

Spring 2026

Vermilion Conservationist

Forest Glen Kennekuk Lake Vermilion Heron Kickapoo Rail Trail



Vermilion County
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Recreation · Education · Conservation

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Celebrating our 60th Birthday with a new logo

The VCCD is commemorating six decades with a new logo design! The logo, at left, was created by WhiteSmith Marketing Group, Inc., from Vermilion County.

Representing recreation, education, and conservation opportunities across our sun-filled prairie skies, flowing rivers, and forest diversity, this logo was selected from over 60 submissions.

On April 7, 1966, a petition was filed by a citizen advisory committee at the Vermilion County Circuit Court to form the Vermilion County Conservation District. The referendum was held on June 14, 1966 and was approved by the citizens of Vermilion County by a vote with an almost two to one margin (9,399 yes, 4,856 no).

The Illinois Conservation District Act of 1963 made it possible for a county or group of adjacent counties to form an organization to provide for open space, preservation, and outdoor recreation needs.

The Vermilion County Conservation District is proud to be the steward of over 6000 acres across our five properties.



Vermilion Conservationist

This newsletter is a publication of the Vermilion County Conservation District. It covers news, programs, and natural history information of interest relating to Vermilion County. It is free upon request from:

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The Vermilion County Conservation District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, or handicap in admission to or treatment or employment with the Illinois Human Rights Act, the Illinois Constitution, Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended, and the US Constitution.

Director's Dateline

Jamie Pasquale

Our staff typically begins tapping trees at the end of January for maple syrup production. However, this year temperatures remained below freezing into mid-February, shortening the production season. The staff usually place 500 spiles and buckets on sugar maple trees throughout Forest Glen Preserve. Historically, 1,200 to 6,000 gallons of sap is collected resulting in 30 to 150 gallons of syrup. The District will once again hold the Maple Syrup Fest on March 15, from 10am to 2pm, at Forest Glen Gannett Education Center & Sugar Bush.

Construction of the Kickapoo Rail Trail is expected to resume this year. The primary focus will be continuing the trail west from Oakwood to Fithian. Dependent upon funding, construction from Fithian to the Vermilion/Champaign county line will take place in 2027.

The Balloons Over Vermilion event will be held at Kennekuk County Park on June 5-6. The festival is celebrating 10 years in 2026 and brings energy, joy, and a sense of pride to Vermilion County. Event updates can be found at <https://www.balloonsoververmilion.com/>.

Over the winter, the district added solar energy generating panel systems at Forest Glen. The Maintenance Facility and the Gannett Education Center system are now online and producing energy for the sites. In addition to the two Forest Glen sites, the district has solar panel systems at Kennekuk's Education Center, Maintenance Facility, Administration Building, and Laury Barn.

With funding from the Vermilion County Conservation Foundation, the staff began construction of a new playground located at Kennekuk's Horseshoe Pond. Some of the equipment has been installed, including a sidewalk from the parking lot to the playground. The new playground is expected to be completed in June. Equipment will include swings, slides, and play station. Thank you to the Vermilion County Conservation Foundation for their support of VCCD programs, events, and facilities.

Maple Syrup Fest

March 15, 2026



The annual Maple Syrup Fest will be held on Sunday, March 15, 2026, at Forest Glen Preserve from 10am - 2pm.

Watch the sap collected from Forest Glen sugar maple trees turn into syrup at the Sugar Bush. Test your skills as you tap a metal spile into a tree trunk, shown below. Learn the history and folklore of maple syrup on guided hikes along Willow Creek Trail that will begin every 30 minutes until 1pm.

Tour the Pioneer Homestead Cabin for a step back in history. Visit the Nature Center for a kid's craft activity.

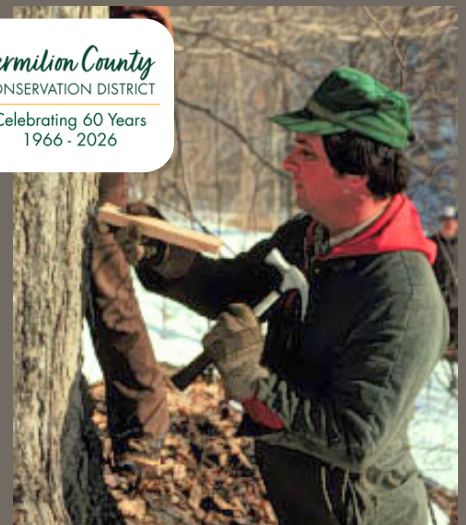
Enjoy a taste of Forest Glen maple syrup with a French Toast Stick and Sausage Basket for \$6/basket at the Gannett Education Center. Please note there will be limited seating for eating at the Gannett Education Center.



