

Session 1 - Friday Oct 16, 1:30 – 5:00

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!

Bread Basics – Outdoor Cooking

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 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.

Chainsaw Skills for Beginners

Gain the confidence and skills to safely operate a chainsaw in this hands-on workshop designed specifically for women. Whether you're clearing storm damage, maintaining your property, or simply want to learn a valuable new skill, this class covers the fundamentals of chainsaw safety, proper handling, maintenance, personal protective equipment (PPE), and basic cutting techniques. Experienced instructors provide step-by-step guidance in a supportive, encouraging environment, with plenty of opportunities for practice. No prior experience is necessary, just bring a willingness to learn and clothes suitable for working outdoors. (long pants, closed toes shoes)

Mountain Biking

New to mountain biking? This beginner-friendly class is designed to help you build confidence on the trails. Learn essential skills like proper body position, braking, shifting, cornering, and trail etiquette in a fun, supportive environment. Perfect for first-time riders or anyone looking to improve their fundamentals while exploring the scenic trails around Touch of Nature. LIMITED SPACE.

1 **Natural Communities, Natural Heritage Overview**
Southern Illinois is one of the most diverse places in the Midwest—but have you ever wondered what makes each forest, prairie, wetland, glade, and stream so different? In this fun, interactive class, you'll explore the natural communities that make our region unique and learn how plants, animals, geology, water, and climate all work together to create healthy ecosystems. We'll also dive into habitat restoration, including how tools like prescribed fire help keep these landscapes healthy for wildlife and future generations. Whether you're a nature lover, landowner, or just curious about the world around you, you'll leave with a whole new appreciation for the places that make Illinois so special.

1 **Nature-Inspired Torn Paper Collage**
Explore the beauty of the natural world through the playful, expressive art of torn paper collage. In this hands-on class, participants will use colorful papers, textures, layering, and composition techniques to create a unique artwork inspired by flowers, leaves, landscapes, animals, or seasonal colors. No drawing experience is needed—just a willingness to tear, arrange, experiment, and let nature guide your creativity.

1 **Paddle with a Nature Nerd**
Learn to kayak while exploring the natural beauty of Southern Illinois! This beginner-friendly class will teach you the basics of paddling, boat control, safety, and the skills you need to feel confident on the water. Once you're gliding along, your instructor—a proud nature nerd—will bring the landscape to life, sharing stories about the wildlife, plants, geology, and hidden wonders that make Southern Illinois so unique. It's the perfect blend of outdoor adventure and nature exploration for anyone ready to dip a paddle in the water for the first time.

Session 2 - Saturday Oct 17 8:30 – 12:00

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!

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.

Orienteering

Put down the GPS and discover the fun of navigating with a map and compass! This beginner-friendly class will teach you the fundamentals of orienteering, including how to read a topographic map, use a compass, identify landmarks, and navigate through the woods with confidence. Then, put your new skills to the test with a hands-on navigation challenge. Perfect for hikers, hunters, campers, and anyone who loves exploring the outdoors, this class will give you practical skills and the confidence to find your way on your next adventure.

Outdoor Cooking Adventures

Who says campfire meals is 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.

****Shotgun Intro**

Ready to break some clays? This beginner-friendly class is the perfect introduction to shotgun shooting. Learn the basics of firearm safety, proper shooting techniques, and how to hit moving targets in a fun, supportive environment. Whether you're interested in hunting or sporting clays, you'll leave with the confidence and skills to keep shooting. No experience necessary!

****The BOW Firearms Safety course is a prerequisite unless you have verification of completing a Hunter Education course.**

Stream Ecology

Pull on a pair of boots and discover the hidden world beneath the water! In this hands-on, interactive class, you'll explore a local stream while searching for aquatic insects, crayfish, fish, and other fascinating creatures that call it home. Learn how these organisms reveal the health of a stream, how water shapes the surrounding ecosystem, and why healthy waterways are so important for wildlife and people alike. Whether you're a curious beginner or simply love spending time outdoors, this class will leave you seeing every creek and stream in a whole new way.

Trapping

Join us for a welcoming, hands-on introduction designed for women who want to learn one of North America's oldest outdoor traditions. Discover how trapping plays an important role in modern wildlife conservation and furbearer management while building practical outdoor skills. You'll learn the basics of land and water trapping, including equipment, regulations, trap preparation, and Best Management Practices. We'll explore the habits of common furbearers, practice setting traps, and discuss the many uses of furbearers. No experience is necessary—just come ready to learn, ask questions, and enjoy time both in the classroom and outdoors.

