



# Vermilion Conservationist Summer 2018

Forest Glen

Kennekuk

Lake Vermilion

Heron

## 2018 CONSERVATION OLYMPICS

Vermilion County 6th grade students, with their instructors, mentors, and parent volunteers for this year's Conservation Olympics, gathered at Forest Glen Preserve on Friday, May 11. This valuable educational program is now in its 35th year. Thirteen teams representing six schools participated in this year's series of the VCCD's Olympic events. They were: Oakwood Elementary (4 teams), Salt Fork Junior High (3 teams), Judith Giacoma Elementary (3 teams), Potomac Elementary (1 team), Mary Miller Junior High Georgetown (1 team), and Schlarman Academy (1 team).

The instructors prepared the students well over the past few months, and it was evident as they competed in nine events. Each event tested the student's knowledge concerning state and county natural heritage. The students were awarded 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place medals in each individual event and each team's event scores were totaled and the following teams were awarded plaques.

- 1st Place - **Salt Fork Team Omnivores**
- 2nd Place - **Oakwood Team 4**
- 3rd Place - **Judith Giacoma Team Navy**
- 4th Place - **Oakwood Team 2**
- 5th Place - **Oakwood Team 3**
- Gary L. Wilford Sportsmanship Award -  
**Potomac Cardinals**

One 6th grade participant shared with us after winning a team event, "this is the proudest moment of my life!"



First Place Team Salt Fork Omnivores

Thank you goes out to volunteers Jonathan Myers, Ken and Cheryl Hannan, Gary and Judy Wilford, Larry Gilliland, Mike and Ruthie Hannan, Jennifer Jenkins, Debbie and Willie Howell, Alex Hannan, Erica Briggs, and Betsy Daily and her students from Georgetown-Ridge Farm High School for assisting VCCD Staff with the day's events. And especially to those wonderful 6th grade Conservation Olympic teachers whose time and efforts are invaluable to the program's success.



## Vermilion Conservationist

This newsletter is a publication of the Vermilion County Conservation District. It covers news, programs, and natural history information of interest to residents of Vermilion County. It is free upon request from:

Vermilion County Conservation District  
22296 Henning Road  
Danville, IL 61834

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## Director's Dateline

The arrival of the summer season's warmer temperatures and extended daylight hours brings a definite change to the amount of visitors and activity in all the county parks. The summer season keeps the staff busy with mowing, cleaning, maintenance, and repairs. The full time staff of 12 as well as part-time and seasonal employees work hard and do their best to maintain your parks. The VCCD also relies on volunteers to help with a vast array of duties.

In addition to the regular maintenance, repairs, summer camps, and special events we want to accomplish many projects to better serve our visitors. At Lake Vermilion we are planning on repairs to the boat ramp and resurfacing the parking lot. A new non-floating concession building is planned to replace the current building. The concession building project is being funded by a private donation.

Some projects at Forest Glen will be the continued repair to the spillway at Willow Creek Pond, a new bridge on the Old Barn Trail, possible resurfacing of the handicap trail, and we are hoping to get reliable internet service for park office operations. The campgrounds will get a new RV dump station, septic system, shower house roof, and resurfacing of some camping pads.

Kennekuk will see exterior painting of several buildings in the Bunker Hill Historic Area. The Hideaway rental facility will get exterior painting and window replacement. New front door, some siding replacement, and updated insulation are in the plans for the Kennekuk Visitor Center. We will also be busy updating the landscape at the road leading to Horseshoe Pond and the main park entrance.

The boardwalk at Heron County Park received more damage earlier this year. The heavy rain wedged more logs under the boardwalk. We will attempt to remove the logs and repair damaged sections as soon as we can.

We look forward to seeing you at the parks this summer!

