



Benton County Conservation

Naturalist Program Options

If you are interested in a program topic that is not on the list, please let us know and the naturalists may be able to tailor an educational program to fit your needs.

Preschool

Trees (indoors/outdoors)

Learn what makes a tree special, and investigate the different parts of trees. We will also act out parts of a tree!

Bats (indoors)

Bats are often misunderstood, and we will find out more about these nocturnal critters and what makes them special. Act out a bat in a simple game!

Explore The Outdoors (outdoors)

Use our five senses plus an extra tool (magnifying glass) to investigate our outside environment.

Kindergarten

Spiders (indoors/outdoors)

Listen to a story about a spider and find out more about the parts of a spider. They will also get the chance to go on a “spider hunt” outside or in the classroom.

Nocturnal Animals (indoors)

What is the difference between a “nocturnal” and “diurnal” animal? Find out by acting out different nocturnal animals, and sorting nocturnal versus diurnal animals.

Powder Tracks (indoors)

Listen to a story about animal tracks. Learn about clues that an animal leaves behind, and get the chance to figure out a tracking mystery!

Furs (indoors)

What is a mammal? Find out what makes a mammal special. Look up close and touch some furs that come from different animals and talk about why they are unique.

Explore Our World (outdoors)

Use our five senses and special tools (magnifying glass and simple binoculars to investigate our outside environment.

First Grade

Turkeys (indoors)

Perfect for Thanksgiving time! Did you know that a wild turkey is different than the turkey we eat at Thanksgiving? Hear a funny turkey story and learn more about Iowa's wild turkeys by investigating different parts of a turkey.

Hibernate, Migrate, or Stay (winter/indoors)

We might spend more time inside, but what do animals do when it gets cold and snowy outside? Learn about how animals adapt to the winter by acting out different strategies.

Owls (indoors)

Whooooo is an owl? Discover what makes an owl special and get an up close look at real parts from an owl.

End of Winter (late winter)

Hear a traditional story about an end of winter tradition in a European town. Students will get a chance to design their own mask to scare away winter!

Everybody Needs a Rock (indoors/outdoors)

What makes rocks special? Hear a story about finding the perfect rock and get the chance to start a rock collection of your own.

Graham Cracker Geology (indoors)

Find out more about plate tectonics in this yummy activity! Students will use graham crackers and frosting to act out different types of plates on Earth.

Build a Tree (indoors/outdoors)

Find out more about trees by becoming a giant tree! Each student will act out a role to learn more about the parts of a tree and how they live.

Red Squirrel Gray Squirrel (outdoors)

Kids learn about how different squirrels prepare for winter and get to hide food just like squirrels.

Second Grade

North Star (indoors)

Listen to a Native American legend about Why the North Star Stands Still. Create a craft in the classroom to help remember where to look for the North Star. Find out more about “constellations” and stars.

Soil Bags (indoors)

Hear a story about the life cycle of a tree. Learn what the word “decompose” means and find out about what types of things decompose with a fun matching activity.

Bats/Bat & Moth (indoors or outdoors)

Learn what is unique about a bat and find out the truth behind some myths about bats. Play a game that shows us how bats use echolocation.

Butterflies (indoors)

Find out more about butterflies by watching one volunteer be dressed up as a butterfly!

Learn more about their life cycle and behavior.

Build-A-Plant (indoor/outdoor)

What do plants need to grow? Find out more about plants with this interactive program by building a plant! This program covers it all.

Third Grade

Prairie Journaling (outdoors)

Learn how to make scientific observations in a journal. We will visit a prairie [or another location] to draw some plants, insects and make observations.

Prairie Seed Collecting (outdoors)

Visit a prairie to learn more about the plants that grow there and collect some seeds that can be used to plant later.

Frogs (indoors)

What is the difference between a frog and a toad? Discover this and more! Students will also get a chance to hear and make different frog sounds.

Incredible Journey/Water Cycle (need large space to play game, such as in gym or outside field) *must have a minimum of 45 minutes for this program*

Play an interactive game to find out more about the water cycle and how it is not as simple as we may think.

Crayfish (indoors — teachers must order crayfish)

Investigate a live crayfish and make scientific observations to discover physical attributes of a crayfish and how these help the crayfish survive. Talk about the word “adaptation.”

Bucket of Bones (indoors) *must have a minimum of 45 minutes for this program*

Discover different types of bones in a mammal. Investigate the skeletons of several Iowa mammals and work as a team to try and reassemble a skeleton.

Skulls (indoors)

What can an animal's skull tell us about their life? Investigate a variety of mammal skulls, try to figure out what animal each skull came from, and discuss the adaptations of each.

Fourth Grade

Prairie Seed Collecting (outdoors)

Visit a prairie to learn more about the plants that grow there and collect some seed that can be used to plant later.

Pass the Energy/Energy Cycles (indoors/outdoors)

Follow the path of energy from the sun to plants to animals. Find out the basics of Ecosystems, food chains, and food pyramids.

Solar System in Your Pocket (indoors)

Discover more about our solar system, and make a model of the solar system that conveniently folds up to fit in your pocket.

Fifth Grade

Shelter Building (outdoors in wooded area)

How would we survive if we were lost in the woods? Shelter is one of the most important things we need to survive. Work as a team to try and build a sturdy shelter, and take a "tour of shelters" at the end to survey each team's handiwork.

Bird Migration (indoors)

What does it mean to “migrate”? Find out why birds migrate and how their migration can be affected by different things. Each student will pick a bird to research more about and make a model paper bird to take home. They will learn how to use “field markings” to identify a bird.

Monarch butterflies (indoors)

Learn about the monarch's amazing metamorphosis and migration.

Miscellaneous Grades

Bison Tub (2nd grade & up)

Look up close at the traditional ways that Native Americans used all parts of a bison. Figure out what modern-day items are similar to the bison parts, and find out more about why wild bison were extirpated from Iowa.

Lakota Games (2nd grade & up, outdoors)

Discover more about Native American culture by participating in several traditional games.

Skins/Skulls (3rd grade & up, indoors)

Investigate the furs and skulls from many Iowa mammals. Discover what an “adaptation” is and discuss how the fur and skulls from each animal give us clues to its unique adaptations.

Snowshoeing (4th grade & up, outdoors, must be 4+ inches of snow on the ground)

Try out this fun form of winter travel! Get the chance to test out snowshoes on a winter hike.

Atlatls (4th grade & up, outdoors)

Discover one of the oldest hunting tools of mankind. Students will have the opportunity to try out their aim by using atlatls to throw darts at targets.

Birds of Prey (3rd grade & up, indoors/outdoors)

What is that soaring high up in the sky?! Learn about Iowa raptors, their adaptations and how to identify them.