

Becoming an Outdoors Woman

Fall Workshop

Sept 12-14, 2025

Touch of Nature - Makanda, IL



Becoming an Outdoors-Woman in Illinois

Archery: Learn to Shoot

Channel your inner Katniss in this fun and beginner friendly archery session. You'll learn proper shooting form, how to handle a bow safely, and get plenty of time to practice on the range with guidance from experienced instructors. Learn the differences and how to use traditional style bows and more modern compound bows. No gear or experience needed. Whether you're interested in hunting or target shooting, by the end of this session, you'll be slinging arrows with confidence!

Bass Fishing

The course covers a short lab instruction followed by hands on fishing instruction. Students will learn basic knot tying, artificial bait choices and rigging, casting, plus proper fish handling and care. Students will learn how and where to use specific baits for a successful day of fishing. Students will leave the class with all basic knowledge and skills to land their own bass.

Birding

Southern Illinois offers a large variety of birds to enjoy. Learn how to identify different species of birds through site and sound using tools such as field guides. Birding is a wonderful outdoor activity for all ages and abilities. Includes a trail hike.

Butchering 101: From Field/Farm to Freezer

In this hands-on introductory course, you'll learn the foundational skills of butchering - everything from breaking down large cuts of meat into steaks to processing whole small-game animals into manageable portions. You will gain practical experience in: grinding and packaging meat for long-term storage; creating link sausage from ground meat; selecting and sharpening the right knives; practicing safe and efficient meat-cutting techniques

By the end of the course, you'll leave with a handful of recipes and, more importantly, the skills and confidence to butcher your own meat at home. Whether you're a hunter, homesteader, or simply interested in becoming more self-sufficient, this class is the perfect starting point.

Canoeing with an Interpretive Guide

Glide across the water and explore the natural world from a new perspective in this guided canoeing adventure. Led by an experienced interpretive guide, you'll learn basic paddling techniques while uncovering the hidden stories of the landscape around you—wildlife, plants, geology, and local history. Perfect for beginners and nature lovers alike, this peaceful paddle blends outdoor skill-building with a deeper connection to the environment. No prior canoeing experience needed—just curiosity and a sense of adventure!

Cordage Craft

Gain a deeper connection with the land through the ancient art of cordage making. In this hands-on experience, you'll learn to identify, harvest, and process fibers from native yucca plants growing along local trails, transforming them into strong, beautiful cord by hand. As you twist fibers, you will explore the deep-rooted relationship between people and plants—past and present. Slow, meditative, and deeply grounding, this program invites you to engage your hands, heart, and senses in a timeless craft tied to place. No experience needed—just curiosity and respect for the natural world.

Fall Foraging

Let Southern Illinois become your kitchen! In the fall, we have up to 30 different edible mushrooms to hunt for, delicious fruits, and other various plants to harvest. Sample wild edibles with sustainability in mind and learn their multiple uses during our hike which will end with some beautiful views. Please come to the class prepared to hike, with water, and in appropriate hiking attire.

Fly Fishing: Ready to Hook a New Hobby?

Grab your sense of adventure and join us for a laid-back, hands-on intro to fly fishing! Whether you've never held a rod or just want to try something new, this class is your perfect first cast. We'll cover all the essentials—how to cast like a pro, pick the perfect fly, and find the sneaky spots where fish like to hide. You'll practice your skills on both land and water, and even dive into the fascinating world of fish-approved bugs (yes, it's cooler than it sounds!).

No experience needed—just bring your curiosity, a little patience, and your love for the great outdoors. By the end, you'll be ready to hit the water with confidence and maybe even hook your first fish!

Fly Tying Basics

Join us for a hands-on introduction to the art of fly tying! In this beginner-friendly class, you'll learn how to tie one of the most effective and versatile flies out there—the Woolly Bugger. We'll walk you through the essential tools, materials, and techniques step by step, so no prior experience is necessary. If time allows, we'll also tie colorful cork poppers, perfect for targeting bass and other topwater species. All tools and materials are provided. Come ready to create, learn, and take home your own hand-tied flies! These are works of art, even if you never catch a fish!

Frog Gigging

Dive into the time-honored tradition of frog gigging in this fun and informative beginner's class! You'll learn the essentials of locating, identifying, and safely harvesting frogs using a gig. Topics include gear selection, basic techniques, local regulations, and ethical practices. While frog gigging is not in season during this class, you'll gain all the knowledge and confidence you need to head out on your own when the time is right. Plus, enjoy a delicious sample of frog legs to get a true taste of the experience!

Girls with Power Tools

Power tools may look and sound intimidating, but with the proper training, these tools can really save you time and money around the house and yard. Learn the different parts of power tools, safety, and how to operate.

***Handguns**

This beginner-friendly class covers the basics of selecting the right handgun and developing essential shooting skills. Whether you have no prior experience or want to improve your accuracy and confidence, this course provides hands-on instruction in a safe, supportive environment. Firearms and ammunition are provided.

