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Illinois  
Master  
Naturalist

**2024**

# Illinois Master Naturalist State Conference

September 26-27  
Macomb, IL

**ILLINOIS  
EXTENSION**



## The Land Between the Rivers

Sitting between two mighty rivers, the Illinois and Mississippi, west-central Illinois is a landscape shaped by water and home to wetlands, prairies, and woodlands.

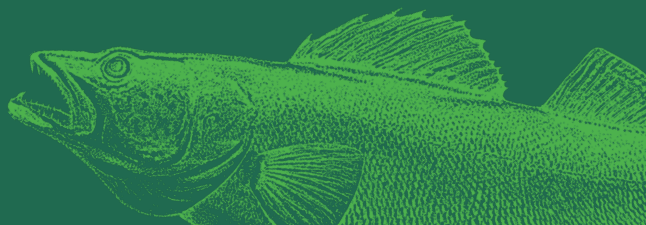
Explore the land between the rivers this September at the 2024 Illinois Master Naturalist Conference! This annual gathering brings Master Naturalist volunteers and coordinators together to learn and grow their skills as advocates, teachers, and environmental stewards.

On the first day, hit the road for the field trip of your choice to conservation sites across Western Illinois on the journey to Macomb. That evening, get your campfire songs ready for a bonfire, food, insect night lighting, and a bat walk at Lake View Nature Center.

Grow your knowledge about conservation and ecology with a day of sessions with environmental experts from across the Midwest at the Spoon River Outreach Center in Macomb. World-renowned oak tree expert Guy Sternberg will start the day off with the keynote address on native trees in a changing climate.

This year's conference is hosted by the Illinois Extension staff and Master Naturalists of Henderson, Knox, McDonough, and Warren counties. Thank you to our partners: Western Illinois University, Prairie Land Conservancy, Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, and Macomb Park District.

We welcome you to explore the wonders of Western Illinois and hope you leave feeling inspired to take on new projects across the state that support our natural world.





## Registration

The cost to attend is \$45. There are additional fees for some tours. T-shirts are available to preorder.

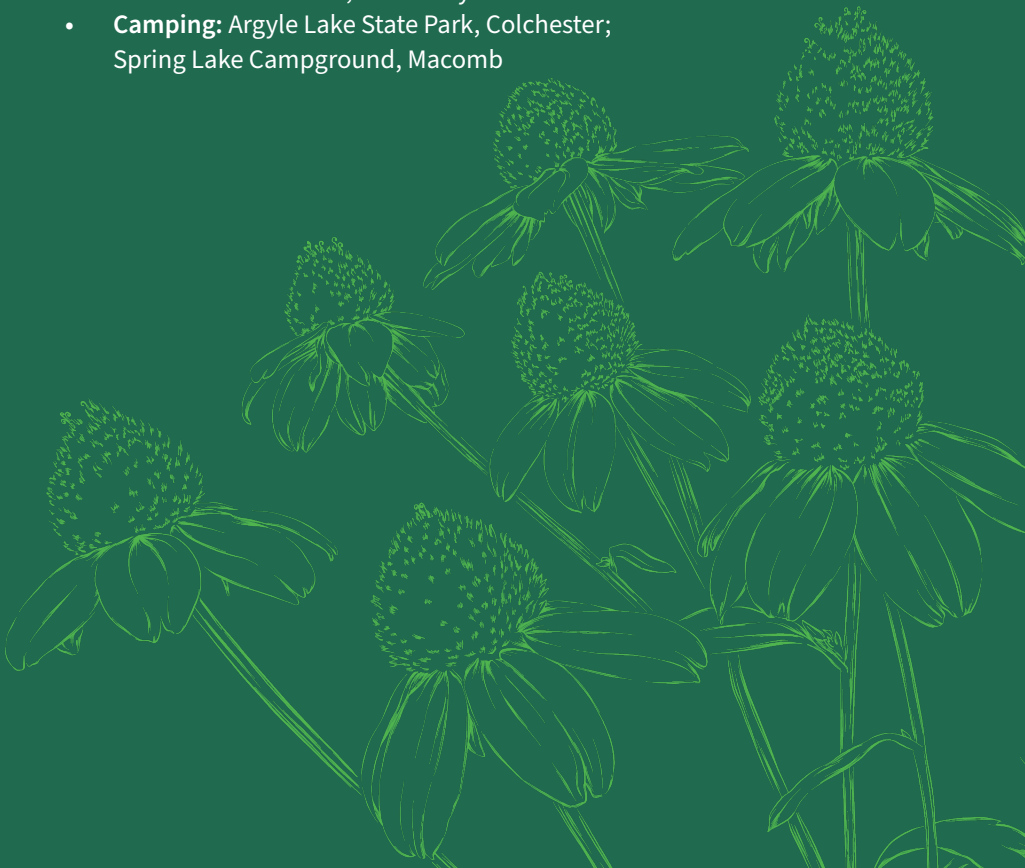
Tours and sessions are open to Illinois Extension staff and Master Naturalists. The evening activity is open to other guests.