If available, the Forest Glen Maple Syrup will be for sale as well. All activities are free with the exception of the French Toast and Sausage basket (\$6), additional 2oz cups of syrup (\$1), and Forest Glen Maple Syrup Pints (\$15) or Quarts (\$30).

Carry-out containers for the French Toast and Sausage will also be available this year.

All activities will run concurrently during the event time with the last guided hike leaving at 1pm.



The VCCD held maple syrup camps in the early 1980's at Forest Glen to educate the public on the production process. The Sugar Bush building was constructed in 1986 to house the evaporator.



NATURALIST'S NOTES

SPRING TREES IN BLOOM

Brenna Karcher, Environmental Educator

Some of my favorite signs of spring are the buds and blooms on the trees. When I was a kid, cherry blossoms were all the rage, and many millennial girls will never forget the grip that Cherry Blossom Bath and Body Works sprays had on our hearts.

As I have grown, my appreciation of things closer to home has grown. Now I look to the Redbuds, Dogwoods and Tulip Trees. These natives are not only showy, but they also support native invertebrate biodiversity. Their early bloom time provides nectar for early flying insect populations.

Redbud's pink flowers, below, show up in the understory of our deciduous forests around April. While I hear comments about how common they are, and how hard it can be to prevent them from sprouting where you don't want them, I think their ability to treat any corner of a yard as an opportunity is a little inspiring. They also act as a host plant for 19 different species of caterpillars.



Flowering Dogwoods, above, have gorgeous white blooms with greenish-yellow centers. They brighten woodland edges from March through May and contrast with the pinks from redbuds. A dogwood can host up to 115 caterpillar species.



Tulip Tree flowers, above, are my favorite to inspect closely. They grow upward facing, shaped like a tulip, all the way up in the canopy. Their colors range from vibrant green to yellow, and striking orange, depending on the age of the flower. Inside wide, curved petals, their sepals stand tall and bright yellow. Prime bloom time for a tulip poplar is later in the year, around May and June. The tree can host the same number of caterpillars as a redbud: 19.

Flower gardens and spring ephemerals on the ground get lots of love, but don't forget to look up to enjoy spring blooms all the way to the forest canopy. If you have a need to plant a tree in your yard or woodlands, consider one of these to provide a touch of spring color.

PANORAMA OF LIFE

Racheal Anderson, Environmental Educator



Well, it's about time I introduce myself! My name is Racheal Anderson, my friends and program patrons have dubbed me Ranger Racheal. While "ranger" is not officially in my job title at the conservation district, I do wear many awesome hats, strive to uphold ranger principles, and see myself as a role model as well as ambassador for these parks I have grown up in and love so dearly. It is an absolute honor to be working here alongside such knowledgeable and wonderful stewards for our wild world.

When people on guided hikes ask me how I started working at the VCCD, I always begin with "I graduated in computer programming and graphic design" that tends to throw them off. "I loved it so much, I quit," I say sarcastically. The truth is when I went in for the seasonal environmental educator interview in August of 2022 I was desperately in need of a change to my career path.

While I had previously considered becoming a teacher, I had no idea how quickly my favored classroom setting would become the wilds of Forest Glen. I fondly recalled memories of my own experience at Outdoor School, field trips, getting to touch furs and bones. While I have done many things with my skills after leaving the world of modifying software (everything from screen-printing to theater prop creation to helping design escape rooms).

I could not shake the feeling that there was more in store for me than being stuck in windowless work spaces with classes on beekeeping and biodiversity relegated to my spare time. The natural world was always home for my heart, my friends and I practically lived outside, riding bikes or horses, exploring endlessly, turning over rocks to find bugs or snakes and carrying around Eyewitness Encyclopedias on birds or dinosaurs. (Just in case, haha!)



Since joining the VCCD team I've gotten to participate in owl and bat studies with the U of I, RiverWatch studies, freshwater mussel surveys, assisted with invasive species removal and habitat restoration through the Land Conservation Foundation, attended IDNR workshops, and hosted library and school programs. Somewhere along the line, I also became vice president of Keep Vermilion County Beautiful, a nonprofit organization which hosts neighborhood litter cleanups and electronic recycling events (Join us!). From loving Outdoor School as a young student to now reconnecting with nature and getting to expand the hearts and minds of my own students, I am forever grateful - this job has been a dream come true.

