assigned groups.
 - c. informing the naturalist, before the day of the field trip, which students require special attention.
 - d. asking questions during the activities, to encourage the students to ask questions.
 - e. teachers are expected to participate in the activities with the students.
3. If, on the day of the scheduled field trip, the weather is questionable, it is the responsibility of the group leader to decide if the trip will continue or be postponed. A rain date for the field trip should be discussed with the naturalist after the original field trip has been canceled. If you wish to cancel or reschedule the field trip due to inclement weather, call the Wapsi River Center.
4. Send out permission slips to parents, if required, and include a note requesting adult helpers.
5. Select adult helpers for the field trip. The ideal ratios are one adult for five students with younger students, and one adult for ten students with older students. The naturalists would like to avoid over fifteen students per adult, if at all possible. Adult helpers must understand that they are responsible for discipline, and that they must take part in the activities.
6. Divide the students into groups using colors, numbers or special codes. Assign adult helpers to each group. The ideal size is 10-15 students per group, depending on class size.
7. Locate materials needed for the field trip, if requested.
8. Conduct related classroom pre-trip and post-trip activities.
9. Discuss safety and conduct rules with the students. Bring a first-aid kit, and contact the school nurse as a possible adult helper. (See also "In case of an emergency")
10. Stress proper clothing. It's always cooler at the Wapsi River Center than in town, so dress in layers. (See also "What should I wear?")
11. Sack lunches in disposable containers are easiest. When the lunches are divided into group boxes in the morning, lunchtime can be relatively hassle-free.
12. You might want to ask your local newspaper to cover your field trip.
13. The Wapsi River Center offers a wide variety of programs and activities for field trips. We can tailor your class's or group's field trip to meet your needs and interests.

Field Trip Schedule:

The Wapsi River Center staff will provide a schedule suitable for your class size and age group. Schedules can be tailored to include specific topics the students might be studying at the time. Prior to your field trip, you will receive a schedule of the activities you have chosen. The schedule will have the time of each presentation, and the number of groups necessary for the schedule to work. **Please have your class divided into the appropriate number of groups prior to arriving at the Center, and have at least one adult assigned to each group to supervise the group throughout the day.** Below is an example of a time/program schedule:

| | | | |
|---------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| 9:30 - 9:45 | Arrival and Introductions | | |
| | <u>Group 1</u> | <u>Group 2</u> | <u>Group 3</u> |
| 9:45 - 10:30 | Birds of Prey | Nature Hike | Center Tour |
| 10:30 - 11:15 | Center Tour | Birds of Prey | Nature Hike |
| 11:15 - 12:00 | Nature Hike | Center Tour | Birds of Prey |
| 12:00 - 12:30 | LUNCH (for all) | | |
| 12:30 - 1:15 | Nature Game | | |
| 1:15 | Departure | | |

WHAT SHOULD I WEAR?

- Wear old clothes because you will be involved in outdoor activities where you might get dirty.
- Long-sleeved shirts, long pants, shoes and socks are recommended for protection against poison ivy, prickly bushes and insects.
- Shorts, sandals, dress shoes, jewelry and anything that is not allowed to get wet and dirty are not proper clothing.
- Spring, fall, and even summer mornings can be cool, so be prepared. Dress in four layers: T-shirt, long-sleeved shirt, sweater or sweatshirt, and jacket.
- For winter hikes, don't forget hats (that come down over the ears), scarves, coats (that come down over the hips), long underwear, warm insulated snow boots, and mittens or gloves. For cross-country skiing, layering clothing is recommended.
- Other things to remember: hats, for keeping out bugs and the sun, rain gear (you can still work and learn outside in the rain), old sneakers (for wading during pond and stream studies, no bare feet!), insect repellent with the active ingredient DEET (seasonal).



Illustration by Alexandra Charrow

IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY

In case of an emergency, contact a naturalist **immediately**. If a naturalist isn't available, call **911**. There are telephones on the porch of Redtail Lodge and in the Eco Center. The identification number that is needed by the emergency personnel is **31555**. That number is for the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center. Specific directions to where the injured person is located will need to be given to the operator.