[*BOW's Firearms Safety class \(Friday night\) or Hunter Safety Education Course is a prerequisite for this session. Please coordinate with BOW Coordinator after you've registered.](#)

High Ropes Course

The high ropes course is three stories tall, with elements starting at 20 feet and reaching nearly 40 feet tall. It is a series of 11 obstacles that stretch between telephone poles securely anchored to the ground and home to a 30-foot-tall zip line that stretches over 100 yards. Participants are outfitted with all equipment necessary to safely participate – helmets and harnesses are provided. Trained facilitators guide groups through all elements and down the zip line while always maintaining safety standards.

Hiking Giant City

Enjoy a guided 2-mile hike through the stunning Trillium Trail at Giant City State Park. This rugged trail winds through Fern Rocks Nature Preserve, a 110-acre natural area known for its high-quality sandstone bluffs, rich botanical diversity, and exceptional bird habitats. Along the way, you'll learn about the park's fascinating history and unique geology. Perfect for nature lovers and outdoor enthusiasts alike! Please come to the class prepared with water, and in appropriate hiking attire.

Hunting in Illinois Overview & Wild Game Tasting

Curious about hunting and/or trapping but not sure where to start? This session will walk you through the who, what, where, and when of hunting in Illinois. Not sure what type of hunting you're interested in? We'll help match you to the type of hunting that best suits your interests, personality, and personal circumstances to find the best fit. We'll also dive into the why, exploring the role of hunting in conservation and food sourcing. To top it off, you'll get to sample a variety of delicious wild game dishes and learn creative ways to cook what you harvest! Join us for this fun session to learn about hunting, game species ecology, and so much more!

Kayak Basics: Intro to Paddling

Discover the fun of kayaking in this beginner-friendly class designed for all skill levels! Learn essential paddling techniques, safety skills, and basic water navigation in a supportive, hands-on environment. Perfect for those new to kayaking or looking to build confidence on the water. All equipment provided—just bring your sense of adventure! Class will be at Lake Murphysboro – a star-shaped 145 acre lake nestled within gently rolling wooded hills, sandy shores, and beautiful stands of oak-hickory forest. Please bring the following: Sun block, hat, water bottle, water shoes, extra set of clothes (just in case you decide to try some exits), towel, bug spray and sense of adventure!

Kayak Fishing: Cast, Paddle, Catch!

Ready to reel in some fun? This playful intro class combines the thrill of fishing with the adventure of kayaking! You'll learn the basics of paddling, setting up your gear, staying safe on the water, and hooking your first catch—all from the seat of a kayak. You'll cover choosing the right tackle, reading the water, and how to land a fish without tipping over (yes, it's possible!). No experience? No problem! We'll guide you every splash of the way. Just bring your sense of adventure—we'll handle the rest.

Knots & Lashing

Knot tying is a skill that all outdoors women need to know. Whether you want to be on Survivor or just make a trellis for your garden, we can help you out. Learn different knots, lashings, and how to use them to create practical items. This hands-on, fun class is perfect for anyone who like playing with sticks and string.

My Own Time

Maybe you and your crew want to explore some local adventures—wineries, ziplining, shopping, horseback riding—or maybe you're craving a little quiet, unplugged time to yourself. Maybe none of the current class options in a session quite fit your vibe. If any of that sounds like you, then *My Own Time* is the perfect pick. This option gives you the space to do whatever feels right. No schedule, no pressure—just time that's truly your own.

Native Landscaping

Transform your yard into a thriving, eco-friendly habitat using plants and trees native to your region. This course explores how native landscaping supports pollinators, conserves water, improves soil health, and reduces the need for chemicals. You will learn about invasive plants we are faced with and how to deal with them in your own landscape. You'll learn practical design and maintenance techniques while helping restore local ecosystems. Less watering, less mowing and more beauty!! No experience needed—just a passion for sustainable gardening! Plan for a walk around campus to learn how to identify the tree and plant species around you. If interested, learn how a city becomes a "tree city".

Nature Crafting

Spend your final session unwinding as you relax your body and let your imagination roam free in this nature-inspired crafting experience. Using natural and found materials, you'll create a one-of-a-kind project that reflects the beauty and creativity of the outdoors. There's no set formula and no pressure—just an open invitation to explore, experiment, and connect with the natural world in a creative way. No experience or special skills needed—just a love for nature and a playful spirit!

Orienteering

What happens when your GPS fails you while you're hiking, hunting, or just in an unfamiliar landscape. Learn how to find your way with a map and compass, just like the old timers. Includes practice on an orienteering course.

Outdoor Cooking Adventures

Who says campfire meals have to be just hotdogs and hamburgers? In this hands-on class, you'll learn how to create delicious, fire-cooked dishes that bring a touch of gourmet to the outdoors. From building the perfect cooking fire to mastering rustic techniques, we'll show you how to elevate your outdoor meals with flavor and flair. Perfect for beginners and adventurous food lovers ready to cook beyond the basics—right over the flames.