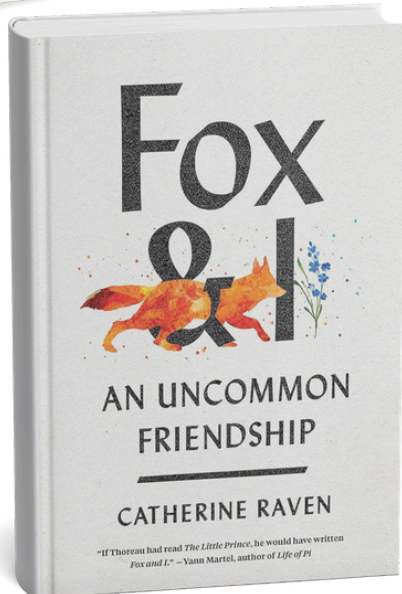


Vermilion County
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Celebrating 60 Years
1966 - 2026

Throughout 2026, we will be sharing historical moments and photos from our first sixty years as a Conservation District in our newsletters and on our Facebook page. Be sure to follow us to see all the celebration moments. Here are a few of our favorites!

- Originally, the VCCD was called the "Vermilion County Conservation and Recreation District." The elimination of "recreation" from our name began in May 1974.
- On May 28, 1982, Stephens Beach at Lake Mingo, Kennekuk County Park, opened with a beach party sponsored by WITY Radio (photo at right). The beach closed in September 2004.
- The first Revolutionary War Reenactment was held at Forest Glen Preserve on July 30-31, 1988.
- February 14, 1991 was the Silver Anniversary of the VCCD with a celebration at the Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen Preserve.



Fox and I: An Uncommon Friendship is an absolutely captivating memoir from front to back.

The author, Catherine Raven, a PhD in biology who built herself a tiny cottage in Montana, recounts her time spent in (mostly out) of civilization while leading field classes in nearby Yellowstone National Park. Her home is surrounded by nature, everything from voles to black widows, and she has difficulty imagining herself ever leaving it for long but it's where she fills out applications for another "real job" that might "help her fit into society."

Her scientific training has taught her not to anthropomorphize animals but her thoughts become increasingly preoccupied with a little runt fox that visits her cottage at the same time every day. She sits with him, reads to him, considers him a guest and a friend.

Catherine learned the single most important thing about loneliness: we are never alone when we are connected to the natural world. Friends, however, cannot save each other from the uncontained forces of nature.

Available for checkout at the Danville Public Library, audiobook available on both Libby and Hoopla apps.



Vermilion County Conservation District

2026 Calendar of Events

For the most up-to-date information, visit VCCD.org and follow us on Facebook.

****VCCD Summer Camps require pre-registration and fee, call 217-442-1691****

February

- 1 Moonlight Owl Prowl, Presentation and Night Hike, Kennekuk Education Center, 6-7:30pm, \$5/person
Pre-Registration Required at <https://MoonlightOwlProwl.eventbrite.com>
- 13 Vermilion County Conservation Foundation Board Meeting, Kennekuk Education Center, 9am, Public Invited
- 18 VCCD Board of Trustees Meeting, Kennekuk Education Center, 4:30pm, Public Invited
- 28 Stardew Valley IRL - Winter Minerals, Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen, 2-4pm, Free w/opt. \$5 geode
Pre-registration required at https://winter_rocks.eventbrite.com

March

- 9 Spring Turkey Draw for Kennekuk, Applications Due March 6, call 217-442-1691 for information
- 14 Middlefork Audubon Society Hummingbird Program with Vicki May, Kennekuk Education Center, 10am, Free
- 14 Sportsman's Banquet at the Dragonfly, Sleepy Creek, VCCF Fundraising Event, call 217-442-1691 for tickets
- 15 Maple Syrup Fest, Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen, 10am-2pm, Call 217-662-2142 for information
- 18 VCCD Board of Trustees Meeting, Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen, 4:30pm, Public Invited

April

- 10 Vermilion County Conservation Foundation Board Meeting, Kennekuk Education Center, 9am, Public Invited
- 15 VCCD Board of Trustees Meeting, Kennekuk Education Center, 4:30pm, Public Invited
- 18 IDNR ENTICE Education Workshop: Woodland Basics, Kennekuk Education Center, 9am-3pm, \$11/person
Pre-Registration Required at <https://enticeworkshops.com>
- 20-23 Outdoor School for Adults: Four-day Outdoor Exploration, 9am-3pm, \$100/person
Information and Registration at <https://OSforA2026.eventbrite.com>
- 25 Stardew Valley IRL - Spring Planting, Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen, 2-4pm, Free w/opt. \$10 plant pot
Pre-registration required at https://spring_planting.eventbrite.com

