Severson Dells Nature Center

Field-based Learning that Engages Students
100% IL Standards Aligned
100% STEM & NGSS
100% Natural

2021-2022
“As a teacher, Severson Dells is just a great opportunity for me to give my students a different hands-on approach to things.

If we don’t teach our kids and our students about nature, they’ll have no reason to preserve it in the future.”

Stacy Wallace
2nd grade teacher
Marshall Gifted Academy

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Dear Teachers -

We are delighted to welcome teachers and students back to Severson Dells for outdoor field experiences! For the 2021-2022 school year, we have a variety of options for you to choose from.

1. The Full Field Experience - you bring your students to Severson Dells for a day of outdoor programming.

2. A Field Experience at Your School - we bring our most popular field programs to your school and use your school’s campus for the field experience.

3. Traveling Naturalist - we have a selection of indoor nature-themed programs that introduce your students to some basic ecological concepts, such as metamorphosis, habitats and species requirements.

You can contact us about lessons or professional development either by email (ellen@seversondells.org) or phone (815-335-2915).

We look forward to helping you and your students reconnect with the world’s greatest teacher: Mother Nature.

Ellen Rathbone, Education Specialist
Severson Dells Nature Center

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But Wait - There’s More....

Severson Dells Nature Center also offers programs for Homeschool Groups, scouts, and more!

Be sure to check out our year-round public programs, which provide outdoor experiences for visitors of all ages.

If you or someone you know is looking for a place to volunteer, consider joining our Conservation Crew as they tackle invasive species and work on habitat restoration on our property, or becoming an Education Volunteer and help lead our school programs.

Visit our website: www.seversondells.org
General Information

Science & Nature Outings
We are looking forward to welcoming back schools, teachers and students to our Science and Nature Outings!

Masking protocols are changing all the time. We follow the protocols set out by the IDPH and the Winnebago County Health Department at all times.

Science and Nature Outings are $5/student/program. Most programs are about 1.5 hours long. We limit groups to 15 students per instructor, and we can have up to 60 students in one day.

Traveling Naturalist Programs
Our in-school programs are $100 for the first class and $40 for additional classes on the same day, with a limit of three sessions. A class is one classroom, with a maximum of 30 students.

Need Help?
Contact Ellen at 815-335-2915, Tuesdays through Saturdays, or ellen@seversondells.org.

2021-2022
At-school
Science & Nature Outings

Fall
September 14-December 17

Winter
January 4 - March 18

Spring
April 5 - June 3

Traveling Naturalist
year round

About Severson Dells
Located on 369 acres of remnant oak-hickory forest and restored prairie and savanna ecosystems, Severson Dells is a local gem.

The land and lodge were donated to the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County by Harry and Fannie Severson in 1974, and the Nature Center was established as a nonprofit in 1976.

Our mission is to link people to nature through education and research.
Meeting the Illinois K-12 Standards

Our goal at Severson Dells is to help you meet Illinois’ K-12 Standards by providing you and your students with programs that focus on the Science, Engineering, Math and Literacy Practices.

Using nature and the outdoors as our classroom, our lessons are cross-curricular. Even though we may be focusing on biology, ecology, physics or engineering, our programs can also help meet the standards for math and literacy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Science &amp; Engineering</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>English Language Arts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1: Ask questions &amp; define problems;</td>
<td>M1: Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them;</td>
<td>E1: Demonstrate independence in reading complex texts, writing and speaking about them;</td>
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<td>S2: Develop and use models;</td>
<td>M2: Reason abstractly and quantitatively;</td>
<td>E2: Build a strong base of knowledge through context-rich texts;</td>
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<td>S3: Plan &amp; carry out investigations;</td>
<td>M3: Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others;</td>
<td>E3: Obtain, synthesize &amp; report findings clearly &amp; effectively in response to task and purpose;</td>
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<td>S4: Analyze and interpret data;</td>
<td>M4: Model with mathematics;</td>
<td>E4: Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others;</td>
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<td>S5: Use mathematics and computational thinking;</td>
<td>M5: Use appropriate tools strategically;</td>
<td>E5: Read, write and speak grounded in evidence;</td>
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<td>S6: Construct explanations and design solutions;</td>
<td>M6: Attend to precision;</td>
<td>E6: Use technology and digital media strategically and capably;</td>
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<td>S7: Engage in argument from evidence;</td>
<td>M7: Look for and make use of structure;</td>
<td>E7: Come to understand other perspectives and cultures through reading, listening and collaboration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>S8: Obtain, evaluate and communicate information.</td>
<td>M8: Look for &amp; express regularity in repeated reasoning.</td>
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**Programs at a Glance**

