

# OTTAWA COUNTY PARKS SCHOOL PROGRAM GUIDE

*Year-round, curriculum-based programming  
for students from pre-k to high school.*



explore  
your Ottawa County Parks



Ottawa County Parks &  
Recreation Commission

## SCHOOL PROGRAM GUIDE

Ottawa County Parks offers a variety of outdoor educational programs that meet the **Next Generation Science Standards** for K-8 grade students and the curriculum goals of high school teachers.

The goals of our programs are to:

- Provide students positive experiences interacting with nature.
- Initiate and encourage further exploration.
- Develop an emotional connection with nature.
- Develop a wider perspective of students' sense of place in the environment.
- Promote a greater understanding and attitude of responsible stewardship.



The outdoor educational field trips we offer can't be duplicated in class and are designed to enhance lesson plans. Memorable experiences and field trips help students recall what they learned when the topic is discussed in the classroom.

### ECOSYSTEM COMPARISON (GRADES 4TH-8TH)

Through hands-on exploration, participants compare different ecosystems and the factors that influence the plants that grow there. Students will also discover the secrets of life in a variety of habitats. How are plants and animals adapted to their habitat? How do they work together to function as an ecosystem? This program can be held at a variety of parks where meadow, forest, and riparian ecosystems can be investigated.

- Hemlock Crossing
- Grand Ravines North
- Grand River Park \*
- Hager Park
- Upper Macatawa Natural Area

*\*Can include a ride on the Grand Lady Riverboat to learn about Watersheds.*



### DUNE ECOLOGY (GRADES 4TH-HIGH SCHOOL)

Residents of Ottawa County are privileged to live in close proximity to the Lake Michigan coastline. Explore the natural dune ecosystem and the process of dune formation and ecological succession. This program can be held at the following parks:

- Rosy Mound Natural Area
- Kirk Park
- North Ottawa Dunes
- North Beach Park



## DISCOVERING ECOSYSTEMS SERIES: (K-6TH)

Through hands-on exploration, learn about a variety of habitats by exploring West Michigan ecosystems like meadows, forest, and rivers. This hands-on program can be held at the following parks:

- Hemlock Crossing
- Grand Ravines North
- Grand River Park\*
- Hager Park
- Upper Macatawa Natural Area

\*Can include a ride on the Grand Lady Riverboat to learn about Watersheds.



These can be full or half day sessions!



### ***Discovering Wetlands!***

Dip for wetland creatures along the boardwalk. Learn about what makes a wetland and why they are important.

### ***Discovering Meadows!***

Grassland plants, flowers, and pollinators highlight this exploration of our restored prairie in the spring. Fall is a perfect time to focus on the seed dispersal techniques of grassland plants.

### ***Discovering Forests***

Travel through Beech/Maple and Pine forests while learning a bit about Michigan forest history, tree identification, life cycles, and function.

### ***Discovering Rivers!***

The lifeblood of the local environment is found in watersheds. Explore river wildlife and water quality and learn the importance of protecting our local waterways.



## AMAZING ADAPTATIONS (PK-5TH GRADE)

Through more detailed investigation, participants engage the natural world and the amazing things found when looking a little deeper. How and why are animals adapted to do what they do? What happens when something interferes with this?

### ***Camouflage***

Discover how and why animals use camouflage, then explore the trails in search of hidden animals!

### ***Life Cycles***

From frogs and fish to butterflies and birds, different animals live different lives; find out how.

### ***Amazing Avian Adaptations***

- Hummingbirds
- Owls
- Woodpeckers
- Turkeys
- Birds and their songs

### ***Insects and Invasive Species (3rd-HS)***

90% of insects are specialists! How does this impact the relationship between plants, insects, and the food web? What happens when invasive species are introduced into an ecosystem?

# ADDITIONAL PROGRAM OFFERINGS

## **Seasonal (2nd-HS)**

Don't let the winter weather keep you indoors!

- Animal Tracking
- Skull Detectives\*
- Birding Basics
- Cross-country skiing & snowshoeing

*\*This program can be led in your classroom.*

## **Outdoor Adventure Series (4th-HS)**

Incorporate outdoor skills into the field trip including the use of map, compass, and binoculars.

- Survival
- Firebuilding
- Orienteering
- Birding Basics

## **Service-Based Learning**

Service learning projects are a special segment of our volunteer and school programming. In addition to getting students outside and caring for our natural lands, it's an educational opportunity to connect students with the outdoors and our natural heritage. It's a chance to teach students about ecosystems while improving an ecosystem. Opportunities are available for all age groups.



# CURRICULUM STANDARDS

Our outdoor programs & field trips were developed to meet curriculum standards for each grade level. Programs can be offered anytime of year to accommodate for specific curriculum goals.

- Kindergarten: K-LS1-1, K-ESS2-2, K-ESS3.c
- 1st Grade: LS1.A, LS1.B, LS1.D, LS3.A, LS3.B
- 2nd Grade: LS2.A, LS4.D, ESS1.C
- 3rd Grade: LS1.B, LS2.D: LS3.A, LS3.B, LS2.C, LS4.C, LS4.D
- 4th Grade: LS1.A, ESS2.A, ESS2.E
- 5th Grade: PS3.D, LS1.C, LS2.A, LS2.B, ESS2.A, ESS3.C
- Middle School: LS2.A, LS2.B, LS2.C, LS4.D, ETS1.B, LS2.A, LS2.B, LS2.C, LS4.D, ETS1.B



# NATURE EDUCATION CENTER

Contact Parks staff at the Nature Education Center to schedule your school program!

The Nature Education Center at Hemlock Crossing County Park | 8115 West Olive Rd, West Olive, MI 49460

Phone: (616) 786-4847 | E-mail: [naturecenter@miOttawa.org](mailto:naturecenter@miOttawa.org) | Website: [miOttawa.org/Parks](http://miOttawa.org/Parks)