Sign up by September 15 at

[go.illinois.edu/2024IllinoisMasterNaturalistConference](https://go.illinois.edu/2024IllinoisMasterNaturalistConference)

## Lodging Options

- **Hotels in Macomb:** Hampton Inn of Macomb, Best Western Macomb Inn, University Union Hotel
- **Camping:** Argyle Lake State Park, Colchester; Spring Lake Campground, Macomb







## Keynote Speaker: Guy Sternberg

Guy Sternberg is the co-founder of Starhill Forest Arboretum, which has developed the most comprehensive research collection of oaks in the US, with approximately 250 taxa and six globally endangered species. He is a founding member of the Illinois Native Plant Society, the founding president of the International Oak Society, and an active member of many other conservation and environmental organizations.

He serves as adjunct faculty in Biology at Illinois College and adjunct research associate in Botany at the Illinois State Museum. He is an arborist, licensed landscape architect, and a tree consultant for many communities and governmental agencies, including Oak Ridge Cemetery, home of President Lincoln's Tomb and Illinois' National Living Memorial site.





SEPTEMBER 26

## Field Trips, Tours, and Activities

### **Illinois River Driving Tour**

9:45 AM | [Dickson Mounds Museum and Mason State Tree Nursery](#)

Explore the rich natural resources of the Illinois River Valley from Emiquon to the Mason State Tree Nursery on a driving tour. Stop for lunch at the Riverfront Park in Havana and hear from scientists who are researching and working in the local aquatic ecosystems. Bring a packed lunch.

### **Mississippi River Boat, Drive, and Hike Tour**

10 AM | [WIU Kibbe Life Science Station and Stoney Hills Nature Preserve](#)

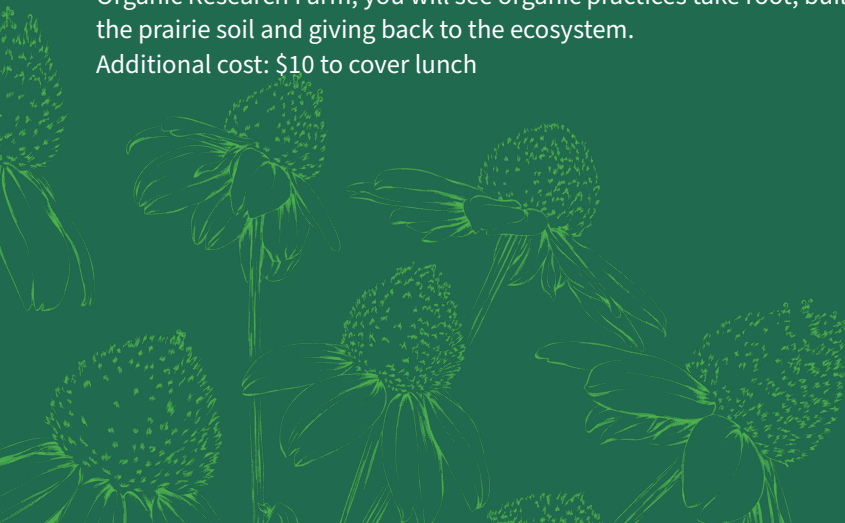
West-central Illinois has three natural divisions — the western Forest-Prairie division, the Upper Mississippi and Illinois River bottomlands, and the middle Mississippi border division. During this tour, explore all three! Experience the mighty, some say muddy, Mississippi River by boat, drive along the bluffs of the river, and take a guided hike through the adjacent forests and prairies. Staff from the Kibbe Life Science Station at Western Illinois University and Illinois Department of Natural Resources lead this tour. Bring a packed lunch; a refrigerator is available.