To help guide you to the right programs for your students, please consult the table below, where our programs are listed by the grades for which they are most appropriate.

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<tr>
<th>Programs</th>
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<td>Discover Nature Hike</td>
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<td>Nature’s Alphabet, Colors Shapes &amp; Smells</td>
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<td>Fabulous Beasts &amp; Where to Find Them</td>
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<td>Predator-Prey Palooza</td>
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<td>Birds of a Feather</td>
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<td>Outdoor Skills</td>
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<td>Aquatic Studies: Stream Sleuths</td>
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<td>Finding Your Way</td>
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<td><strong>Traveling Naturalist</strong> - programs we offer for in your classroom</td>
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<td>The Unhuggables</td>
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<td>Owl Moon</td>
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<td>Bats - Fly by Night</td>
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<td>All About Frogs</td>
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Don’t forget to make The Grove a part of your visit! The Grove is our Nature Playscape, a chance for your students to experience free play with a nature theme! From climbing logs to a giant spider web, novelty musical instruments to basic building blocks, The Grove is a great outlet for energy and imagination.
Science & Nature Outings at Severson Dells

Outing Information
Our Science & Nature Outings can accommodate up to 60 students at one time, unless otherwise noted in the program description.

When you arrive, your students are greeted at the bus. We give them a quick overview of what to expect during their visit. Chaperons also receive a brief talk about their responsibilities during the visit. Depending on your group size, we divide students into groups of approximately 15 students, each with 1-2 chaperons. Each group is led by one of our staff or education volunteers.

All our Outings have an outdoor component; some are entirely outdoors. Students, teachers, and chaperons should be aware of this ahead of time and come dressed for the weather. We go out rain, snow or shine. If dangerous conditions prevail, we will alter the program for indoors or you can reschedule.

Lunch
If your group is here during lunch and the weather allows, lunch is taken out in The Grove. Otherwise, we can accommodate you in our classroom. We offer a 20-minute Low-Waste Lunch presentation for your students after they eat so they can learn the importance of recycling, composting, and reducing waste in the form of packaging.

Chaperon Expectations
Chaperons play an important role in the success of your visit to Severson Dells. We encourage chaperons to participate in the programs, but please make sure they understand that the students are our primary audience, and that as chaperons they are there to help manage the students. We ask that you provide one chaperon for every five students in pre-K and K, and one chaperon for every eight students in grades 1 and up. This does include the teachers.

Any Grade
Discover Nature Hike 1-1.5 hrs
Students are introduced to the nature and landscape of Severson Dells. Everything is fair game on this exploration of our trails where we focus on students developing their observation and questioning skills.  S1; S3; S4; S6; S7; S8; M2; M3; M8; E4; E5; E7

Pre-K & Kindergarten
Nature’s Alphabet, Colors, Shapes & Smells 1 hr
Nature is the ultimate teacher when it comes to learning about our senses, as well as letters, shapes and colors! Students develop these essential skills by searching for natural items along the trail.  S1; S2; S3; S4; S7; S8; M2; M3; M5; M6; M8; E3; E4; E5

First - Fourth Grades
Predator-Prey Palooza! 1.5-2 hrs
Students learn the traits of predators and prey animals, and then test their ability to “fill the shoes” of these animals in fun activities.  S1; S3; S4; S6; S7; S8; M1; M2; M3; M5; M6; M7; M8; E3; E4; E5; E7

Birds of a Feather 1.5-2 hrs
Using mounts, feathers, a hands-on beak activity, and binoculars, students get an up-close look at what makes a bird a bird and learn how to identify the birds commonly found at our feeders.  S1; S3; S4; S6; S7; S8; M1; M2; M3; M5; M6; M7; M8; E3; E4; E5; E7

