



# PROGRAM GUIDE

Join us at Wesselman Woods to explore, learn, and experience the richness of an urban old-growth forest. From infants to our friends in retirement, our programs will engage the curiosity of every participant and offer hands-on discovery.



# ON-SITE PROGRAMS

*Wesselman Woods or Howell Wetlands*

To register, please visit  
[www.wesselmanwoods.org/education](http://www.wesselmanwoods.org/education)

## Registration and Pricing

Our group programs serve schools, daycares, scout troops, religious institutions, and other public organizations. We ask that any group sign-up for a program at least two months in advance, as our programs are in high demand.

**Program days are Wednesdays and Fridays during April - May, and Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays during September - November.** If you require a different weekday, please contact us to devise a plan.

For groups visiting Wesselman Woods or Howell Wetlands, it is \$6 per participant – teachers and bus drivers do not have to pay.

## Group Capacity

Groups must be less than 50 students per day. If there are more than 50 students, please consider splitting the program into two separate days or consider a self-guided experience. We please ask that leaders of any group divide their groups into smaller groups of 10-15. In order to provide first-hand interactive experiences without harm to our animal ambassadors or natural resources, small groups of ~10 students per naturalist are key. This also allows us to follow participant interests and provide personal attention to each individual. If splitting into two separate days is not manageable, the program will be half guided and half self-guided in the Nature Playscape. The naturalists will take half the group and complete the guided activities while the other group explores the Nature Playscape and then the groups will swap.

## Curriculum and Topics

Programs can be catered to meet current curriculum. We make specific adjustments to each program to match Indiana Academic Standards and Earth Charter principles.

*See examples of topics of interest on the next page.*



# \$6/PARTICIPANT

*Including chaperones*

**Teachers and bus drivers  
receive free entry.**

*If you have any questions, contact  
the Director of Education.*

# ON-SITE PROGRAM *Topics*

*Wesselman Woods or Howell Wetlands*

## **Maple Sugarbush** *Wesselman Woods*

Here at Wesselman Woods we collect sap from some of our Sugar Maple trees just outside of preserve limits. We create maple syrup with the sap we collect through a process called tapping. Students can come and see how we perform the process of tapping and sap collection.

## **Animal Groups** *Wesselman Woods or Howell Wetlands*

Students will differentiate between mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish using our animal ambassadors, biofacts, and/or the live wildlife inhabiting the woods. We will learn about local species, their adaptations, and habitats.

## **Tree & Wildflower Identification** *Wesselman Woods or Howell Wetlands*

Walk the old-growth forest and identify the various native species of trees and wildflowers. Environmental Educators can help students observe, compare, and identify the parts of wildflowers and trees as well as discuss biodiversity and how a tree grows and competes for the resources needed for survival.

## **Birds** *Wesselman Woods or Howell Wetlands*

We house a diverse array of avian predators as part of our animal ambassador collection. Students will learn about bird anatomy, diet, niches, adaptations, and food webs. Participants will compare the differences between raptors, waterfowl, and songbirds.



# ON-SITE PROGRAM *Topics*

*Wesselman Woods or Howell Wetlands*

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## **Pollinators** *Wesselman Woods or Howell Wetlands*

Pollinators are so important in the balance of our ecosystem. There are many more pollinators aside from bees, such as birds, bats, and beetles. Students will have the chance to learn about pollination through discussion, guided hikes, and exploration of some of our biofacts.

## **Biodiversity** *Wesselman Woods or Howell Wetlands*

**Forest Inventory** - Students will study biodiversity at the community level by measuring species diversity of vascular plants at Wesselman Woods. They will learn and identify specimens to the ordinal level using field guides and dichotomous keys.

**Wetlands Ecology** - Students will study biodiversity at the community level by measuring species diversity of macroinvertebrates at Howell Wetlands. They will learn and identify specimens to the ordinal level using field guides and dichotomous keys.

## **Wetlands** *Howell Wetlands*

Students will observe, identify, and describe wetland life, particularly macroinvertebrates. They will make predictions about the quality of water in a wetland and impacts of pollution, as well as recognize that organisms interact with each other and their environment in various ways for survival.

## **Lifecycles** *Howell Wetlands*

Discover the life cycles of various arthropods by engaging in macroinvertebrate fishing and bug catching. Using nets, bowls, and trays, macro-fishing will take place on the boardwalk in the marsh. This program offers students an opportunity to closely examine the various aquatic stages of animals like dragonflies and damselflies.



# ON-SITE PROGRAM *Activities*

## *Wesselman Woods*

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### **Guided Hike**

Guided hikes are led by naturalists throughout the 200-acre old-growth forest. Information within the guided hike will be geared towards the current curriculum and will connect said curriculum to the local/native-specific information of Wesselman Woods. These hikes not only introduce a new form of experience-based learning, but also present applicable information about the community and nature. These hikes may last anywhere between 30 minutes to an hour.