Jamie Pasquale  
Interim Executive Director

# "Cheeseburgers and FUN"



Sponsored By

**SATURDAY**

**AUGUST 11**

**NO COVER CHARGE!  
DONATIONS GLADLY ACCEPTED**

**KENNEKUK COUNTY PARK  
DANVILLE, IL**

**LIVE  
BANDS**

**Featuring**   
**1'N 1 - 3 P.M.**  
**LEFT 4 DEAD 4-6 p.m.**  
**LADY LUCK 7-9 p.m.**

**At 3:00 p.m.**

**CHEESEBURGER COOKOUT**

**burgers, chips, soda ~ \$6.00**

**For more information call 217-442-1691**

**KID'S  
ACTIVITIES** 

**PLUS**

**11th Annual Bunker Hill Run  
- On Display 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. -  
Antique, Muscle Cars,  
Hot Rods & Antique Tractors  
Cruise-in!**



**RAFFLES!  
PRIZES!**

 **KENNEKUK ROAD RUNNERS ~ HOWL AT THE MOON 8 HOUR WALK/RUN** 

 **VERMILION VOLES VINTAGE BASEBALL JAMBOREE ~ NOON** 

# Summer Programs and Activities



- June**
- 2 Public Hayride at Forest Glen, 7 p.m. Meet at LJK Visitor Center parking lot. \$1/person Fee
  - 2 Illini Bass Club & D.A.R.E. Kid's Fishing Derby, Horseshoe Pond, Kennekuk, 9 a.m. Free!
  - 4 VCCD Wildlife Programs begin for 9 weeks at Vermilion County Libraries. Free!  
See accompanying article on page 5
  - 8 VCCF Board Meeting, Kennekuk Environmental Education Center, 9 a.m.
  - 20 VCCD Board Meeting at Gannett Education Center, 4:30 p.m. Forest Glen. Public Invited
  - 20 \*Toddling Into Nature Camp "Wonderful Wetlands" - open to ages 3, 4, 5 yrs. 10 a.m. or 2 p.m.  
Kennekuk Environmental Education Center
  - 21 \*Toddling Into Nature Camp "Wonderful Wetlands" - open to ages 3, 4, 5 yrs. 10 a.m. or 2 p.m.  
Kennekuk Environmental Education Center
  - 26 \*Science in Nature Camp - 3rd-5th Grade; 9 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  
Kennekuk Environmental Education Center
  - 27 \*Pioneer Kids Camp - 1st-3rd Grade; 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Forest Glen

- July**
- 7 Public Hayride at Forest Glen, 7 p.m. Meet at LJK Visitor Center parking lot. \$1/person
  - 10 \*Photographing Nature Camp - 5th-10th Grade; 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
Kennekuk Environmental Education Center
  - 11 \*Toddling Into Nature Camp "The Need for Seeds" - open to ages 3, 4, 5 yrs. 10 a.m. or 2 p.m.  
Kennekuk Environmental Education Center
  - 12 \*Toddling Into Nature Camp "The Need for Seeds" - open to ages 3, 4, 5 yrs. 10 a.m. or 2 p.m.  
Kennekuk Environmental Education Center
  - 14 Spinners & Weavers Day, Forest Glen's Gannett Education Center; 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Free!
  - 14-15 French and Indian War Re-enactment, Forest Glen Homestead Cabin. Free!

\* Preregistration & fee required, registration form online at [vccd.org](http://vccd.org) or at park visitor centers

## July

- 18 VCCD Board Meeting at Kennekuk Environmental Education Center, 4:30 p.m. Public Invited
- 19 \*Creek Stomping Ecology Camp - 4th-6th Grade; 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Forest Glen
- 21 \*Creek Stomping Ecology Camp - 4th-6th Grade; 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Forest Glen
- 22 Forest Glen Preserve Whitetail Archery Deer Hunt Lottery Draw  
Forest Glen Gannett Education Center  
For more information, call Cole Craft 217-369-0871
- 27 VCCF Board Meeting, Kennekuk Environmental Education Center, 9 a.m.

## August

- 4 Public Hayride at Forest Glen, 7 p.m. Meet at LJK Visitor Center parking lot. \$1/person Fee
- 5-10 VCCD Wildlife Display at the Georgetown Fair - Come visit us!
- 11 VCC Foundation "Cheeseburgers & Fun" at Kennekuk's Bunker Hill Historic Area.  
Live bands, antique car show & entertainment. Call 442-1691 for details
- 15 VCCD Board Meeting at Kennekuk Environmental Education Center, 4:30 p.m. Public Invited

\* Preregistration & fee required, registration form online at [vccd.org](http://vccd.org) or at park visitor centers

### VCCD Wildlife Literacy Program coming to your local library again this summer!

Find out how "Reading Takes You Everywhere!" this summer with VCCD Naturalists at local libraries! A nature-filled exhibit will be displayed at the libraries below for the week with a special program given by a naturalist one day. This program, open to all ages, will show how naturalists use books like field guides and research papers to educate themselves on the flora and fauna native to particular areas. We will also incorporate stories about our local natural forests, prairies, rivers, and more. Contact Forest Glen at 662-2142 or your local library for more information.