Fabulous Beasts & Where to Find Them 1.5-2 hrs
Habitats provide the food, shelter and water that all things need to survive. Some species do best in the woods, some in grasslands, some in water. And some live life on the edge! This introductory program to habitats is ideal for our younger learners.  S1; S3; S4; S6; S7; S8; M1; M3; M5; M6; M7; M8; E4; E5; E7

First - Tenth Grades
Outdoor Skills 1.5-3 hrs
For this ultimate day of hands-on learning, students apply science and engineering standards, and even math and art, as they build shelters, try primitive fire starting, make cordage, learn knots or practice camouflage and sneaking. (Content varies based on age, time & season.)  S1; S2; S3; S4; S5; S6; S7; S8; M1; M2; M3; M5; M6; M7; M8; E3; E4; E5; E7
### Sample Schedules

#### Half-Day Science & Nature Outing
(one program; $5/student)

- 8:00-8:30: Our staff arrive & set up outdoors
- 8:30-10:00: Discover Nature Hike
- 10:00-10:30: Our staff clean up and depart

#### Full-Day Science & Nature Outing
(two programs; $10/student)

- 8:00-8:30: Our staff arrive & set up outdoors
- 8:30-10:00: Group A: Discover Nature Hike  
  Group B: Predator-Prey Palooza
- 10:00-10:15: Groups switch - ideally wash hands
- 10:15-11:45: Group A: Predator-Prey Palooza  
  Group B: Discover Nature Hike
- 11:45-12:15: Our staff clean up and depart

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**Third - Sixth Grades**

### Aquatic Studies: Stream Sleuths 1.5-3 hrs

Students and teachers should be prepared to get wet in this ultimate “immersion” program about what lives in our waters! We explore and sample Hall Creek, investigating aquatic life and the impacts of erosion and flooding on that life. Seasonal. S1; S3; S4; S6; S7; S8; M1; M2; M3; M5; M6; M7; M8; E3; E4; E5; E7

**Fifth - Tenth Grades**

### State of the Prairie 1.5-3 hrs

Illinois is the Prairie State, but how much do your students actually know about prairie ecosystems? During this hands-on program, students are immersed in all things prairie: the structure and importance of plants and soils; the roles of pollinators; endangered species; and prairie restoration practices. Activities may vary based on season. S1; S3; S4; S6; S7; S8; M1; M2; M3; M5; M6; M7; M8; E3; E4; E5; E7

### Introduction to Field Journaling 1.5-3 hrs

Learning how to observe and record one’s observations are invaluable skills. This hands-on program takes students both indoors and outdoors as they look at natural objects (skulls, plants, insects, etc.) and learn to record what they discover through guided activities. Students bring their own journals and pencils from school. S1; S2; S3; S4; S6; S7; S8; M1; M2; M3; M5; M6; M7; M8; E3; E4; E5

### Biodiversity Investigation 1.5-3 hrs

This hands-on program has your students investigating three different habitats in search of “life.” We compare their findings at each site as we discuss diversity versus abundance, and learn which habitats are the richest and why. S1; S3; S4; S6; S7; S8; M1; M2; M3; M5; M6; M7; M8; E3; E4; E5; E7

### Finding Your Way 1.5-4 hrs

In a time when technology does much of our work for us, it is not a bad idea to learn how to go low-tech with a compass or learn how to read a map. If you choose to do this as a full-day program, we cover compass basics, an introduction to map-reading, and how to put a map and compass together. Half-day programs (1.5 hrs) focus on compass use. Both sessions include fun activities that involve following a compass to make mystery shapes. Great for working on math skills. S1; S4; S5; S6; S7; S8; M1; M2; M4; M5; M6; M8; E3; E5; E6; E7
Traveling Naturalist Programs

Traveling Naturalist Information

Sometimes schools cannot come out to Severson Dells, so we bring Severson Dells out to them!

Traveling Naturalist Outreach Programs can accommodate up to 30 students (usually one class) at a time, unless otherwise noted.