May

- 3 BHHA, Education Center at Kennekuk; Education Center, Pioneer Cabin at Forest Glen Open to Public, 1-4pm
- 16 Kids to Park Day Event, Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen, 1-3pm, Free
- 20 VCCD Board of Trustees Meeting, Kennekuk Education Center, 4:30pm, Public Invited
- 21 Sunset Tour at the Boardwalk, Heron County Park, 7:30-8:30pm, \$5/person
Pre-registration required at <https://SunsetatHeron.eventbrite.com>
- TBD Lake Vermilion Boat Ramp Concessions Open, call 217-442-1691 for date and hours of operation

June

- 5-6 Balloons Over Vermilion, Kennekuk County Park, visit <https://www.balloonsoververmilion.com> for information
- 6 Illini Bass Club & DARE Kid's Fishing Derby, Horseshoe Pond, Kennekuk, 9am, Free
- 7 Education Center at Kennekuk; Education Center, Pioneer Cabin at Forest Glen Open to Public, 1-4pm
- 9 Gone Fishin' Summer Camp, ages 10-13 yrs, Horseshoe Pond, Kennekuk, 9-11:30am**
- 10 Creek Stomping Summer Camp, ages 10-13 yrs, Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen, 9-11:30am**
- 11 Wonder Bugs Summer Camp, ages 6-9 yrs, Kennekuk Education Center, 9-11:30am**
- 12 Vermilion County Conservation Foundation Board Meeting, Kennekuk Education Center, 9am, Public Invited
- 16 Toddling Into Camp "Grow Something Wild," ages 3-5 yrs, Kennekuk Education Center, 10am or 2pm**
- 17 Toddling Into Camp "Grow Something Wild," ages 3-5 yrs, Kennekuk Education Center, 10am**
- 17 VCCD Board of Trustees Meeting, Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen, 4:30pm, Public Invited
- 18 Toddling Into Camp "Animal Hide-n-Seek," ages 3-5 yrs, Kennekuk Education Center, 10am or 2pm**
- 19 Toddling Into Camp "Animal Hide-n-Seek," ages 3-5 yrs, Kennekuk Education Center, 10am**
- 23 Young Explorers Camp, ages 6-9 yrs, Kennekuk Education Center, 9am-3pm**
- 24 Junior Explorers Camp, ages 10-13 yrs, Kennekuk Education Center, 9am-3pm**
- 25 Young Explorers Camp, ages 6-9 yrs, Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen, 9am-3pm**
- 27 IDNR ENTICE Education Workshop: Illinois Dragonflies, Kennekuk Education Center, 9am-3pm, \$11/person
Pre-registration required at <https://enticeworkshops.com>
- 27 Full Moon Hike, Pine Knoll Shelter, Forest Glen Preserve, 8:30-9:30pm, \$5/person
Pre-registration required at <https://moontower2026.eventbrite.com>



Vermilion County Conservation District

2026 Calendar of Events

For the most up-to-date information, visit VCCD.org and follow us on Facebook.

****VCCD Summer Camps require pre-registration and fee, call 217-442-1691****

July

- 5 BHHA, Education Center at Kennekuk; Education Center, Pioneer Cabin at Forest Glen Open to Public, 1-4pm
- 8 Trailblazers Camp, ages 14-18 yrs, Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen, 9am-3pm**
- 11 Spinners and Weavers Day, Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen, 10am-3pm, Public Invited, Free
- 14 Pioneer Kids Summer Camp, ages 6-9 yrs, Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen, 9-11:30am**
- 15 VCCD Board of Trustees Meeting, Kennekuk Education Center, 4:30pm, Public Invited
- 16 Pioneer Kids Summer Camp, ages 6-9 yrs, Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen, 9-11:30am**
- 18 Stardew Valley IRL - Summer Sun, Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen, 2-4pm, Free w/opt. activity fee
Pre-registration required at https://summer_sun.eventbrite.com
- 21,22 Paddling Lake Mingo Summer Camp, ages 10-13 yrs, Lake Mingo Boat Ramp, Kennekuk, 9-11am**