June 4-11	Oakwood Public Library, Program on Monday, June 11 at 10:30am
June 11-15	Westville Public Library, Program on Friday, June 15 at 10am
June 18-25	Georgetown Public Library, Program will be held at Georgetown Park on Monday, June 18 at 10am
June 25-28	Hoopeston Public Library, Program on Thursday, June 28 at 2pm
July 9-16	Catlin Public Library, Program on Tuesday, July 10 at 1pm and Wednesday, July 11 at 1pm
July 16-20	Potomac Public Library, Program on Friday, July 20, time TBA
July 20-27	Vance Township Library, Program on Friday, July 27 at 2:00pm
July 27-August 1	Ridge Farm Public Library, Program on Wednesday, August 1 at 1pm
August 6-10	Danville Public Library, Program Wednesday, August 8 at 2pm

# Spring?! 2018

Outdoor School at Forest Glen  
by Nick Jeurissen

The first class of the spring season arrived this year on the brisk morning of April 2nd. Awaiting the 5th grade students of Salt Fork North Elementary stood two smiling park naturalists and approximately two inches of fresh snow. Even though winter was refusing to go away, the kids were prepared and ready to hit the trails.



Fresh snow (photo: Lara Darling)

We began our first day in the classroom with a brief orientation and a few minutes to explore all the cool stuff. The animal pelts are always a favorite. Where else could you pet a river otter and a bobcat fur at the same time! The skulls, found by district employees or donated by local residents, also drew attention. Once the students have had some time to check things out, use the microscopes, and walk around the stations set up along the room's perimeter, the 5th graders questions and stories began to surface and head at me from all directions. This is when I know the gears are turning in their heads and we need to regroup. I explain to them what our Conservation Districts mission is, why Forest Glen is incredibly unique, and how many of their parents sat in the same classroom during their time at Outdoor School. After handing out workbooks and answering questions concerning the amazing collection of wildlife artifacts found throughout the classroom, I begin the day's lesson by asking them if they saw any wildlife as their bus made its way through the preserve and down the hill to the Sycamore Hollow Campus. Most classes are able to observe numerous white tailed deer browsing along the roadside and open fields and of course they all want to tell me their sightings at the same time. The stage is now set for a fun filled week of exploring and hands on science.



Trillium, left, trying to grow through the snow (photo: Lara Darling)

My field notes from last year indicated all the signs of spring by this time of the season, nevertheless winter was holding on tight. There were no ephemeral woodland wildflowers to be found. No emerald green six spotted tiger beetles, no May apples popping up like groves of beach umbrellas, nor Ohio buckeye leaves beginning to leaf out. On the other hand, the animal tracks were abundant and not trampled by human footprints. Very few classes get the opportunity to clearly see the signs of wildlife movement throughout the area. Most of the park's resident wildlife are nocturnal creatures that hide from our view during the daylight hours. With the fresh snowfall, kids can visualize the gait of each animal with their tracks in the snow and learn about the diversity of species in the preserve. Unfortunately, sound travels when there is no vegetation and a fresh layer of snow, so any chance of tracking and seeing the animals was futile considering one is walking through the woods with a bunch of excited kids.

The next two days came with a mixture of pouring rain and snow. Not ideal conditions, but not enough to keep us inside. However, the high winds were too dangerous to be out on the trails. It wasn't a total loss though. The previous week, I went out and collected a few black rat snakes for the Nature Center, one snake measuring nearly four feet in length.

Continued on following page

I explained to the kids that I am temporarily keeping these animals for Outdoor School and that I can never simulate the habitat nature provides in the woods, so I will let them go at the end of the school year.

Forest Glen may not be a zoo, but a few live animals seen up close allows for exciting moments while learning identification and behavior. In fact, we witnessed the black rat snake shake its tail like a rattler and give off a musky odor before stacking up in an s-shaped pattern and striking at the glass window. Everyone jumped and screamed! Last year the turkeys were the star attraction. A few wild snakes can never replace the spring time strut of the tom turkey Jake we used to have in the outside pen though. While at the Nature Center the students also had a chance to handle a tiger salamander and a western milksnake. New "eyes only" additions include the Chilean rose tarantula and an active honey bee hive.

