



Ottawa County Parks & Recreation School Programs & Field Trips

miOttawa.org/fieldtrips



Nature-based Field Trips

We invite you and your students to join us for a journey into the great outdoors of Ottawa County Parks!

Our professional outdoor educators provide field trips that are enriching, positive, and memorable, giving your students tangible experiences to relate back to what is taught in your classroom, no matter the season!

We strive to:

- Initiate and encourage further exploration
- Nurture an emotional connection with nature
- Advance a wider perspective of students' sense of place in the environment
- Promote a greater understanding and attitude of responsible stewardship

All programs meet Next Generation Science Standards; many also meet specific Michigan standards.



Program Length

Field trips for grade school students are typically 2-3 hours, plus a half hour for lunch (not provided).

We offer a variety of nature-based program topics that can be paired together to best fit your classroom goals and interests. We also offer specialty programs that are three hours, plus a 30-minute lunch.

Students will rotate through activities planned for each topic with a break in the middle for lunch.

Contact us if you have questions about which program is best for your class.



Pricing

- \$6/student at a location/park in Ottawa County
- \$8 per student +\$50 travel fee for an off-site program outside of Ottawa County
- Cost includes school staff
- Cost includes chaperones
 - Ratio of 5:1 (grades 1-12)
 - Ratio of 3:1 (pre-k/k)
 - Additional chaperones \$6/person
- \$100 minimum

Ready to schedule a field trip?

Complete our program request form:
miOttawa.org/fieldtrips

Questions? Contact us:

Ottawa County Parks Nature Center:
(616) 786-4847 • naturecenter@miottawa.org



Quick Look Program Menu

Program descriptions, topics, and accompanying curriculum standards for pre-k-grade 2 can be found on page 3; information about programs for grades 1-12 can be found on pages 4-5.

PROGRAM	SEASON	GRADE LEVEL													
		PK/K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Fur & Feathers, Tracks & Feet	Year-round	●	○	○											
Wonderful Worms	Year-round	●	○	○											
Nature Detectives	Year-round	●	○	○											
Insect Investigations	Fall/Spring	●	○	○											
All About Birds	Winter	●	○	○											
Winter Adaptations	Winter	●	○	○											
Camouflage Critters	Year-round	●	●	●	●										
Habitat Discovery	Fall/Spring		●	●											
Owls & Nocturnal Life	Year-round		●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○				
Rendezvous! Fur Trade on the Grand*	Fall/Spring				●	●	○								
Creature Connections**	Year-round				●	●	●	●							
Skull Detectives	Year-round				●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	
Grand Lady Riverboat Experience***	Fall/Spring							●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Eco-Vision	Fall/Spring							●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Great Lakes Dune Exploration	Fall/Spring							●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Set up Camp! Tent & Fire-building	Year-round				●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Birding Basics	Year-round				●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Maps & Orienteering	Year-round				○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Winter Adventure	Winter	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Service-Based Learning****	Fall/Spring		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Program Menu Key

- Recommended grade level
- Available to this grade level

*Rendezvous! Fur Trade on the Grand has limited availability.

**Creature Connections topics vary by season, although there are topics offered year-round.

***The Grand Lady Riverboat Experience includes an additional booking fee for the boat (~\$600). Up to 120 students per field trip.

****Service-based Learning includes volunteer work such as invasive plant removal and litter removal. See the description for more details.



School Program Menu - Pre-K-2

Using their senses to guide them, students will explore outdoors to become familiar with an unfamiliar environment. Every experience includes a foundational book or puppet show, sensory-based activities, and free exploration. Activities are focused on creating positive experiences of discovery and play in the outdoors to aid further engagement in the future. Each topic listed below is 60 minutes and can stand alone or be paired together, as long as they are offered in the same season.

