

Ottawa County  
Parks & Recreation

# School Programs

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

Our professional naturalist guides aim to provide field trips that are enriching, positive, and memorable, giving your students tangible experiences to relate back to what is taught in your classroom.

[miOttawa.org/fieldtrips](http://miOttawa.org/fieldtrips)



## Nature-based field trips

Our goals go beyond supporting your students' learning, as we always 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.

*Our programs meet or exceed the Next Generation Science Standards for K-8 grade students and the curriculum goals of high school teachers.*

## Program Length

Each topic is approximately one hour in length, unless otherwise noted. During their visit, students will rotate through activities planned for each topic. If you have additional time, we can cover additional topics. Times can also be adjusted to meet your group's needs. If you have questions, please let us know on your program request form: [miOttawa.org/fieldtrips](http://miOttawa.org/fieldtrips)

## Pricing

Unless otherwise noted, fees are based on the number of Naturalist Guides required to ensure the best experience for your students.

- \$30 for the first hour for each guide and \$15/guide for each additional hour
- Group size limited to 15 students per guide

*Example: A 2-hour program for 16-30 students would be \$90  
(30+15) x 2 = \$90*

Service-based learning projects are free-of-charge.



## Ready to schedule a field trip?

>> Complete our program request form at:  
[miOttawa.org/fieldtrips](http://miOttawa.org/fieldtrips)

>> Contact the Ottawa County Parks  
Nature Center with questions:  
(616) 786-4847  
[naturecenter@miottawa.org](mailto:naturecenter@miottawa.org)



## Pre-K & Kindergarten

### ● Planting the Wild Garden

Seeds, Plants, and Trees - Who planted the forests and meadows? Explore the movements of seeds and follow plants and trees through their life cycle.

### ● Sleepy Animals

Sssh! Someone is snoozing the day away... we won't see these nocturnal animals, but we can learn all about how they are specially adapted for the dark.

### ● Winter Adaptations

Some animals migrate and some animals hibernate. Please don't wait to learn the great "ATES."

### ● VIP's: Very Important Pollinators

Bees and butterflies play an important role in every ecosystem. Discover their life cycle and the ways these creatures are VIPs!

### ● Insect Detective

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.

### ● Wonderful Worms

One of our most requested programs! Wiggle and Woggle will introduce you to decomposers and what makes worms so wonderful.

### ● Nature's Engineers

Animals are made to be incredible builders. Let's discover what special "tools" they use to make homes and find food.

### ● Habitats/Ecosystem Comparison

While investigating the colors, shapes, and textures of various places in the park, we will discover if these places have everything an animal needs to live there.

### ● Camo Critters

Now you see me! Now you don't! Camouflage is nature's game of hide-and-seek. How many critters can we find?

### ● All About Birds

What makes a bird, a bird? So much to investigate about the different feathers, beaks, and nests of these backyard buddies.

### ● Creature Conundrum: Fur & Feathers, Tracks & Feet

It's an animal treasure hunt! Follow the clues to figure out who has been here.

### Seasonal program key

(pre-k and kindergarten only)

If you're interested in a reoccurring forest school experience throughout the school year, please contact us!

● Fall

● Winter

● Spring



## 1st & 2nd Grade

### Habitat Discovery

Guided by their senses and a spirit of exploration, students will explore 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 various plants and animals that survive in each.

- Wetlands
- Forests
- Meadows
- Camouflage

### Service-Based Learning

Service-based learning is a special segment of our volunteer and school programming. In addition to getting students outside and caring for our natural lands, it is an opportunity to connect students with the outdoors and our natural heritage. Students enjoy learning about ecosystems while improving them.

### Winter Adventure!

In winter, students will adventure through the park by snowshoe, investigate animal tracks, observe birds at the feeders, and discover how creatures prepare for and survive the winter season in a variety of ways.

- Snowshoeing
- Whose Track is That?
- The Great "ATES" of Winter Animal Adaptations





## 3rd & 4th Grade

### Living History

An active outdoor experience that aims to engage students in activities that explain and demonstrate the life and times of Michigan's fur trade. The program is set at Connor Bayou in Robinson Township, a former rendezvous location.

- Furs in the Trade - An interactive experience that presents real furs, their value as a natural resource, and why beaver was king.
- Early Life on the Grand - Learn about the things that the early settlers and traders used and wore in their daily lives.
- Furology: Trading Along the Grand - A game involving the methods used, groups involved, and materials traded in the fur trade.
- Story Time - Engage and discuss a story of the Fur Trade.
- The Rendezvous - Play games that the children of the Fur Trade era would have played at the rendezvous.
- Songs of the Voyageurs - Learn to sing "Alouette" in the voyageurs' mother tongue and discover the importance of traditional songs.
- A Gabagouache Experience - An opportunity to experience the roles the voyageurs played as you paddle an authentic reproduction of a voyageur canoe on the Grand River.

### Creature Connections & Adaptations

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.

- Beavers & Wetlands
- Woodpeckers & Forests
- Plant Life & Meadows
- Owls & Nocturnal Life

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### Outdoor Adventure Series

Incorporate additional outdoor skills into any program and give your students a true adventure!