After a while, the class headed up the hill to the pioneer cabin where a warm fire crackled in the stone fireplace. Here they imagined what life would have been like for an early settler and some even tried the sassafras tea.

The next day the weather had improved and we were able to get back outside, hike into the woods, and conduct our forest floor study or "critter crawl" as we like to call it. Even with the chilly day we found invertebrates and a redback salamander. The afternoon concluded with a trip up the observation tower to see the county from a birds eye view, high above the tree tops. With the trees still bare we could even see down to the Vermilion River.



Redback Salamander (photo: Lara Darling)

Nearly 280 4th/5th grade students from six schools attended Outdoor School at Forest Glen this spring and each week was different from the previous. If only I could get every Outdoor School class out here for one day each week throughout the spring so they could see how quickly the forest changes. Maybe we can do that in the future!

I would like to thank all the schools for continuing to include conservation into your curriculum as well as the community that supports this opportunity for our kids.

The environmental education staff educated approximately 912 students this spring with Outdoor School and one-day Nature Programs. 592 students attended Outdoor School at both Kennekuk County Park and Forest Glen Preserve. Schools at Kennekuk included Prairieview Ogden 5th grade, Armstrong 5th grade, Potomac 4th grade, First Baptist 5th grade, John Greer Hoopston 5th grade, Oakwood 5th grade, St. Joseph 4th grade, and Liberty Elementary 4th grade. Forest Glen hosted students from Salt Fork North 5th grade, Pine Crest 5th grade, Oakwood 5th grade, Salt Fork South 4th grade, St. Joseph 4th grade, and Edison Elementary 4th grade.

320 students participated in one-day Nature Programs at both parks from Salt Fork South 2nd grade, Liberty Elementary Kindergarten, St. Joseph 1st grade, Bismarck 2nd grade and Kindergarten, and Salt Fork South Kindergarten.

We are proud to have so many students participate in our environmental education programs. Thank you to all the school administrators and teachers for bringing the students out to the Vermilion County Parks!

# Where Have The Oaks Gone?

by Cole Craft

Have you taken a walk through your woods lately? I have been here now for 2 years and walked many miles through public and private woodlands. There seems to be a consistent theme taking place everywhere I go. Why is there no oak regeneration taking place in our forests? This is not just a local problem, but a problem that is an issue throughout The Eastern Hardwood Forest Region.



There are three main reasons why we are not seeing adequate regeneration in our forests. The first reason is that Oak species are very disturbance dependent. This means that something needs to take place to create gaps in the forest canopy so that sunlight can reach the forest floor. Gaps can be created by harvesting and by natural causes such as tornadoes, lightning strikes, or a canopy-dominant tree dying. Oak species require full sunlight in order to regenerate. The second reason is the lack of prescribed fire in our woods. This is also a form of disturbance but it helps in different ways compared to the others I have listed. Fire removes the leaf litter on the forest floor and returns those nutrients back into the soil. This also creates good contact between the acorns and the soil helping improve the odds of regeneration. In addition, fire will help remove the undesirable species of trees growing in the understory leaving more sunlight for your new oak seedlings. Oaks are one of the more fire resistant species we have around here; simply meaning prescribed fire does not hurt mature oak trees. Oak seedlings however, have a thinner layer of bark which could cause mortality during a burn. Oaks that are roughly 2-3 inches in diameter should have a fair chance at survival. Oaks larger than that should have no problems given that the burn is done correctly. The last reason you are not seeing any regeneration is due to invasive species. Invasive species grow much more quickly than oaks therefore the invasive species will block the sunlight that the oaks need in order to grow.

Now that you have this information it's time to take action. The first thing you need to do is contact your local forester. They can help you get started by creating a management plan so that you can best achieve your goal of Oak regeneration. I would not suggest going out and hiring a logger as the first thing you do. Steps need to be taken before harvesting your timber, or even creating canopy gaps on your own, and your local or state forester can help you with that. More information on forestry, including a list of foresters you can consult, can be found at <https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/Forestry/Pages/default.aspx>.



