Camp Redtail = Fun

The Boone County Conservation District operates an adventure camping program for youth ages 12 – 15 years old called Camp Redtail. Each summer the BCCD takes a small group of kids on four-day overnight camping trips. The goal of Camp Redtail is to model the principles of responsible outdoor recreation to young people by identifying regional outdoor recreation opportunities, teaching Leave No Trace principles, modeling safe outdoor recreation habits, teaching outdoor life skills, and building self-confidence.

This past summer Camp Redtail spent four days at Turkey Run State Park in Indiana and four days backpacking in the Porcupine Mountains along Lake Superior in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The following article was written by Grace (15yr), who has been a long time participant of the BCCD’s summer camp programs.

Camp Redtail is one of the most fun things that I do every summer. It is the embodiment of what I want to experience on a camping trip. You get to interact completely with the outdoors and you get to make connections with people that you’d never expect. Despite the difficult parts, like backpacking a few miles or hiking out of a ravine, it always manages to be fun.

You might think it's simply a week in the wilderness with no running water (sometimes) that is spent sleeping on the ground. After a day spent on a bus and arriving only to have to hike to your campsite or set up your tent right away it might seem tiring. However, after spending a few days surrounded by the beautiful scenery and some of the most fun and interesting people that you might not have met otherwise, you'll want to come back year after year.

This was my last year as a camper, and that's saying something since I've been going to BCCD camps for 11 years straight. After experiencing so many years of going to camp it seems odd to think about not being a camper anymore. Once you have immersed yourself into a world full of great company and the wilderness for so long it's strange to think about it being different.

Even though I was sad to think of this as my last year as a camper, I still had a lot of fun. The Turkey Run trip was fun and laid back. We went hiking, letterboxing, swimming, and horseback riding. We slept in tents, took turns cooking dinner, and roasted s’mores.

The backpacking trip is always one of the hardest trips. This was my second time going and it was easier than the first. The trail that we took ended at the shores of Lake Superior. Finally getting to the lake and feeling the cool breeze come off of it is one of the best feelings you can have. You feel like you've accomplished something.

This summer was a great end to my camper years, although I'll most likely be a volunteer leader next year. These trips get kids outside, camping and experiencing the wilderness in a way that we never would have before. Camp Redtail is, and always will be a great memory for me and will connect me with the outdoors throughout my life.
The Mission of the Boone County Conservation District is to preserve and manage natural areas and open spaces for ecological, educational, and recreational benefits of present and future generations.

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Riffles & Eddies is a free newsletter published quarterly. If you know someone who would like to receive this publication, or has an address correction, please call our office at (815) 547-7935.

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**Send a Kid to Camp**

**Camp Redwing** is an outdoor environmental education day camp for children ages 6 – 11 years. It runs for 5 weeks. Each week offers a new theme, fishing, crafts, labs, swimming, a family night, field trip and lots of outdoor fun! Camp starts the week of June 22nd. Cost is $100 per week.

**Camp Redtail** is an outdoor adventure camp for youth ages 12 – 15 years. It offers two 4-day overnight camping trips. This year’s trips are caving at Maquoketa Caves State Park, Iowa and canoe camping in the Sylvania Wilderness Area, upper Peninsula of Michigan. Both trips will be in July. Equipment is provided and no experience is necessary. Cost is $200 per trip.

**Camp Ducktails** is offered one morning a week on Thursday for Pre-K children ages 4 and 5. Each week a new nature topic is introduced and includes story-time, snack-time, and crafts. Ducktails will start on June 25th. Cost is $50 for all 5 sessions or $15/session.

There are scholarships available to qualifying families for each camp. Check out photos from last summer on our Facebook page!!

**BCCD Summer Camps**
Registration begins April 1st
More information available on our website www.bccdil.org

Help us get kids outside!
Donate to the BCCD’s Send a Kid to Camp scholarship program.
Mail your donation to BCCD, 603 N. Appleton Rd., Belvidere, IL 61008

The District wants everyone to discover the benefits of recreation. For families considering any of our programs who have special considerations, such as diabetes, asthma or physical or cognitive disabilities, your participation is welcome too. The earlier you contact us so we can talk with you about how to make your experience safe and fun, the more likely it will be safe and fun!
Flora Prairie Clean Up
Tues., March 10th
9:00 a.m.—12:00 noon
Join us for the annual clean up at Flora Prairie. Volunteers will help clear brush and unsightly trash from the prairie. Wear comfortable clothing and bring work gloves.

Long Prairie Trail Clean Up
Sat., April 11th  8:30 a.m.
Join us at the junction of the LPT and State Street in Poplar Grove for juice and donuts before tackling the trail clean up. Bring work gloves if you have them.

Wildflower Walkabout - Piscasaw Fen Conservation Area
Wed., May 6th— 6:00 p.m.
Join volunteer Brian Hale on a hunt for spring wildflowers in the fen and oak savanna habitats of the Piscasaw Fen. Participants will also see the habitat restoration that is in process at this BCCD site. The area is located at the south end of Norris Lane. Norris Lane runs south off of Edson Road. Edson Road is just south and east of the Village of Poplar Grove. Easy hiking

Attention teachers—
Registration for BCCD’s spring programs will begin on Wednesday, March 4th at 7:00 a.m.

Attention Bow Hunters
Qualifying for the BCCD archery hunt will be held on:

Saturday, May 9th
8:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon
Tuesday, May 12th
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Thursday, May 14th
12:00 noon. - 7:00 p.m.
(no make up or additional dates will be scheduled)

Kishwaukee Bend Conservation Area
9416 US Rt. 20
Garden Prairie, IL
For more information visit our website: www.bccdil.org

Firearm Hunt Information
The BCCD will again host a firearm hunt. We will post qualification times, dates, cost and all other information on our web page, www.bccdil.org or on our Facebook page as the information becomes available.

Bird Hikes
Tues., May 12th  4:00 p.m.
and Sat., May 16th  7:00 a.m.
Join BCCD Volunteer John Todt for a walk to view the birds. This is the time when a lot of species of birds might be migrating through the area. Meet at the Lion’s Shelter in Spencer Conservation Area. The shelter is located near the fishing ponds at the end of the park road.

For more information or to register for any of the programs, call (815) 547-7935.

Summer Camp Staff
Now accepting applications for Summer camp staff. Applications and job descriptions are available on our website or at the office.

Prescribed Fire Season
Conservation District land management staff will be conducting prescribed burns at several of our conservation areas in the early spring. Prescribed fire is an essential and efficient management practice for the health of our native ecosystems, including prairies, savannas, and woodlands. Fire helps return nutrients to the soil, helps control undesirable exotic weeds and shrubs, increases blooming and seed production among our native plants, and stimulates the growth of our native prairie and woodland plant species. District staff manage the burns to minimize smoke on highways and neighboring properties.

Tuesday Morning Volunteer Opportunity
The BCCD Natural Resource Management Department is looking for a few more hard working volunteers to join with other hard working volunteers every Tuesday morning to help with habitat restoration projects. This is a great learning experience and chance to work with some “unforgettable” people. If interested or if you need more information, email Josh Sage at jsage@bccdil.org
Volunteers Needed

Saturday, March 21
8:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

The BCCD is looking for help with painting and cleaning the classroom and rotunda of the Gustafson Nature Center. You can stay all day, or just come for a couple of hours. Lunch will be provided for those who work all day. Call 815-547-7935 to let us know you’ll be coming to help.