The Traveling Naturalist is $100 for the first class, and $40 for each additional class.

We require teachers to remain in the classroom at all times during our presentations. Teachers are asked to monitor their students to be sure they are getting the most out of our programs.

The Unhuggables
Pre-K & K 30-40 minutes
Familiar animals (skunks, raccoons and opossums) provide a foundation for what is wild. Puppets, pelts and other props introduce young learners to the idea that wild animals can take care of themselves without depending on people, as long as they have a suitable habitat. Teaches care and respect for all life.

Room for Salamanders
K-2nd grade 30-40 minutes
Anne Mazer’s now-classic children’s book Salamander Room introduces students to the concept of habitat: that plants animals have specific needs and live where those need are best met. Fun, engaging storytelling helps students predict what is best for our amphibian friends.

Owl Moon
K-5th grade 30-40 minutes
Flying silently while using their ears and eyes to find food, owls are skillful hunters with many special tools. This program looks at owl adaptations and behaviors through the use of mounted specimens, wings, pellets and sound recordings.

Bats—Fly By Night
K-5th grade 30-45 minutes
All living things are dependent on each other and their surroundings. Although valuable members of the Earth’s ecosystems, bats are quite often misunderstood and feared. Using skulls, sounds and replicas, students discover that bats are not as scary as many people believe. Bats are facing more challenges than ever. What will happen if bats vanish.

All About Frogs
1st-4th grade 30-40 minutes
See! Hear! Move! Protect! Eat! How do they do it? Frogs are perfectly adapted to survive in their habitats. Sounds, photos and even an experiment help students discover these unique abilities. Jump in and find out why frogs are fascinating.

Wilderness is not a luxury but a necessity of the human spirit.

~ Edward Abbey
Virtual Nature Lessons

When COVID hit, our staff sprang into action producing several virtual lessons for schools focusing on the NGSS and RPS science standards and how environmental education can help you meet those standards.

Our pre-recorded lessons are still available for free on our website, and they meet the standards as set by RPS and other regional schools.

**Pre-recorded Lessons**

We have developed a series of pre-recorded lessons, each 10-15 minutes long, that meet ES and LS standards for each grade.

Each lesson features at least one of our naturalists presenting a virtual field session for your students, and giving your students an activity or two they can do at home or at school that builds on what we covered.

These are free and are available on our website.

**Kindergarten**: Look and Learn (K-LS1-1)
Grade 1: Biomimicry (1-LS1-1)
Grade 2: Relief Maps and Modeling (2-ESS2-2)
Grade 3: Habitats & Adaptations (3-LS4-3)
Grade 4: Bioswales & Rain Gardens (4-ESS3-2)
Benefits of Field-based Learning

“In field-based learning, teaching is extended to a site outside of the classroom or laboratory, exposing students to a real-world setting. Students learn through direct interaction with an environment that reflects taught concepts rather than learning through indirect presentations of the setting such as textbooks or lectures.” (Queen’s University)

What does field-based learning do for you and your students?
• Provides an opportunity to present materials, objects or phenomena that are not accessible otherwise to students in a way that enables direct contact and interaction;
• Provides students with an opportunity to practice skills or techniques that cannot be carried out elsewhere;
• Stimulates higher understanding and reinforcement of previously learned classroom material; and
• Stimulates an appreciation for, and concern or valuing of the visited environment.


At Severson Dells, we believe in the benefits of field-based learning. We’ve seen students thrive in an outdoor learning environment; science backs up the importance of getting students outdoors to study and play.

We encourage you to integrate more outdoor experiences into your school days, and Severson Dells is happy to help.

Signing Up for a Program

When you are ready to register, give us a call (815-335-2915), or send an email (ellen@seversondells.org). Our offices are open Monday - Friday, 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM.

Please have the following information ready:
• Preferred program date & time, plus alternatives in case we cannot accommodate your first choice;
• Names and contact information for all participating teachers (phone, email);
• Grade & number of students who will be attending;
• School name, address, phone number;
• name of the program(s) you are interested in.

Payment: Our program fee is $5/student/program with a $50 minimum. Payment can be made the day of your program. Please make checks payable to: Severson Dells Nature Center.