### **Sustainable and Regenerative Agriculture Farm Tour**

10 AM | [Fowler Family Farm and Allison Organic Research Farm](#)

Nearly all of Illinois' prairie has been converted to farmland. With the change in land use to agriculture, where does habitat fit? Tour two innovative farms that have incorporated habitat and regenerative practices within their production system. At Fowler Family Farm, experience beautiful prairie and woodland restoration within an agricultural production setting. At Allison Organic Research Farm, you will see organic practices take root, building upon the prairie soil and giving back to the ecosystem.

Additional cost: \$10 to cover lunch



## **Invasive Species and Habitat Restoration**

10 AM | [Wigwam Hollow Bird Sanctuary and Owsley Prairie](#)

Where do many restoration projects start? Often with family. This trip explores two sites that, through family connections, have created spectacular woodland, wetland, riverine, and prairie habitats. At Wigwam Hollow Bird Sanctuary, tour a century-old farmstead and learn how the current generation has dealt with invasive plants to create a wildlife sanctuary. At Owsley Prairie, experience a highly diverse habitat project that started with an inheritance and a soybean field. Now at nearly 20 years of restoration, the 38 acres boast fields of blooms all season that are home to an array of wildlife.

Additional costs: \$10 to cover lunch

## **Conservation Interpretation: Magic Through Making Art**

1-3 PM | [Lakeview Nature Area & Center](#)

Join us in the prairie for an afternoon filled with inspiring hands-on art activities that celebrate the interconnectivity of nature, art, and curiosity. We'll take inspiration from the Lakeview Nature Area, which includes 55+ acres of restored tallgrass prairie, a labyrinth, permanent StoryWalk®, community apiary, and meditative trails. Inside the Nature Center, we'll move through a series of projects that will enrich and expand our experiences and learning through nature. These projects will delight curious naturalists of all ages and can easily be adapted for future interpretive use.

Additional cost: \$5

## **Forest Management: Tree ID, Best Management Practices, and Invasive Species**

10 AM | [McCully Heritage Project and Lovett Forest](#)

Learn basic tree identification, forest health, management, and invasive species control on this walk through the woods. Explore the McCully Heritage Project and the Illinois Forestry Association's Lovett Forest with foresters Mary Grapperhaus and Chris Evans, forestry Extension research specialist, covering these topics along the way. A field lunch will be provided.

Additional cost: \$10 for lunch

## **A Night in Nature: Bats, Insects, and Bonfires**

5:30-8:30 PM | [Lake View Nature Center](#)

Enjoy an enchanting fall evening in nature! Get expert insights on bats with University of Illinois researcher and Extension wildlife specialist Joy O'Keefe. Experience an insect night lighting with Angella Moorehouse. Spend time around a cozy bonfire while savoring delicious food available for purchase.



SEPTEMBER 27

## Keynote Address and Breakout Sessions

9 AM-3 PM | Spoon River College Outreach Center  
2500 E Jackson, Macomb, IL 61455

## Keynote Address

### Native Trees in a Changing Climate

Science shows that the climate is becoming increasingly unstable. How will this affect our most treasured and permanent landscape plants – our trees? Why should we be concerned, and what should we do? Learn more about observed versus proxy data, clinal variation, Milankovich and ENSO climate cycling, clathrate guns, the infamous hockey stick, invasive exotic species and their problems, and the importance of provenance and diversity. Then, look more closely at some of our North American native trees that are most likely to adjust and survive and come away better prepared for the uncertain future of our environment.

