



# Illinois Extension Master Naturalist State Conference 2023

## September 21-22, 2023 Touch of Nature, Makanda

### Registration

[go.illinois.edu/2023MasterNaturalistConference](http://go.illinois.edu/2023MasterNaturalistConference)

Registration Fee: \$45 | T-Shirt Pre-Order: \$18

### Schedule

*Thursday, Sept. 21*

9AM - Registration and vendors open

10AM - Keynote

11AM - Breakout Session 1

12PM - Lunch and vendors

1PM - Breakout Session 2

2:45PM - Breakout Session 3

4:15PM - Wrap-Up

*Friday, Sept. 22*

9AM - Meet at field trip destination

9:30AM - Field trips begin

12PM - Dismissal

### Location

Touch of Nature Outdoor Education Center  
1206 Touch of Nature Rd, Makanda, IL 62958



Illinois  
Master  
Naturalist



### Keynote Speaker

*Chris Benda*

Chris Benda is a botanist and past president of the Illinois Native Plant Society (2015-2016). Currently, he works as a Researcher at Southern Illinois University, where he coordinates the Plants of Concern Southern Illinois Program and teaches The Flora of Southern Illinois. Besides working at SIU, he conducts botanical fieldwork around the world, teaches a variety of classes at The Morton Arboretum and leads nature tours for Camp Ondessonk. He is an accomplished photographer and author of several publications about natural areas in Illinois. He is also known as Illinois Botanizer.



**Illinois Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



## **Keynote Address**

*Wild Illinois: A Selection of Nature Encounters with Chris Benda, Illinois Botanizer*

In this presentation, Chris Benda will highlight his nature experiences in Illinois with beautiful photography. He has extensive knowledge of plants and animals throughout Illinois and will share stories and photos of the most exciting encounters of his career in Illinois and beyond in the past 20 years.

## **Breakout Session 1**

### **11AM-12PM**

*Southern Illinois Plant & Tree ID Hike with Nick Seaton, Ecologist, Shawnee National Forest Service*

Join Nick Seaton in this outdoor session to learn how to identify plants and tree species that are thriving at Touch of Nature.

*Basic Birding Hike with Vicki Lang, retired from Touch of Nature*

Enjoy a leisurely stroll on a paved path through a patch of woods and to the lake to look and listen for our avian friends. No experience is necessary and binoculars will be available on loan for those interested.

*Overview of Citizen Science in Wildlife Research and Monitoring with Dr. Brent Pease, Assistant Professor of Biodiversity Conservation, Southern Illinois University*

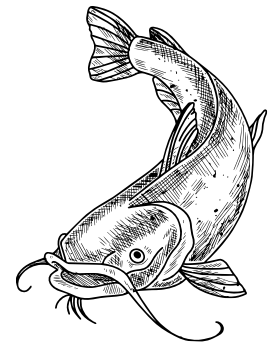
Discover the captivating world of citizen science in wildlife research and monitoring during this informative session. Led by a wildlife biologist and citizen science practitioner, explore ongoing projects in the region, learn about the equipment and software employed in wildlife citizen science, and visit an active project at Touch of Nature. Get hands-on experience by participating in a current project and uncover ways to engage in citizen science, making a meaningful impact on wildlife conservation.

*Southern Illinois in a Changing Climate: Observations and Expectations with Dr. Justin Schoof, Director, School of Earth Systems and Sustainability and Professor, Geography and Environmental Resources, Southern Illinois University*

The presenter will provide an overview of global and regional climate change including examples of historical and possible future changes here in Southern Illinois.

*Planting Clues: How Plants Solve Crimes with Dr. David Gibson, Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, Plant Biology, Southern Illinois University*

The presentation will cover the many ways that plants are involved in crimes. Plants can provide forensic evidence of crimes, and through poisonings and poaching be involved in crimes. "Plant Blindness" or the lack of recognition of plants hinders the use of plants in solving crimes highlighting the need for the training of more people of botanical skills.