Programs that are canceled with less than 48 hours notice (unless due to inclement weather) will be charged a $50 fee.

See next page for financial assistance information!
**Teachers’ Resources**

**Financial Assistance**

- **Illinois Biodiversity Field Trip Grant** is offered through the Illinois DNR to help teachers provide their students with field trip opportunities to study some aspects of Illinois’ biodiversity.  
  [www.dnr.illinois.gov/education/Pages/GrantBFTG.aspx](http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/education/Pages/GrantBFTG.aspx)

- **Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Action Grant** is offered through the Illinois DNR and Illinois Conservation Foundation to encourage teachers to involve their students with hands-on natural resources stewardship.  
  [www.dnr.illinois.gov/education/Pages/GrantsSHAG.aspx](http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/education/Pages/GrantsSHAG.aspx)

- **Target** also helps fund field trips! From their website: “It’s become increasingly difficult for schools to fund learning opportunities outside the classroom. To help them out, we launched Field Trip Grants in 2007. Since then, we’ve made it possible for millions of students to go on a field trip. As part of the program, Target stores award Field Trip Grants to K-12 schools nationwide. Each grant is valued up to $700.”  

- **The Meemic Foundation** offers a variety of grants for teachers year-round, including funding field trips.  

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**Continuing Education, Certifications, Workshops, et al**

- **Project Learning Tree (PLT)** is an award-winning environmental education program that uses the forest as a “window” into natural and built environments, helping people gain an awareness and knowledge of the world around them.  
  [www.cedarcreerinstitute.org](http://www.cedarcreerinstitute.org)

- **The Leopold Education Project (LEP)** is an innovative, interdisciplinary conservation ethics curriculum targeted for grades 6-12. LEP is part of Pheasants Forever’s education program to create an ecologically literate citizenry.  
  [www.lep.org](http://www.lep.org)

- **Project F.I.S.H.** is an educational program for youth and families sponsored locally by school, fishing conservation organizations, others interested in fishing and our fisheries.  
  [www.projectfish.org](http://www.projectfish.org)

- **Audubon Adventures**, an environmental education curriculum project created by the National Audubon Society for grades 3-8, presents standards-based science content about birds, wildlife, and their habitats.  
  [www.audubonadventures.org](http://www.audubonadventures.org)

- **Project WILD**, a wildlife-focused conservation education program for K-12 educators and their students, is based on the premise that young people and education have a vital interest in learning about our natural world and addresses the need for human beings to develop as responsible citizens of our planet.  
  [www.projectwild.org](http://www.projectwild.org)

- **Project WET**’s mission is to reach children, parents, teachers & community members of the world with water education that promotes awareness of water and empowers community action to solve complex water issues.  
  [www.projectwet.org](http://www.projectwet.org)
Homeschoolers, Scouts & Other Youth Groups

We invite homeschoolers, scouts and other youth groups (Big Brothers/Big Sisters, YMCA, camps, et al) to come out to Severson Dells. Each of these groups can sign up for our school programs, can request programs to fit their needs, or can “do their own thing” while benefiting from the many natural and restored habitats on our property.

For more information, or to sign up, contact us at:
815-335-2915 or ellen@seversondells.org

Testimonials

“It’s a safe place to get outside and try a lot of things they’ve never tried before...the pond is full of nifty little creatures...seeing things they wouldn’t see in the city.

We need to give kids an understanding and appreciation of the natural world. A lot of them don’t get outside in their daily lives, so they don’t spend a lot of time outside, don’t like to be outside, and we need to change that so they have an appreciation of what we have and why it’s important”

~ Nancy Cleburn, Environmental Science Teacher, Jefferson High School

“I used to bring my 2nd graders out here every year and they loved it. The best part was they would get here and they would want to take off running - go as fast as they could and as far as they could - and by the time they left, they were pointing everything out to each other and stopping all along the way. They were so excited and they learned how to slow down; they learned that if they were quiet, the would see and hear more.”

~ retired 2nd grade teacher

“Could it be any cooler?”

~ Carter, 2nd grader, Olson Park