August

- 2 BHHA, Education Center at Kennekuk; Education Center, Pioneer Cabin at Forest Glen Open to Public, 1-4pm
- 8 VCCF Pack the Park Event, Bunker Hill Historic Area, Kennekuk, Visit <https://www.vccfoundation.info/> for info
- 14 Vermilion County Conservation Foundation Board Meeting, Kennekuk Education Center, 9am, Public Invited
- 19 VCCD Board of Trustees Meeting, Kennekuk Education Center, 4:30pm, Public Invited
- 29 Moonlight Glow Paddle on Lake Mingo, Kennekuk, ages 12 and up, Pre-registration required
\$15/person or BYO Boat \$5/person, Register at <https://Glowpaddle26.eventbrite.com>

September

- 6 BHHA, Education Center at Kennekuk; Education Center, Pioneer Cabin at Forest Glen Open to Public, 1-4pm
- 12 River to Rail Bike Ride for the KRT, Preregistration and Fee Required, SAG-supported Routes
Information and Registration opens on February 2 at <https://RtoR2026.eventbrite.com>
- 12 Natural Dye Day, Pioneer Homestead Cabin, Forest Glen, 10am-3pm, Public Invited, Free
- 14 Waterfowl Hunt Draw for Lake Vermilion and Mingo, Applications due Sept 11, call 217-442-1691 for info
- 16 VCCD Board of Trustees Meeting, Kennekuk Education Center, 4:30pm, Public Invited
- 20 Middlefork Audubon Society Live Raptor Program, White Oak Barn, Kennekuk, 2pm, Public Invited, Free
- 26-27 Revolutionary War Re-enactment, Pioneer Homestead Cabin, Forest Glen, 10am-4pm, Public Invited, Free
- 27 Pioneer Craft Day, Pioneer Homestead Cabin, Forest Glen, 10am-4pm, Public Invited, Free

October

- 4 BHHA, Education Center at Kennekuk; Education Center, Pioneer Cabin at Forest Glen Open to Public, 1-4pm
- 9 Vermilion County Conservation Foundation Meeting, Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen, 9am, Public Invited
- 11 Kickapoo Rail Trail Guided Bike Ride Tour, 106 S. Scott Street, Oakwood, \$5/person, 4:30-6pm
Pre-registration required at <https://KRTbike2026.eventbrite.com>
- 17 Stardew Valley IRL, Fall Foraging, Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen, 2-4pm, Free w/opt. \$5 produce bag
Pre-registration required at https://fall_foraging.eventbrite.com
- 21 VCCD Board of Trustees Meeting, Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen, 4:30pm, Public Invited

November

- 8 Thanksgiving at the Cabin, Pioneer Homestead Cabin, Forest Glen, 1-4pm, Public Invited, Free
- 18 VCCD Board of Trustees Meeting, Kennekuk Education Center, 4:30pm, Public Invited

December

- 4 Vermilion County Conservation Foundation Board Meeting, Kennekuk Education Center, 9am, Public Invited
- 6 BHHA Holiday Open House, Bunker Hill Historic Area, Kennekuk, 2-8pm, Public Invited, Free
- 6-31 BHHA Holiday Lights, Bunker Hill Historic Area, Kennekuk, 5-8pm, Public Invited, Free
- 16 VCCD Board of Trustees Meeting, Kennekuk Education Center, 4:30pm, Public Invited

January 2027

- 4 First Day Shelter Reservations Accepted for 2027, call 217-442-1691 for more information

ILLINOIS WRENS

SMALL BIRDS...BIG VOICES

Lara Danzl, Environmental Educator



I love memories from many years ago that feel as clear as yesterday. My mom had a white swing next to our house with bird houses on the up-right supports. As a child, I would sit on that swing and watch a small energetic bird pop in and out of the bird house. I would spend hours on that swing - sometimes with my mom, sometimes with a book - listening to the call of this small bird.

I now know this bird was the Northern House Wren, a not-so-colorful yet loud backyard neighbor (shown in the title photo). Measuring only 4 to 5 inches, they lack the distinctive white eye stripe found on their cousin, the Carolina Wren (below and right).

Both male and female house wrens sing. Males often sing long, bubbly calls with abrupt repetitive churrs up to eleven times per minute in the spring.

Carolina Wrens are slightly larger than a house wren with only the males signing a high decibel "tea-kettle, tea-kettle" call.



Both wren species will nest in tree cavities, bird houses, and unusual spots like flowerpots, boots, or mailboxes.

According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, house wren nests can become infested with mites and other parasites that feed on the wren nestlings. Perhaps to fight this problem, wrens often add spider egg sacs into the materials they build their nests from. In lab studies, once the spiders hatched, they helped the wrens by devouring the nest parasites.