## **Breakout Sessions 2 and 3**

**1PM-2:30PM and 2:45PM-4:15PM**

*Archaeology and Abolitionists: The Underground Railroad in Southern Illinois with Heather Carey, Heritage Program Manager and Tribal Liaison, Shawnee National Forest Service*

Archaeological investigations at the Pre-Civil War African American community of Miller Grove in the Shawnee National Forest of Southern Illinois have focused on uncovering the life histories of the free African Americans who lived there. The very location of Miller Grove, being situated only a few miles north of the Ohio River, suggests the community may have been planned as an Underground Railroad station. Free African American communities operated along the border states as part of this secret network and it is quite likely that Miller Grove residents also aided fugitive slaves. Participation in Underground Railroad activities by African Americans was very dangerous and written documentation would have jeopardized the community members. Historical research has led to a connection between educated white missionaries who were dedicated to the abolition of slavery and the community of Miller Grove. The Forest has recently undertaken archaeological investigations at the homesite of one of these missionaries to shed light on the larger story of the Underground Railroad in southern Illinois.

*Fisheries Management in Illinois with Luke Nelson, Fisheries Biologist, Illinois Department of Natural Resources*

Learn about the work being conducted by fisheries biologists, including sampling methods and gear. Participants will get the chance to go on a short boat ride to help electroshock fish, which will then be identified for the group. \*Waiver required.

*Interpreting/Facilitating with Purpose: Moving Beyond “Drag and Brag,” Steve Gariepy, Outreach Assistant, SIUC STEM Education and Research Center*

Join Steve Gariepy on the Rocky Ledges Educational Trail (designed and built to educate outdoor education facilitators) for an experience and lessons/discussions regarding making your interpretive/facilitative programs purposeful, connective, and relevant to your participants. With varied depths of training levels for volunteers from agency to agency, building a process and delivery for programs and activities is often left to the volunteer. Observe and consider framing strategies, “non-formal” education methods from varied related disciplines and more, demonstrated on the trail to move your programs from dragging and bragging, to engaging, connecting, and inspiring. Program will be facilitated on a trail with a moderate hiking rating. Elevation changes and regular trail conditions considering weather will be present.

*Trail Maintenance 101 with Alyssa Macuiba, Wilderness Technician and Volunteer Coordinator, Shawnee National Forest Service*

Trails are key in preserving open space and inspiring public interest in habitat and natural landscapes. They help us make sense of a world increasingly dominated by pavement and technology. Trails put us in touch with our natural surroundings, challenge our bodies, and allow us to practice traditional skills. Learn about the importance of trails, trail users, tools and their uses, and trail-building tips and techniques during this outdoor session.



## **Breakout Sessions 2 and 3**

### **1PM-2:30PM and 2:45PM-4:15PM**

*Nature is for Everyone: How to Promote Inclusion as a Master Naturalist Volunteer with Joy O'Keefe, Assistant Professor and Wildlife Extension Specialist in Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences and Ross Wantland, Director of Curriculum Development and Education, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, University of Illinois*

Join Dr. Joy O'Keefe and Ross Wantland for an interactive workshop on strategies to create open and welcoming naturalist activities. As part of the Diversify Master Naturalist initiative, the presenters will share some of the promising practices for making natural spaces more inclusive from across Illinois Extension, while also delving into some of the very real challenges. Participants will explore some of the historical and current barriers for involvement, and engage with practice scenarios to identify unique approaches that will work for them as Master Naturalist Volunteers.

*Introduction to Illustrated Nature Journaling with Kathy Belletire, Master Naturalist and Nature Artist*

Ever want to try adding some sketches to your written nature observations? What did you actually see and what questions pop into your mind spurred by deep looking? A simple drawing with a few touches of color pencil will bring your written observations into focus; the essence of that interesting bird, bug, butterfly — or plant, or that unusual rock formation or tree you saw while hiking will be there on your page to refer to long after an experience is past. This class needs no prior art skill, just enthusiasm and willingness to learn. Materials provided.

*MN Coordinator session - only offered during Breakout Session 3*

Master Naturalist coordinators are invited to share ideas, successes, and challenges with one another to receive feedback, advice, and tips for best supporting their volunteers.