SATELLITE AREAS UTILIZED BY THE WAPSI RIVER ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER

Sherman Park, Clinton County

This 207-acre park has approximately 142 acres of hardwood timber, 37 acres of grassland and sand prairie remnants, 4 acres of upland pothole marshes and 5 developed acres for picnicking and camping. A portion of the park is open to public hunting. Sherman Park is a popular fishing spot along the Wapsipinicon River, with a public boat ramp. This area is located directly across the river from the Wapsi River Center.



West Lake Park, Davenport, Iowa

This 620 acre park is a multi-use recreation area featuring four lakes with two boat ramps, handicap accessible fishing docks, a disc golf course, swimming beach, hiking trails, shelters, picnic areas, and two campgrounds.

Scott County Park, Eldridge, Iowa

This 1,280 acre park is a multi-use recreation area offering: an Olympic sized pool, 2 cabins, 5 campgrounds, fishing at Pride Lake, hiking/biking/equestrian trails, historic Pioneer Village, Olde St. Ann's Church, Glynns Creek Golf Course, shelters/picnic areas.



Buena Vista

Buena Vista is located two miles east of Dixon along the Wapsipinicon River. This area contains 165 acres of timber and open areas and has two ponds. It is the perfect place for a pond study and just the right size for the beginning canoeist/kayaker.

Duke Prairie

Duke Prairie is one of only a handful of black soil prairies in eastern Iowa, which comprise less than 1/10th of 1 percent of the original prairie remaining in Iowa. The 20 acres of prairie provide an excellent opportunity to experience Iowa's original landscape first-hand. Duke Prairie is located 2 miles southwest of Grand Mound.



The Bob Boock Farm

Bob has spent years turning several acres on his farm into great waterfowl habitat. The Boock farm is the location of a pair of trumpeter swans, which are part of the statewide Trumpeter Swan Restoration Project initiated by the DNR. The Boock farm is located 2 miles north of Wheatland.

Nahant Marsh Educational Field Station, Davenport, Iowa

Nahant Marsh is a cooperative effort between the City of Davenport, Eastern Iowa Community College District, and River Action, Inc. Nahant Marsh is a cattail marsh providing educational opportunities for aquatic studies.

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES AT THE WAPSI RIVER ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER

PowerPoint Program on the Wapsi River Center

A PowerPoint program on the Center is available for in-service days and other organizational gatherings. The program includes the history of the Center, what types of facilities are available, what natural resources can be seen and the variety of educational opportunities available.

Special Winter Activities

The Wapsi River Center has many activities available for all groups during the winter. Bald eagle observation sessions are held throughout the winter. The bald eagle night roost is located within 200 feet of the Eagle View Eco Center, providing excellent indoor-viewing opportunities. The Center has cross-country skis and snowshoes available. The Center grooms trails for cross-country skiing. A great way to explore outdoors in winter!

Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts

Many of the programs at the Wapsi River Center are ideal for Boy and Girl Scout groups to fulfill their conservation or outdoor merit badges. We are happy to assist with other youth organizations, such as 4-H or environmental clubs. For non-school groups, the following guidelines are recommended. There needs to be at least two weeks' advance notice. If the program is held on a weekend, there must be a minimum of 20 kids in attendance. If the program is held during the workweek (Monday-Friday, 8:00 A.M.- 4:30 P.M.), there must be a minimum of 10 kids in attendance and arrival should be no later than 4:30 P.M.

EDIWILD “Educators In The Wild” Teachers’ Workshop

The Wapsi River Center organizes and conducts an annual summer teachers’ workshop in June. The four-day event provides educators with first hand experiences in outdoor education. Natural Resources personnel and organizations help to make *Ediwild* a cooperative effort, providing the best educational opportunities possible. Graduate and Staff Development Credit is available through AEA9.

The W.R.E.N. (Wapsi River Environmental News)

The Wapsi River Center offers a full schedule of public programs that are advertised through the local media and *The W.R.E.N.* *The W.R.E.N.* is the quarterly newsletter of the Scott County Conservation Board and is published by the Center. As stewards of our natural resources, the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center invites you to join them along a greener path. In an effort to conserve our resources, *The W.R.E.N.* is now being offered electronically. Please visit our website at www.scottcountyiowa.com/conservation/wapsi.php to download a copy. If you do not have access to a computer or the Internet, a copy can be found at libraries and museums in the Scott County area, or you may request a newsletter by sending your mailing information to the Center ~ 31555 52nd Ave. ~ Dixon, IA 52745.