Carolina and house wrens are quick and constant in their search for insects on tree trunks, branches, nooks, and crannies. They will use their curved bill to flip leaves and bark on the ground searching for bugs, caterpillars, crickets, and more.

Listen to the call of a **House Wren** [here](#) or scan the QR Code:



Listen to the call of a **Carolina Wren** [here](#) or scan the QR Code:



Photos used in this article are courtesy of Tom Marriage.



Friends of the District

Donation of Serviceberry Bush, Forest Glen Preserve
Georgetown Lions Club, Georgetown, IL

Donation of Teacher Education Guide Books
Kristin Camp, Collison, IL

Monetary Donation to Forest Glen Preserve
Sons of the American Legion, Georgetown, IL

Monetary Donation for new grill at Rotary Point Shelter, Kennekuk County Park
Danville Rotary Club, Danville, IL

In Memory of Kenneth J. Kakauskay
Daf Spezia, Westville, IL
Nathaniel Rakausky, Westville, IL

Monetary Donations to the VCCD
John Blue, Georgetown, IL
Donald G. & Susan Richter, Oakwood, IL
Rand A. & Glenda G. Campbell, Danville, IL

Support the



Your Vermilion County Conservation Foundation membership will help conserve and protect natural areas, support environmental education, and maintain public access with the VCCD.

Choose a level of giving:

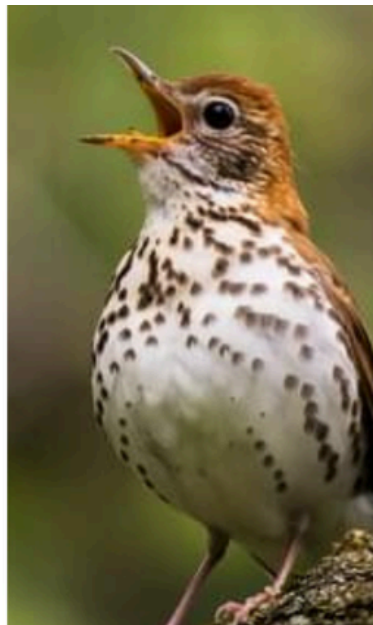
- LIFE \$1000 (payable in up to 4 installments)
- PATRON \$100
- SUPPORTING \$50
- REGULAR \$25

Mail your check or money order to:

VCCF, 22296 Henning Road, Danville, IL, 61834

Or Scan the QR Code to join through the website <https://www.vccfoundation.info/>






Vermilion County
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

OUTDOOR SCHOOL FOR ADULTS

APRIL 20-23, 2026
<https://OSforA2026.eventbrite.com>

The Vermilion County Conservation District is excited to host the Outdoor School for Adults Program on April 20-23, 2026. Reconnect with your inner child as we learn about our natural world while exploring VCCD parks with our education staff!

The first three days will run from 9am-3pm at Forest Glen Preserve, Kennekuk County Park, or Heron County Park. The program will conclude on Thursday with a catered dinner, evening hike, and fancy s'mores at Forest Glen Preserve from 3-9pm. Participants will need to provide transportation to site locations and bring a sack lunch.



Pre-registration is required at <https://OSforA2026.eventbrite.com>. Snacks, a naturalist pack, and one catered meal are included in the registration cost of \$100 for all four days. Early bird registration is only \$75 before February 20, 2026! Registration is limited to 30 people. Call 217-442-1691 for more information.

The four days will be modeled after our Outdoor School program that has been offered to 4th and 5th grade students since 1972. Program highlights will include special guest presenters, tours of Illinois Nature Preserves, forest "critter crawl" habitat exploration (shown above), macroinvertebrate pond dipping, spring ephemerals, and a hike to Illinois' only National Wild and Scenic River, the Middle Fork. Hikes and explorations will be up to four miles each day, split between morning and afternoon.




The first Outdoor School for Adults was held in the fall of 2019 with Todd M. Jones, a graduate research assistant from the University of Illinois leading a bird netting demonstration.



UPCOMING EVENTS

March - May 2026

For Up-to-Date Information, Visit VCCD.org

Middlefork Audubon Society Hummingbird Program

March 14, 10am, Kennekuk Education Center

Join local members of the Audubon Society as hummingbird expert Vicki May shares her tips and tricks to invite these beautiful birds to your backyard.

Free, No registration Required

VCCF Sportsmans Banquet

March 14, Dragonfly Center, Sleepy Creek Vineyards

This annual fundraising event supports VCCD programs, events, and construction improvements.

Call 217-442-1691 for ticket information

Maple Syrup Fest

March 15, 10am-2pm, Forest Glen Preserve

Read all about this event on page 3.