Presenter: Guy Sternberg

## Breakout Sessions

### Believe in Miracles: Osage Orange, *Maclura pomifera*

The story of Osage-orange, from the Pleistocene to the future. Learn about the nearest thing we have to a miracle tree, with attributes that offer something for everyone. We will begin with its fossil history and continue through post-ice-age re-colonization, adaptation to anthropogenic vectoring, unique chemical and structural properties, genetic diversity, human history, cultivar selections, and its bright future in a world threatened by global climate destabilization. If your smartphone had only one tree app, this species should be the one.

Presenter: Guy Sternberg

### The Other Pollinators: Flies, Beetles, and Bugs

Bees and butterflies have long received the most attention as pollinators; however, there are many other types of insects that contribute to the transfer of pollen. For the past six years, Angella Moorehouse has been conducting photographic surveys of hundreds of flower-visiting insects in west-central Illinois. She will share her photos and describe some of the critical interactions between the lesser-known insects and native flowers.

Presenter: Angella Moorehouse





## **Communicating Climate Change**

While many people are interested in climate change, many are also apprehensive about discussing it with others. Duane Friend with University of Illinois Extension will provide resources that may be helpful in talking about climate change and doing so in a non-polarizing fashion.

**Presenter: Duane Friend, Illinois Master Naturalist Coordinator and Climate Specialist**

## **Master Naturalist Coordinator Retreat**

Join Peggy Anesi for this simple gathering to spend time with others of like mind. We will learn about life harmony, not balance, as we talk, share, and create together. Bring yourselves and your ability to simply be in the moments we have together. This session is for Extension staff only and will follow lunch at the McDonough County Extension Office.

**Presenter: Peggy Anesi**

## **Ecology and Identification of Common Woodland Ferns in Illinois**

Ferns are an integral part of Illinois ecosystems. While ferns can occur in many different habitats, this presentation focuses on ferns found in Illinois woodlands, including their ecology, life history, and how to identify some of the common woodland ferns.

**Presenter: Chris Evans**

## **Research and Monitoring on the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers**

Understanding long-term trends in large river ecology helps guide decisions in managing some of the continent's largest river systems. Get an overview of long-term fish, water quality, and macroinvertebrate monitoring on the Mississippi and Illinois rivers and how this data is used to determine trends and help make management decisions. It will also explore some of the targeted research at the Illinois River Biological Station to help guide the management and understanding of our river resources.

**Presenter: Jim Lamer**

## **The Return of Bald Eagles: History, Biology, and Winter Prevalence in the Tristate Area**

Why are there so many bald eagles now? Where did they go in the first place? Discover the history and biology of bald eagles and the reasons for their prevalence in the tri-state area of Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa in winter. Leave with a deeper understanding and tips for photographing eagles.

**Presenter: Joe Coelho, Quincy University**



## **The Prairie-Woodland Transition in Illinois: A Historical, Ecological, and Management Perspective**

The class will consist of a lecture and discussion of anthropogenic fire and its interaction with landscape features and large ungulates in shaping the pre-settlement prairie woodland mosaic in Western Illinois. We will also discuss the loss of these systems and the use of prescribed fire as one management tool in managing and restoring prairies, oak savannas, and woodland remnants.

**Presenter: Sean Jenkins**

## **Illinois Cultural History, Archeology, and Artifact Identification**

Join archaeologist Dave Nolan with the Illinois State Archeological Survey in exploring Illinois' cultural history through your own artifact collections. Bring one or a few artifacts, have them identified, and get more information. This is an opportunity to understand the artifacts you or your family have collected and how they relate to Illinois cultural history. Dave will also share information about the new publication from ISAS covering the cultural history of Illinois from its first people to the present.

**Presenter: Dave Nolan**

## **Finding Bats in Your Town**

This class will discuss findings from the Bats in Small Cities project carried out in 2023 and will present results from a deep dive into the ecology of urban bats in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois. Participants will learn how to conduct mobile or stationary acoustic surveys for bats in their town and the value of those data to local, regional, and national monitoring efforts.

**Presenter: Joy O'Keefe, Assistant Professor and  
Wildlife Extension Specialist, University of Illinois**





# Illinois Extension

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**College of Agricultural, Consumer & Environmental Sciences**

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