Outdoor Cooking: Bread Basics

Discover the magic of baking fresh, crusty bread over an open fire! In this fun and flavorful class, you'll learn how to mix, knead, and bake delicious artisan-style bread using a simple outdoor cooking techniques. No fancy kitchen required—just flames, flour, and a little patience. Perfect for campers, food lovers, and anyone who enjoys the smell of fresh bread in the wild.

Primitive Skills

Go back in time and learn ways of the past. Try your hand at atlatl spear throwing, sling shots, tomahawk throwing and how to witch for water. Learn basic knot tying, nature awareness and more. Discover nature by becoming part of nature by using primitive skills and tools.

Reading Animal Sign in Illinois

The woods are full of written stories. In this hands-on session, you'll learn how to identify tracks, scat and other animal sign left behind by Illinois wildlife and how this skill helps both hunters and wildlife watchers. Whether you're hiking or hunting, you'll never look at the woods the same way again! Along our hike, we will also discuss common plants and trees that are critical for Illinois wildlife.

Reptiles/Amphibians

Enjoy a guided hike along the famous "Snake Road" in the Shawnee National Forest in search of reptiles and amphibians. This will be a full day class and involve moderate hiking along a 2.7 mile gravel road through swamps and bluffs where snakes migrate from the swamps to their winter dens in the bluffs. Cameras are encouraged and closed toed shoes are a must (Hiking boots preferred) as venomous snakes are common in this area. We will also be scientists for a day as we collect data on the animals we see with special permits from the USFS. This class will be limited to 12 participants and lunch will be in the field between hikes.

***Rifle**

Designed for beginners and those seeking more practice, this class teaches the fundamentals of selecting and safely handling rifles. You'll learn basic shooting techniques and gain hands-on experience to build accuracy and confidence. Try your marksmanship out on .22 caliber rifles. Firearms and ammunition are provided.

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Rock Climbing

Top-rope rock climbing on the incredible sandstone bluffs of Southern Illinois! Participants will be taken to Giant City State Park. You will be outfitted in all the necessary safety gear – helmets and harnesses are provided. Groups can climb multiple routes throughout their scheduled time. On Belay! If you don't know what that means, you'll know after taking this class.

Trailer Made – The Art of Pulling and Backing Trailers

Have you ever been intimidated by the idea of driving with a trailer? This class will give you the foundation to feel confident doing so. You will learn in small groups, in a closed area. Topics covered include safety requirements, different hitches, how to couple/uncouple, securing cargo, towing different trailer types and how to back up safely in a variety of situations.

Walking Giant City State Park

Take a relaxing interpretive walk through the peaceful Indian Creek Nature Trail, a ¾-mile journey into the lush creek bottomland of Giant City State Park. Stroll at a leisurely pace as you explore the area's rich flora, fauna, geology, and cultural history. Discover how Late Woodland Native Americans once thrived here between 400–900 A.D., using the land's abundant resources for food and shelter. As the forest surrounds you, look for native trees, shrubs, berries, and wildlife that tell the story of those who walked this land centuries ago.

Evening Program

*Firearm Safety

Are you new and curious about firearms, or have some questions about your own firearms? This essential course is the perfect place to start. You'll learn the basics of firearm types, safety practices, how to select and purchase a firearm, and proper handling and storage—all using inoperable (non-functioning) firearms for demonstration. No need to pre-register—just sign-up during Friday night dinner. Whether you're brand new or simply looking for more info, this class offers a safe, judgment-free space to learn and ask questions.

****This class is mandatory for anyone who has not completed a certified Hunter Education course and wishes to participate in live fire classes (handgun, rifle) later in the workshop.**

Evening Program

When Adventure Calls, Are You Ready to Respond?

This engaging talk on Outdoor First Aid will prepare outdoor enthusiasts—from casual hikers to seasoned hunters—to handle everything from “itches and ouches” to medical emergencies in remote settings. Led by an experienced medical professional, the session covers how to assess injuries, manage common wilderness health issues, and make smart decisions under pressure. Attendees will learn basic first aid techniques, gain safety awareness to prevent incidents, and hear real-life examples to make the training practical and relatable.

A Q&A session will follow, making it a valuable opportunity to boost your preparedness for any outdoor adventure.

Evening Program

Owl Prowl Night Hike

Step into the nighttime world of the forest and discover whooo's awake after dark! Join in for an evening Owl Prowl—a guided night hike where you'll listen for calls, search the treetops, and learn about the fascinating lives of these mysterious nocturnal birds. Along the way, you'll pick up tips on owl identification, behavior, and the adaptations that make them expert nighttime hunters. Bring your curiosity, a flashlight or headlamp, and your quietest footsteps. Perfect for all ages—this is a magical way to experience the woods after sunset



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