No pre-registration needed

VCCD Board of Trustees Meeting

March 18, 4:30pm, Forest Glen Preserve
Public Invited

Vermilion County Conservation Foundation Meeting

April 10, 9am, Kennekuk Education Center
Public Invited

VCCD Board of Trustees Meeting

April 15, 4:30pm, Kennekuk Education Center
Public Invited

IDNR ENTICE Workshop: Woodland Basics

April 18, 9am-3pm, Kennekuk Education Center

What do oak trees, squirrels, blue bells, fireflies, and morels have in common? Join us as we take a deep dive into the ecology of Illinois woodland habitats.

Pre-registration of \$11 required at
<https://enticeworkshops.com/>

Outdoor School for Adults

April 20-23, Various VCCD parks

Read all about this program on page 11.

Pre-registration required at
<https://OSforA2026.eventbrite.com>

Stardew Valley IRL - Spring Planting

April 25, 2-4pm, Pioneer Cabin, Forest Glen

Through this Stardew Valley inspired program, learn what plants are great in backyard gardens for food and what plants are fun for color and wildlife. Dig in the dirt at the cabin garden planting herbs.

Pre-Registration required at
https://spring_planting.eventbrite.com
Free with optional \$10 plant pot

BHHA, Ed Center at Kennekuk, Ed Center and Pioneer Cabin at Forest Glen Open to Public

May 3, 1-4pm

Free, No Registration Required

Kids to Park Day Event

May 16, 1-3pm, Gannett Ed Center, Forest Glen

Enjoy crafts, nature, and woodland hikes! Guided hikes led by naturalists will start at 1:15 and 2:15.

Free, No Registration Required

VCCD Board of Trustees Meeting

May 20, 4:30pm, Kennekuk Education Center
Public Invited

Sunset Tour at the Boardwalk

May 21, 7:30-8:30pm, Heron County Park

Join a VCCD naturalist as we explore the sights and sounds of the wetlands as the day comes to a close.

Pre-registration of \$5 required at
<https://SunsetatHeron.eventbrite.com>

2026 SUMMER CAMPS

VCCD Summer Camps offer outdoor fun for children 3 to 18 years old. With almost 5,000 acres between Kennekuk County Park and Forest Glen Preserve, children will gain appreciation and knowledge of wildlife and the great outdoors. Guided by experienced camp counselors, the activities will help children explore their natural world through hands-on discoveries, hiking excursions, and art.



Camps for Children 3-5 years old

3-5 years old as of June 1, 2026

\$5.00/child/session, 1.25 hours

Kennekuk Education Center, Kennekuk County Park

Introduce young children to the natural world by exploring through stories, activities, crafts, and more *with a parent or guardian*. Each class is organized around a theme and emphasizes active learning through sensory experiences, and movement activities. Toddlers may sign up for one camp or both.

Grow Something Wild

June 16 at 10:00am or 2:00pm

June 17 at 10:00am

Learn how plants grow! Children will take home their own planted seed to watch grow.

Animal Hide-n-Seek

June 18 at 10:00am or 2:00pm

June 19 at 10:00am

Discover all the fascinating ways animals hide in nature.



Camps for Children 6-9 years old

6-9 years old as of June 1, 2026

Wonder Bugs

\$20/child June 11 at 9:00am - 11:30am

Kennekuk Education Center, Kennekuk County Park

Explore the forest through books, activities, and a "Critter Crawl" activity. From rotting logs to tall trees, come out and discover how amazing forests can be!

Young Explorers

\$35/child

June 23 at 9:00am - 3:00pm at the Kennekuk Education Center, Kennekuk County Park

June 25 at 9:00am - 3:00pm at the Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen Preserve

During this fun-filled classic summer camp, kids will participate in a nature hike, roast a hot dog for lunch, discover wildlife, and create an arts and craft project.

Pioneer Kids

\$20/child July 14 or July 16 at 9:00am - 11:30am

Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen Preserve

What was it like to be a kid in the 1850's? Join us for Pioneer Kids Camp to find out! Campers will hike to the Pioneer Homestead, make a jump rope, and cook a sweet treat on the hearth to enjoy.



Camps for Children 10-13 years old

Gone Fishin'

\$20/child June 9 at 9:00am - 11:30am

Horseshoe Pond, Kennekuk County Park

Practice fishing from start to finish: bait your hook and care for your fish after the catch. Learn to identify common Illinois fish. Campers will see a live ethical demonstration on how to clean, cut, and prepare fish after catching. All fishing equipment will be provided.