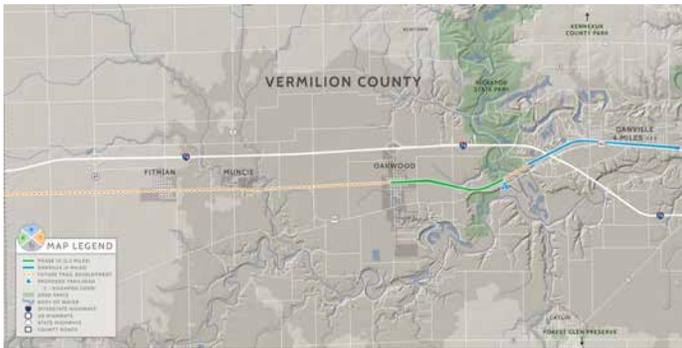
## Monthly Heron County Park Boardwalk Birdwalks

The Middlefork Audubon Society hosts monthly "boardwalk birdwalks" at Heron County Park's Wetland Boardwalk the first Saturday of every month at 7:00am and the first Sunday of every month at 2:00pm. Come join local bird experts on the diversity of birds and more found where the North Fork River enters Lake Vermilion! For more information, please contact Bud Lewsader at (217)442-3521 or lewsaderbud@aol.com

Greater Yellowlegs wading bird at left, photo by Bob Schifo

# Kickapoo Rail Trail Update

The Kickapoo Rail Trail is coming to Vermilion County! Construction bids were accepted this past April for the 1.8-mile Phase One portion that will extend from the west side of Oakwood to the west side of Gray's Siding community off Route 150. Cross Construction came in with the lowest bid. Cross Construction also completed the KRT Phase One portion in Champaign County so they are very familiar with the design and layout of the Rail Trail.



Phase One is being funded primarily with an Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP) grant. This is a federal grant program that provides funding for community-based projects that expand travel options, including bike and pedestrian travel and is administered through the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). The VCCD has to match a percentage of the ITEP grant funds. These matching funds will be from other grant sources, donations, and fundraiser event proceeds

that the Vermilion County Conservation Foundation and Champaign County Forest Preserve District has been holding on our behalf.

The next step will be a pre-construction meeting with IDOT, Farnsworth Group, Cross Construction, and the VCCD to ensure all participating organizations and businesses understand expectations. We are hopeful construction will begin in June and, depending on weather and other unknown factors, wrap up by September of this year.

If you are interested in volunteering for the Kickapoo Rail Trail, either on the fundraising committee, public relations committee, or to be a Rail Trail Steward, please contact VCCD Volunteer Coordinator, Lara Darling at [ldarling@vccd.org](mailto:ldarling@vccd.org) or 442-1691. If you want construction updates delivered to your email inbox, send an email to Kim Fox at [kfox@vccd.org](mailto:kfox@vccd.org) with "KRT Construction Update Email Group" in the subject line. For more information on the Kickapoo Rail Trail, visit <http://kickapoorailtrail.com/>.

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## Kickapoo de Paris 100-mile Ride

Another exciting fundraising event for the Kickapoo Rail Trail is planned for Sunday, July 29: The Kickapoo de Paris Ride!



In recognition of the final stage of the 2018 Tour de France, riders will depart Kickapoo State Park and pedal to the scenic Edgar County Courthouse in the town square in Paris, Illinois, and return to Kickapoo State Park, completing a 100-mile round trip. This will be the third year for this century ride event. Back by popular demand for this year's ride will be Belgium waffles served by chef John Paul in Belgium, a SAG stop at the Edgar County Courthouse, beautiful podium girls with bouquets of prairie flowers, and costumed fans encouraging riders up the final hill climb when returning to Kickapoo State Park.

Registration is now open at <https://www.signmeup.com/KickapooDeParis>. For more information, contact Lara Darling at 442-1691 or [ldarling@vccd.org](mailto:ldarling@vccd.org).

## River Ridge Backpack Trail Work Completed

On Saturday, May 12, Forest Glen Preserve was fortunate to have volunteers from the "Chicago Backpackers Meetup Group" to assist Cole Craft and Nick Jeurissen with trail work on the 11-mile River Ridge Backpack Trail. They helped with the removal of an irreparable wooden walkway bridge, cleared back brush and overhanging vegetation, and chainsaw work on fallen trees. The eight volunteers are from the Chicago area, with the exception of Crew Leader Doug Cecil from Peoria. Doug shared, "We really appreciate the opportunity to give back to Forest Glen and improve the trails that our group uses often. We hope to return again and volunteer on any other trail maintenance related activities." He estimated the volunteers contributed about 50 hours of volunteer work on Saturday. The VCCD would like to extend a hearty Thank You for all their work and effort - we welcome the crew back anytime!