## **Optional Friday Field Trips**

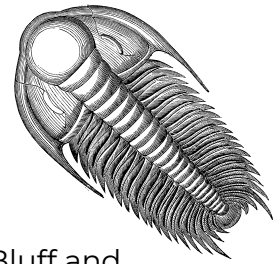
### **9:30AM-12PM**

*Guided Hike at Snake Road with John Palis, Biologist*

Learn about the site history, seasonal migration, and herpetofauna of La-Rue Pine Hills. Forest Road #345, locally known as Snake Road, is the only road in the country that is closed to vehicles twice a year in the spring and fall to protect the migrating reptiles and amphibians. Learn natural history tidbits about the creatures that call this beautiful place home as well as identification tips.

*Guided Hike at Pomona Natural Bridge with Alyssa Macuiba, Wilderness Technician and Volunteer Coordinator, Shawnee National Forest Service*

Come learn about the history of Pomona's natural bridge, local flora, fauna, and wildlife in the area. This natural geologic sandstone formation spans 90 feet across a ravine in a mature beech, oak, and hickory forest. This field trip will have some light service work including trash pick-up and light trail work to help enhance and protect our National Forest.



## **Optional Friday Field Trips, continued**

*Geology Field Trip at Millstone Bluff and Millstone Lake with Joe Devera, Senior Paleontologist, Illinois State Geological Survey*

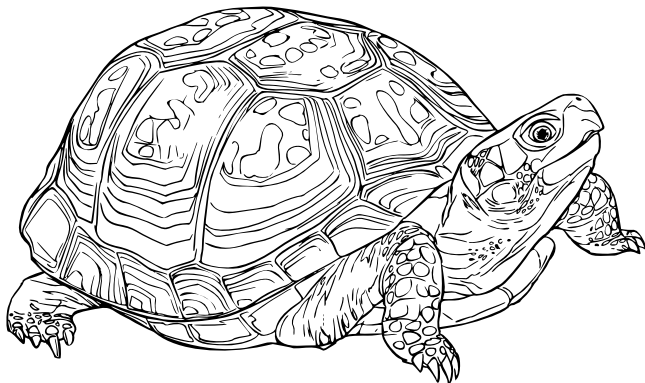
The field trip in northwestern Pope County, Illinois will include stops at Millstone Bluff and Millstone Lake. These locations cover a part of the geologic column that is at the mid-Carboniferous boundary. The boundary between the Mississippian limestones and shales and the Pennsylvanian Sandstones, the two sub-systems of the Carboniferous Period (359 to 299 million years ago). The boundary itself is around 323 million years ago.

*Tour of Sunnyside Acres, owned by Rob and Rhonda Rothrock*

Robert and Rhonda Rothrock invite you to their 40-acre property on Hickory Ridge Road, Pomona, IL. Their property is home to over 550 species of native forbs and grasses. 15 acres is a seasonally mowed field that has been managed as an open native prairie for about 20 years. The remaining acres are woodlands with three ponds and a seasonal pool. The Rothrocks collect native seed to sell on consignment to Prairie Moon Nursery in Minnesota. At this tour you will walk around the prairie and learn how Sunnyside came to be, prairie management techniques, and how to collect and process seed for distribution. Attendees will have the opportunity to collect seed. If time allows, seed cleaning equipment will be demonstrated.

*Connecting the Learner to the Landscape Canoe Trip at Lake Murphysboro State Park with Steve Gariepy, Outreach Assistant, SIUC STEM Education and Research Center*

Utilize Illinois Natural Divisions Education in the field and the classroom as a framework to connect learners of all ages to their landscapes. A sensible, progress-able paradigm that works with NGSS and other learning standards, utilizing aspects of interpretive, experiential, environmental, and outdoor education fundamentals with existing online resources and the state's natural areas and land management agencies. Facilitated at beautiful Lake Murphysboro State Park where the glacial till plain pinches the Shawnee Hills against the Mississippi River Bottomland Division.



University of Illinois, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Local Extension Councils Cooperating. University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment. If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate, please contact Erin Garrett at 618-524-2270. Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time to meet your needs. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the US Department of Agriculture by the Director, Cooperative Extension Service, and University of Illinois.