
Environmental Education Programs

We offer year round opportunities for children, adults, and families to connect with nature. Our facility introduces the habitats, flora, and fauna of Illinois. Woodlands, wetlands and prairies surrounding us serve as living outdoor classrooms for exploration and discovery. Whether you come to us to we go to you, TNI educators help expand understanding and appreciation of the natural world and foster scientific capability using innovative teaching tools and techniques. In the classroom or in the field, learn with live animals, mounted specimens, monitoring equipment, and natural objects. All of our programs include specific academic activities that meet IL state standards and national environmental education standards.

Field Trip-On Site

Talahi Lodge (2 hour program) \$3/child
Includes program of your choice and a hike
Talahi Lodge (3+ hour program) \$4/child
Includes program of your choice, hike and team challenge or research

In School and Outreach

One hour program (up to 30 people) \$2/child
Afterschool program and scout program
Series \$2/child

Our Mission

TNI works to foster an awareness and appreciation of the natural world through preservation, restoration, and education.



Our History

In 1926, the Levis Family commissioned a group of Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) members to build a YWCA retreat called Camp Talahi. Nearly thirty years later, industrialist and entrepreneur John M Olin bought the lodge and surrounding woods. Later, Mr. Olin deeded his property to the State of Illinois, requesting that it always be preserved as a natural area. Over the years, volunteer stewards, educators, and community members of all kinds have kept Olin's vision alive. The nature Institute officially became a non-profit organization in 1980 and with the help of people like you, we continue to protect the Olin Nature Preserve and other parts of our community's natural heritage.



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*Field Trips
at TNI*

The Nature Institute is open for field trips from Public Schools, Private Schools, and Home School Groups from August to May.

We offer a wide variety of topics and activities to go along with what you are teaching in your classroom.

Pre-School and Kindergarten

Field trips for young children should be full of exploration and using their senses. We will go on a color hike, smell some plants and look for animal signs.

- Fall on the Preserves
- Spring on the Preserves
- Pond Study
- Insects
- Animal Signs and Tracks
- Worms

1st Grade-3rd Grade

As children get older then can graduate from exploring to understanding. We will explore on a hike with our senses and we will learn to identify some of the plants and animals signs we are seeing as well as understanding the difference between forest, prairie and wet-land habitats.

- Fall on the Preserves
- Spring on the Preserves
- Pond Study
- Recycling and Composting
- Bird is the Word
- Scat
- Winter Ecology
- Seeds
- Geology



4th Grade-6th Grade

As students understand nature more they want to help save it. They become stewards. With older students that want to help we can talk more about conservation. We can also focus on topics that are harder to understand such as Geology and Ecology. With these older students we can also incorporate a stewardship project with their trip.

- Geology
- Survival Skills
- GPS, Compass and Map Reading
- The Mississippi River Conservation Game
- Living History
- River Watch
- Forest Ecology
- Prairie Ecology
- Aldo Leopold and Land Ethics

Middle School and High School

As students reach middle school and high school they are ready to be challenged and take action on what they believe in. With these students our field trips can focus more on the social issues related to conservation and stewardship. We can bring up the big questions and give them a voice. In the coming months we will be developing more programs to reach these students.

- The Mississippi River Conservation Game
- Stewardship Project
- River Watch
- Any Citizen Science Project
- Invasion Ecology
- Aldo Leopold and Land Ethics



What to Bring

Students should have

- Name Tag
- Closed Toed Shoes (able to get muddy)
- Proper clothing for the weather
- Lunch

Teacher should have

- 1 chaperone for every 8 students
- Students split up into groups of about 12
- Transportation
- Payment

We can provide a campfire if you would like your students to cook hotdogs and marshmallows over a fire. We have a large fire pit and roasting sticks. You will need to provide the food.

If you have specific topics that you need us to cover we can customize a program to fit your needs.