- Fire-building - learn the elements of fire and how to build and light one safely and effectively.
- Orienteering - in an age of smart phones, maps and compasses are becoming lost tools. Help your students understand how to navigate without the aid of electronics!
- Birding Basics - Students will be introduced to using binoculars, along with methods for observing and identifying birds. Then they'll either observe birds at the feeders (fall/winter) or go on a walk to visit birds in their habitats (spring).

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## 5th & 6th Grade

### Ecosystem Investigation

Designed as an immersive scientific investigation experience, students will unlock the secret factors influencing the life that survives in a variety of habitats. Our guides will drive the process by asking questions, ultimately helping them view their surroundings in a different light.

- Upland Forests
- Bottomland Forests
- Meadow/Prairies
- Wetlands
- Great Lakes Dunes (limited locations and group sizes)

### Grand Lady Riverboat\*/ Ecosystem Investigation

Experience the Grand River from the deck of a riverboat! Guided by staff, students will observe features of the river and learn about watersheds. Students will also investigate different habitats on land at Grand River Park (see Ecosystem Investigation).

- Riverboat: River wildlife/habitat observations and Grand River watersheds
- On Land: Upland Forest, Bottomland Forest, Meadow Ecosystem Investigations

*The Grand Lady Riverboat is a three-hour program.*

*Additional pricing: \$500 (for boat rental).*



## 6th-8th Grade

### Eco-Vision

Designed for large middle school groups, students will visit various stations and discover the role of both natural and human influences on different ecosystems. In the process, they'll gain insight into how these ecosystems provide us important services and how we can be good stewards of them.

- Michigan Pine Forest
- Invasive Species
- Wetland Lab
- Watersheds

### Great Lakes Dune Ecology

Residents of Ottawa County are privileged to live in close proximity to a globally unique ecosystem along the Lake Michigan coastline. Explore the freshwater Great Lakes dune ecosystem and discover the process of dune formation and ecological succession.

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## 9th-12th Grade

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## 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:

- 1 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.
- 2 Familiarize yourself with park rules and regulations, which may vary by property. For example, while visitors are not allowed off trail at parks, off trail hiking and exploration is allowed at open spaces. See page 8 for a list of parks and open spaces.
- 3 Follow *Leave No Trace* principles: Take only pictures, leave only footprints.
- 4 Special events require a permit; be sure to check if you need a permit for the event you are planning.
- 5 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 rental can be found online: [miOttawa.org/parks](http://miOttawa.org/parks)



**Ottawa County Parks Nature Center**  
8115 West Olive Rd, West Olive, MI 49460  
(616) 786-4847  
[naturecenter@miottawa.org](mailto:naturecenter@miottawa.org)  
[miOttawa.org/parks](http://miOttawa.org/parks)





## What's the difference between an Ottawa County park and an open space?

**Parks** include properties where major improvements have been made such as paved parking lots, restroom buildings, designated trails, picnic shelters, playgrounds and other facilities. Some properties designated as parks are currently unimproved; however, improvements are expected to be completed in the future. Parks have more rigid rules and hunting is not allowed except by special permit.

**Open space lands** are typically undeveloped natural lands with fewer rules than parks. Many open space lands do not have designated trails and at properties where trails do exist, they are not signed as extensively as parks. Parking areas are usually small and have gravel surfaces. Dogs are allowed off-leash and most are open to some form of hunting.

### LEGEND

- County Park
- County Parks & Recreation Property
- Regional Trail (managed by Ottawa County Parks)
- County Open Space Land
- State Parks & Recreation Property
- Regional Trail (managed by other organizations)
- P Regional Trail Parking
- Ottawa County Parks Nature Center
- Universally Accessible Kayak Launch



### PARKS

- Adams Street Landing 1
- Connor Bayou 2
- Crockery Creek Natural Area 3
- Deer Creek Park 4
- Eastmanville Farm 5
- Grand Ravines 6
- Grand River Park 7
- Grose Park 8
- Hager Park 9
- Hawthorn Pond Natural Area 10
- Hemlock Crossing 11
- Historic Ottawa Beach 12
- Kirk Park 13
- Musketawa Trail 14
- North Beach Park 15
- North Ottawa Dunes 16
- Olive Shores 17
- Ottawa Sands 18
- Paw Paw Park 19
- Pigeon Creek Park 20
- Pine Bend 21
- Riley Trails 22
- Riverside Park 23
- Rosy Mound Natural Area 24
- Stearns Creek Park 25
- Spring Grove Park 26
- Tunnel Park 27
- Upper Macatawa Natural Area 28

### OPEN SPACES

- Bend Area Open Space 29
- Bur Oak Landing 30
- Eastmanville Bayou 31
- Grand River Open Space 32
- Hiawatha Forest 33
- Johnson Street Forest 34
- Jubb Bayou 35
- Kuits Bayou 36
- Port Sheldon Natural Area 37
- Ripps Bayou 38
- Robinson Forest 39
- Van Buren Street Dunes 40