RULES AND REGULATIONS

- Wapsi River Environmental Education Center Hours 6:00 A.M.- 10:30 P.M. This area is closed during the hours 10:30 P.M.- 6:00 A.M. No visitors allowed after 10:30 P.M. Quiet hours are 10:00 P.M.- 7:00 A.M.
- The speed limit is 15 miles per hour. To preserve the natural beauty, only designated roadways are to be used. Parking facilities are provided.
- The peddling, hawking, soliciting or advertising of a commercial enterprise is strictly prohibited.
- Only approved signs are permitted.
- Unruly demonstrations, disturbing the peace, intoxication and unseemly conduct will not be tolerated.
- Hunting and trapping are prohibited, and firearms, air rifles, and bows and arrows are not permitted.
- Explosives and fireworks are prohibited.
- Kegs are allowed in picnic areas with permit only.
- Group picnics are required to register and provide a clean-up deposit.
- Ground fires and cooking fires must be contained within a fire ring or grill. Fires must be extinguished before leaving. Collection of firewood is not permitted from forested areas; firewood will be provided.
- Containers are provided for the disposal of refuse in order to keep all areas clean. **DO NOT LITTER.** Do not dump wastewater on ground.
- Pets must be leashed; never hitch or tie to a tree or shrub.
- Do not trespass on adjoining farm property.
- Do not remove, destroy, injure, or deface any animal, tree, shrub, plant, flower or fruit, including mushrooms; or disturb or injure any structure or natural attraction.
- Hikers and cross-country skiers must stay on trails.
- **NO PUBLIC CAMPING IS ALLOWED EXCEPT FOR YOUTH GROUPS AND AUTHORIZED SPECIAL EVENTS.**
- **ALL FEDERAL AND STATE LAWS APPLY TO THE WAPSI RIVER CENTER.**
- **WARNING:** Violation of any Wapsi River Environmental Education Center rule, state or federal law, may result in revocation of park privileges, a fine, imprisonment or a combination of punishments.

Take nothing but pictures; leave nothing but footprints!



Programs available at the Wapsi River Center

General Programming:

Eagle View Eco Center

- Birds of Prey
- Reptiles and Amphibians
- Center Tour
- Eagle View Eco Center Scavenger Hunt
- Threatened and Endangered Species
- Insects 101
- IA Furbearers
- Confiscated Materials
- Ecosystems
- Deadly Waters (water pollution)
- To Dam or Not To Dam
- Wild about the Weather
- Rocks & Minerals/Soils

Hikes

- Plants and the Pioneers
- Wild Edibles
- Wildflowers (spring)
- Prairie
- Bird
- Fern (fall)
- Animal Track I.D.
- Scavenger (alphabet and bingo)
- Tree I.D. (introduction to dichotomous keys)
- Sensory Trail
- Fungi (fall)
- Unnatural

Winter Activities

- Animal Adaptations in Winter
- Snowshoeing
- Cross-country Skiing
- Winter Tree I.D.

Environmental Games

- Bat and Moth
- Insect Relay Race
- Migration Game
- Catch & Release (fishing game)
- Animal Charades/Parts
- Habitat Rummy
- Noah's Ark
- Owl & Crow
- Webbing
- Meet a Tree

- Blind Trust Walk
- What Animal am I?
- Fox & Quail
- Nature Detectives
- Sensory Activities
- Nature Cycles

Special Program Options:

The Osprey Aquatic Lab

- Pond Study
- Stream Table Analysis
- Water Quality (water testing & stream flow measurements)
- Microscopic Mysteries
- River Fauna I.D.

Monsignor Menke Observatory

- Observatory Tour (4th grade and higher)
- The Basics of Astronomy

Team Building

- Teams Course
- Communication Stations
- Nature Olympics
- Teaming up with Nature
- Orienteering
 - Nature Detectives
 - Oviparous Activity

Archery/atlatl

Canoe/kayak

Fishing

Make & Take Activities

- Kites
- Snowflakes
- Terrariums
- Bird Feeders
- Dream Catchers
- Bug Cages
- Rockets

Off-Site Programming (groups will travel to locations)

West Lake & Scott County Parks

- canoe, kayak, fishing, hiking

Buena Vista

- Canoeing 101

Program Requests:

If you have other programming ideas or suggestions, please feel free to let us know!