PROGRAM	SEASON
Camouflage Critters, LS1-2 Now you see me! Now you don't! Camouflage is nature's game of hide-and-seek. How many critters can we find?	Year-round
Fur & Feathers, Tracks & Feet, LS1-4, ESS3 It's an animal treasure hunt! Follow the clues to figure out who has been here.	Year-round
Nature Detectives , LS1-4, ETS2, PS4 We'll use our five senses to explore the outdoors. Using magnifiers and more, we'll search for clues outside to discover who lives there.	Year-round
Wonderful Worms, LS1-4 ESS2, PS3 One of our most requested programs! Wiggle and Woggle will introduce you to decomposers and what makes worms so wonderful.	Year-round
Insect Investigations, LS1-4, ETS2, PS4 How many legs does a bug have? Wait, is that a spider? Let's count to figure it out! Using nets and magnifiers we will sleuth our way to learn more about the most abundant creatures on Earth.	Fall/Spring
All About Birds, LS2-4, ESS2-3 What makes a bird, a bird? So much to investigate about the different feathers, beaks, and nests of these backyard buddies.	Winter
Winter Adaptations, LS1-4, ESS2-3 Some animals migrate, some hibernate, and others insulate. We'll explore what animals do in winter, how they stay warm, look for signs of who is awake, and study different animal tracks.	Winter



School Program Menu - Choose two topics for your visit!

Each topic is 90 minutes and can be combined with another topic from a program within the same grade level and season. Students will be given a 30-minute lunch period in between topics (see example). *Lunch not provided

3rd Grade Example

Topic 1: Skull Detectives (9:30-11 am)

Break: Lunch (11-11:30 am)

Topic 2: Creature Connections, Wetlands & Frogs (11:30 am-1 pm)

GRADE	PROGRAM & DESCRIPTION	TOPIC - SEASON
PK-3	Camouflage Critters - LS1-2 Now you see me! Now you don't! Camouflage is nature's game of hide-and-seek. How many critters can we find?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Camouflage Critters - Year-round
1-2	Habitat Discovery - LS1-4, ESS2-3 Students will discover the diversity of life in a variety of habitats, compare living and nonliving features and discover how each habitat is similar or different by learning about the plants and animals that survive in each.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wetland - Fall/Spring Forest - Fall/Spring Meadow - Fall/Spring
1-8	Owls & Nocturnal Life - PS3, LS1-4, ESS3, ETS2 Don't be left in the dark, get en-light-ened on how an owl's adaptations allow them to live nocturnally! You'll also learn which owls can be found nearby and what sounds they make. <i>Owl pellet dissection optional.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owls & Nocturnal Life - Year-round
3	Creature Connections & Life Cycles - LS1-4, ETS2, PS4 How do creatures perpetuate themselves from season to season and year to year? Students will be introduced to the amazing strategies creatures use to complete their life cycles in a variety of different habitats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forests & Trees - Year-round Wetlands & Beavers - Year-round Wetlands & Frogs - Spring Meadows & Insects - Fall Meadows & Bluebirds - Spring
4	Creature Connections & Adaptations - LS1-4, ETS2, PS4 Using the springboard of a featured creature, students will look at how creatures are adapted for their role in each ecosystem as well as how they are connected to other organisms around them in the food web.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forests & Squirrels - Year-round Forests & Woodpeckers - Year-round Wetlands & Beavers - Year-round Wetlands & Frogs - Spring Meadows & Bees - Fall Meadows & Bluebirds - Spring
5-6	Creature Connections & Ecosystems - LS1-4, ESS1-3, ETS2 While exploring various ecosystems, students will investigate and collect data on the factors that distinguish each. Along the way, they'll examine how the roles of various organisms are connected to each other. <i>*Great Lakes Dunes cannot be paired with another topic (see page 5)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upland Forests - Fall/Spring Meadow - Fall/Spring Wetlands - Fall/Spring Bottomland Forest - Fall/Spring *Great Lakes Dunes - Fall/Spring
3-12	Set up Camp! Tent & Fire-building - PS1-3, LS2, LS4, ESS1-3, ETS1-2 Let's go camping! Students will be challenged as they work together to perform some essential camping skills: Setting up a tent and building a campfire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up Camp! - Year-round
3-12	Birding Basics - LS1-4, ESS2-3, ETS2 Students will sharpen their observation skills by learning how to use binoculars and identify birds by sight and sound. Then they will put their skills to use by watching birds at the bird feeders and outdoors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bird Feeder Observation - Fall/Winter Bird Songs Activity - Spring
3-12	Skull Detectives - LS1-4, ESS3, ETS1-2 Discover the variety of skull structures in different animals and learn how to key them out in a detective style program that involves teamwork and hands on activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skull Detectives - Year-round
3-12	Maps & Orienteering - LS1-2, ESS2-3, ETS1-2 Smart phones down, compasses up! Students will learn how to use a compass and then work together to navigate the trails using their new skill.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maps & Orienteering - Year-round
PK-12	Winter Adventure! - LS1-4, ESS2-3 Adventure through the park by snowshoe, investigate animal tracks, and discover how creatures prepare for and survive the winter season in a variety of ways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whose Track is That? - Winter Winter Adaptations - Winter