Creek Stomping Ecology Camp

\$20/child June 10 at 9:00am - 11:30am

Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen Preserve

Follow our Naturalists on an adventure in Willow Creek while searching for aquatic life and observing animal tracks along the way. Participants must wear closed-toed shoes and clothes that can get wet and muddy. Campers will get wet!

Junior Explorers

\$35/child June 24 at 9:00am - 3:00pm

Kennekuk Education Center, Kennekuk County Park

Junior Explorers will be able to enjoy a classic summer camp program, similar to our Young Explorers camp, but with nature adventure activities geared more to their age range. Explorers will take a hike, roast a hot dog for lunch, discover wildlife, and create a unique art and craft project.

Paddling Around Lake Mingo

\$20/child July 21 or July 22 at 9:00am - 11:00am

Lake Mingo Boat Ramp, Kennekuk County Park

Learn about the diversity of fish, birds, mammals, and more that call Lake Mingo home with District Naturalists. Kayaking basics will be covered. All participants are required to wear a provided life jacket.



Camp for Teens 14-18 years old

14-18 years old as of June 1, 2026

NEW

Trailblazers

\$35/child July 8 at 9:00am - 3:00pm

Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen Preserve

Teens will explore an on-and-off trail hike, try their hand at flint and steel fire-starting, and trek through the creek on a creek-walk. Trailblazers will get wet, muddy, and cook their lunch over an open fire.



Frequently Asked Questions

• **How do I register?**

Mail or drop off the registration form found on our website www.vccd.org, or at the Kennekuk and Forest Glen offices. *All fees are due at the time of registration.* Camp placement is not confirmed until fees have been paid.

• **How will I know my child is registered for the camp?**

Registration confirmations will be sent to the email provided on the form. Please legibly print your email and check spam/junk folders if you do not receive a confirmation.

• **Can an adult or guardian stay with child during the camp?**

NO adults, parents, or guardians are allowed to stay during camp with the exception of the 3-5 year old camps. The VCCD offers different program opportunities for families; *Summer Camp programs are strictly for children.*

• **Is the VCCD flexible with children attending camps outside their age range?**

It depends on the camp and age of child. Contact Lara at ldanzl@vccd.org, 217-442-1691 to discuss.

Vermilion County Conservation District

2026 SUMMER CAMP REGISTRATION

Complete form below and return with fee to:
Vermilion County Conservation District, Attention: Summer Camp Registration
22296 Henning Road, Danville, IL, 61834

Child's Name _____

Address, City, Zip _____

Age as of June 1, 2026 _____

Parent/Guardian Name _____

Phone Number _____ Alternate Number _____

Email for Confirmation _____

Special Information we should know, medications, allergies, etc. _____

- If my child should be injured while attending camp, I will be notified. If I cannot be reached, I authorize VCCD staff to act on my behalf to secure necessary medical treatment for the above child. I understand that payment of any medical expenses is my responsibility.

Parent/Guardian Signature Required

Date

The VCCD takes videos or photographs of people at VCCD programs and events for promotions and marketing. They are used at the VCCD's discretion and become its sole property. If a registered participant wishes to be excluded from this, they may do so in writing to the VCCD or by simply stepping away from the camera.

Please check appropriate camp date, time, and/or location. All camp fees are non-refundable. Don't forget to include your registration fee with form.

Checks need to be made out to VCCD. Questions? Call 217-442-1691

Gone Fishin', \$20

June 9, Kennekuk

Creek Stomping, \$20

June 10, Forest Glen

Wonder Bugs, \$20

June 11, Kennekuk

Grow Something, \$5

June 16, 10am, Kennekuk

June 16, 2pm, Kennekuk

June 17, 10am, Kennekuk

Animal Hide-n-Seek, \$5

June 18, 10am, Kennekuk

June 18, 2pm, Kennekuk

June 19, 10am, Kennekuk

Young Explorers, \$35

June 23, Kennekuk

June 25, Forest Glen

Pioneer Kids, \$20

July 14, Forest Glen

July 16, Forest Glen

Paddling Lake Mingo, \$20

July 21, Kennekuk

July 22, Kennekuk

Junior Explorers, \$35

June 24, Kennekuk

Trailblazers, \$35

July 8, Forest Glen

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Vermilion County Conservation District
22296 Henning Road
Danville, IL 61834

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Watch for

Spring Bird Migration

Over 300 million birds travel through Illinois from March to June, peaking in mid-May.

Baltimore Oriole photo by Tom Marriage