Please wear sturdy footwear and bring well-fitting gloves if desired.

Session 3 - Saturday Oct 17 1:30 – 5:00

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!

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!

Native Dyes

Discover the beauty of creating color from the natural world! In this hands-on workshop, you'll learn how common plants found in Southern Illinois can be used to make beautiful natural dyes. Explore different dyeing techniques, experiment with a variety of colors and styles, and create your own naturally dyed project to take home.

Reptiles

Curious about reptiles—or ready to conquer your fear of them? Join us for a fun, hands-on experience featuring a live animal collection from Southern Illinois and beyond! Get up close with fascinating creatures including cockroaches, frogs, lizards, and snakes while learning about their unique adaptations, habitats, and important roles in nature. Whether you're a lifelong wildlife enthusiast or just a little snake-shy, this supportive class is a great opportunity to build confidence and discover a new appreciation for these amazing animals.

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Trees & Trails: Native Tree and Invasive Species ID

Wouldn't it be nice to take a walk in the woods and know what's around you? In this beginner-friendly class, you'll learn to identify common native trees of Southern Illinois, spot invasive species, and discover practical techniques for controlling them. You'll also explore how trees support the entire forest ecosystem—from birds and pollinators to mammals, fungi, and other wildlife—and how healthy woodlands benefit us all. Whether you're a landowner or simply curious about the woods around you, you'll gain the knowledge and confidence to better understand, appreciate, and care for the forests you explore.

Yucca/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.

Session 4 - Sunday Oct 18 8:30 – 12:00

Birding

Have you ever heard a bird singing and wondered... *What is that?* This beginner-friendly class is the perfect introduction to birding in Southern Illinois. Learn how to identify common birds by their colors, shapes, behaviors, and songs while exploring some of the region's best bird habitat. Along the way, you'll discover how birds fit into the larger ecosystem, what makes Southern Illinois a birding hotspot, and simple tips to help you continue birding on your own. Bring your curiosity and enjoy looking—and listening—to nature in a whole new way.

Fishing A-Z

Hook, Line & Learn! There's nothing quite like the excitement of feeling that first tug on your line! Whether you've never picked up a fishing rod or just want to build your confidence, this fun, hands-on class will teach you everything you need to know—from tying a hook and making your first cast to reeling in your catch. You'll also learn how to identify common fish, safely handle and clean your catch, and prepare it for the table with simple food prep techniques. Leave with the skills and confidence to enjoy a successful day on the water—and a delicious meal afterward!

Girls with Power Tools

Power tools may look and sound intimidating, but they don't have to be! This interactive, beginner-friendly class will teach you how to safely and confidently use common power tools for projects around the house and yard. Learn the parts of each tool, essential safety practices, and proper operation before putting your new skills to work by creating a take-home project in class. Leave with practical experience, greater confidence, and the skills to tackle your next DIY project with ease!

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Hike to Glacier's End

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Did you know the Illinoian Glacier pushed farther south in Illinois than anywhere else in North America? Its massive advance reached the northern edge of Giant City State Park, forever shaping the landscape we see today. Join us for an interpretive hike to Glacier's End, where you'll discover the fascinating story of how ancient ice carved the region and learn to spot the lasting evidence of this remarkable geologic event along the trail. Perfect for anyone curious about the natural history of Southern Illinois, or for anyone who likes a little brain side-quest with their exercise.

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Knots & Lashing

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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.

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Osteology

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Every bone tells a story! In this interactive, hands-on class, you'll learn the basics of osteology—the study of bones—using real skulls, skeletons, and other specimens from Illinois wildlife. Discover how to identify common animal bones, uncover clues about an animal's diet and behavior, and explore how scientists use bones to understand the natural world. Whether you're a curious beginner, hunter, hiker, or wildlife enthusiast, this class is a fun way to see nature from a whole new perspective.

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Rock Climbing

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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.

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My Own Time

Maybe you and your crew want to explore some local adventures—shopping, wineries, ziplining, 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.

Friday 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 who wishes to participate in the shotgun intro classes this weekend.**

Friday 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

Saturday Evening Program

Astronomy Night Hike

Experience the outdoors in a whole new way on this guided night hike and astronomy adventure. As darkness falls, we'll explore the sights and sounds of the forest while discovering what comes alive after sunset. Along the way, we'll pause to identify constellations, learn the stories behind the stars, and take in the beauty of the night sky. This fun, beginner-friendly experience is perfect for anyone who wants to connect with nature after dark and discover the magic of the nighttime world.



Becoming an Outdoors-Woman in Illinois

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