School Program Menu - Specialty programs: Choose one for your visit!

During these programs, students will participate in multiple stations over 3.5 hours (including 30 minutes for lunch). Elements of these programs cannot be paired with other topics. All of the programs listed below can be scheduled in the fall or spring.

GRADE	PROGRAM & DESCRIPTION
3-4	<p>Rendezvous! Fur Trade on the Grand - LS1-4, ESS2-3, ETS 1</p> <p>An active outdoor experience that engages children in several activities demonstrating the life and times of Michigan's fur trade. This program takes place at former rendezvous location, Connor Bayou, where students will rotate through the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Furs in the Trade: Check out real furs and learn why the beaver was king. • Early Life on the Grand: Learn about what early settlers and traders used and wore in their daily lives. • Furopoly: Play a game to learn more about the fur trade. • Story Time: Hear a story of the fur trade and engage in discussion. • The Rendezvous: Play childrens games of the fur trade era. • Songs of the Voyageurs: Sing "Alouette" in the voyageur's mother tongue. • A Gabagouache Experience: Paddle an authentic reproduction of a voyageur canoe.
5-12	<p>Grand Lady Riverboat Experience - LS1-4, ESS1-3, ETS1-2</p> <p>Experience the Grand River from the deck of the Grand Lady Riverboat! Onboard, students will observe habitat features of the river and connect them to ecosystem and watershed health. This program takes place at Grand River Park where students will visit the following ecosystems onland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grand River Watershed • Upland Forest • Meadow • Bottomland Forest <p><i>*Additional fees for boat reservation</i></p>
5-12	<p>Great Lakes Dune Exploration - PS4, LS1-4, ESS1-3</p> <p>Take a shallow dip into a sensory experience or a deeper dive into dune formation and ecology. This program can be held at Rosy Mound Natural Area, Kirk Park, or North Ottawa Dunes/North Beach Park. Choose from two experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "First visit to Lake Michigan" Experience • Dune Ecosystem Study
6-12	<p>Eco-Vision - LS1-4, ESS1-3, ETS1-2, PS4</p> <p>Discover the role of various natural & human influences on different ecosystems. While exploring, gain insight into how these ecosystems provide us important services and how we can be good stewards of them. Students will rotate through the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wetlands Lab • Michigan Pine Forests • Wetland Investigation • Invasive Species • Watersheds
1-12	<p>Service-based Learning - PS1, LS1-4, ESS2-3, ETS1-2</p> <p>Service-based learning is both a volunteer and school program. Students will have the opportunity to outside and care for our natural lands, learning about ecosystems while improving them. Service-based learning workdays include volunteer work such as invasive plant removal and litter removal, as well as an educational component.</p>



Grand Lady Riverboat Program



Rendezvous! Fur Trade on the Grand River



Service-based Learning Invasive Removal



Tips for planning a trip to an Ottawa County Park on your own

Visiting Parks

Are you visiting an Ottawa County Parks property with your class? Here are a few tips to plan your visit:

- Please let us know you're coming in advance by contacting us by email or phone. This helps us ensure that the park and facilities (like restrooms!) are ready for a large group.
- Familiarize yourself with park rules and regulations, which vary by property. For example, while visitors are not allowed off trail at parks, off trail hiking and exploration is allowed at open spaces.
- Follow Leave No Trace: Take only pictures, leave only footprints.
- Special events require a permit; be sure to check if you need a permit for the event you are planning.

Do you need a facility for your visit? Ottawa County Parks has a number of facilities available for rent.

Information about park rules, special event permits, and facility rentals can be found online: [miOttawa.org/parks](https://miottawa.org/parks)



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