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"Friends of the District"  
Thank you!

Ed Morgan, Georgetown, IL - Monetary donation towards the pheasant program.

Lucy J. Williams, Danville, IL - Monetary donation for environmental education programming.

John and Deann Currier, Oakwood, IL - Monetary donation for the Outdoor School program.

Dianne E. Seibert, Danville, IL - Monetary donation in memory of Tom Burke for environmental education programming.

# From the Garden

by Susan Biggs Warner

Spring is in full swing and so are the gardeners at the historic area. The crew at Atwood House is working on the flower and vegetable gardens and across the way at the herb garden the yearly routine is also underway. Plans are in the works for the new biblical themed garden bed and new plants are being added.

Another project they are working on is replacing the very rickety wooden trellis tower. The plan is to put up matching rustic metal towers in the back center beds. The gardeners want the towers to be around 12 or 14 feet tall. There is a small budget for the garden, but hopes are to find the towers cheap or free. If you, or anyone you know, might have the top of an old windmill tower please give us a call at 217-662-2142. We really don't need the blades, although they might be cool to incorporate also.

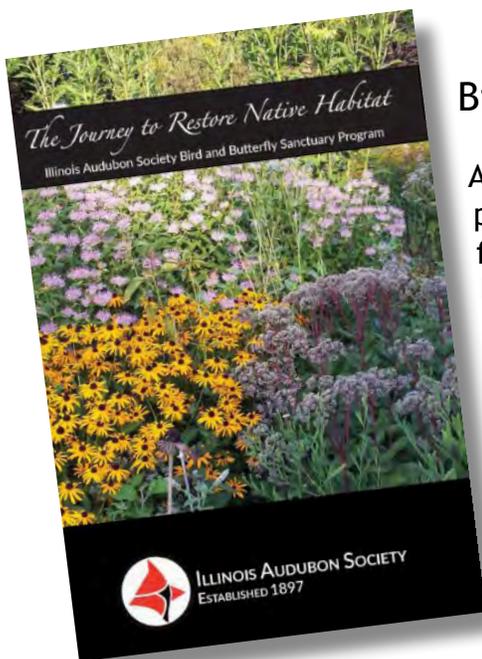
As for this issues recipe, with so many weddings, graduations, and retirements right now how about some Rosemary Biscuits. These are sure to be a hit at your party!

## Rosemary Biscuits

- 4 cups unbleached white flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 Tablespoon sugar
- 4 Tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 Tablespoons rosemary (fresh)
- 1½ cups milk or half and half



Sift the flour, salt, baking powder, soda, and sugar in a large bowl. Cut the butter into dry ingredients. Add rosemary and milk and mix gently to form dough. Preheat oven to 400°. Roll out and cut biscuits, and place on greased cookie sheet closely together. Bake 20 minutes or until golden.



## Bird and Butterfly Sanctuary Program Booklet Available

A new booklet is available from the Illinois Audubon Society to help promote the idea of converting Illinois lawns to oases of habitat featuring native species that benefit Illinois wildlife and require the landowner spend less time on yard maintenance.

Look for "The Journey to Restore Native Habitat" online at [illinoisaudubon.org](http://illinoisaudubon.org). To order a copy of the booklet, complete the on-line request form at [illinoisaudubon.org](http://illinoisaudubon.org). Only requests from the web page can be fulfilled.

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**Support Your Vermilion County Parks**  
**Vermilion County Conservation Foundation**  
**[www.vccfoundation.info](http://www.vccfoundation.info)**

The mission of the Vermilion County Conservation Foundation is to support the efforts of the Vermilion County Conservation District through the conservation of our natural resources, improvement of natural and scenic areas, scientific research, support of conservation education to citizens of Vermilion County, Illinois, and maintenance and support of capital projects to promote historical and natural preservation. The Foundation aspires to be an organization which is committed to all natural and wildlife resource conservation activities which ensure future growth, and scenic enhancements for public use. If you would like to join us, please use the form below, selecting the level of membership that is right for you.

\$25 Regular  
\$50 Supporting  
\$100 Patron  
\$1,000 Life - Payable in up to four installments, if preferred

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclose this form with your tax-deductible check payable to VCCF and send to:  
VCCF c/o Forest Glen Preserve, 20301 E. 900 North Road, Westville, IL 61883