**Topics for consideration:** Basic WW history and information, tree identification, wildflower identification, animal evidence, bird watching, food webs, etc.

### **Animal Encounter**

**Live Encounter** – Staff educators will lead animal encounters. Wesselman Woods has numerous animal ambassadors that assist in educating the community through interactional and informational-based sessions.

*Wesselman Woods program animals include box turtles, snapping turtles, American bald eagle, great horned owl, eastern screech owl, peregrine falcon, turkey vulture, [rat, garter, king] snakes, and an eastern grey squirrel.*

*\*You may request a specific animal, but we cannot guarantee the animal will cooperate the day of program.\**

**Biofact Exploration** – Further hands-on learning is encouraged with the use of biofacts (biological artifacts). These may include taxidermy, skulls, furs, nests, feathers, and/or eggs. The utilization of physical props to demonstrate concepts that can otherwise be difficult to visualize by verbal description is a great asset to educational programs. They also allow participants to examine fine details and mechanics and “discover” the concepts on their own.

### **Nature Playscape Exploration**

The Welborn Baptist Foundation Nature Playscape at Wesselman Woods provides play opportunities for children to follow their own ideas and interests within a wooded landscape consisting of rocks, fallen logs, and native plants. With just over three-acres of natural landscape, our Nature Playscape is one of the largest in the country. Our Nature Playscape is the perfect place for unstructured play and nature exploration. Completed in June of 2022, the Bernhardt Family Bird Sanctuary increases the size of the Nature Playscape to over five acres with native plantings, natural structures, and wildlife friendly habitats. Located on the Indiana Birding Trail, the Bernhardt Family Bird Sanctuary serves as a haven for wildlife while connecting people and nature.

*See examples of Playscape self-guided activities on the next page.*



# ON-SITE PROGRAM *Nature Playscape Exploration*

*Wesselman Woods*

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## ***Arthropod Adventures***

By using nets, bug catchers, and magnifying glasses or by looking at the collection Wesselmans already has, students can distinguish between insects, arachnids, and crustaceans. The Nature Playscape serves as an optimal location for the catch and release of wild insects.

## ***Bird Watching Using Field Guides and Binoculars***

With the addition of the Bernhardt Family Bird Sanctuary, the Nature Playscape is even more wildlife friendly! This new two-acre expansion is full of native plantings including tree species, wildflowers, and forbs that attract birds. The natural log rings, wood piles, and fruit-bearing trees serve as buffets for birds like woodpeckers, tanagers, and other native passerines.

## ***5 Senses Hike***

Be a nature superhero! By using our senses, we can explore nature in a different way. The diverse habitats within the Nature Playscape serve as host environments for many diverse flora and fauna. Listening to the sounds of the forest, seeing the bright colors of the wildflowers, touching different plants, and smelling them too all serve as important sensory stimulation for growing eco-scholars. With adult approval, you can use your “taste” sense by trying honeysuckle, mint, mulberries, or sassafras.

## ***Natural Construction***

Within the Playscape are multiple “nests” made from wooden logs. By using natural materials from within the playscape, eco-scholars can alter these “nests” and turn them into forts. From there, imagination takes over and children can create games involving their handmade constructions.

## ***Mud Pies and Earth Potions***

Kids love getting dirty and making natural creations. By using shovels, buckets, pails, and water, kids can create their own mud pies and earth potions—not to be consumed! Mixing imagination, nature exploration, and mess makes for a fun learning environment!

## ***Search and Sort***

Objects will be hidden throughout the Nature Playscape and the students must team-up and find all the objects. Once all have been found, we sort them based on taxonomy.

***Animal Groups:*** mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and birds

***Arthropod Groups:*** hexapoda, arachnida, crustacea, and myriapoda



NATURE PLAYSCAPE

# ON-SITE PROGRAM *Activities*

*Howell Wetlands*



## **Guided Hike**

Guided hikes are led by naturalists. Information within the guided hike will be geared towards the current curriculum and will connect said curriculum to the local/native-specific information of Howell Wetlands. These hikes not only introduce a new form of experience-based learning, but also present applicable information about the community and nature. These hikes may last anywhere between 30 minutes to an hour.

**Topics for consideration:** Basic HW history and information, arthropods, habitats, food web, bird watching, animal evidence, tree and wildflower identification, etc.

## **Animal Encounter**

**Live Encounter** - Staff educators will lead animal encounters. Wesselman Woods has numerous animal ambassadors that assist in educating the community through interactional and informational-based sessions.

*Howell Wetland program animals include eastern screech owl, box turtles, snapping turtles, and [rat, garter, king] snakes.*

**Biofacts** – Further hands-on learning is encouraged with the use of biofacts (biological artifacts). These may include taxidermy, skulls, furs, nests, feathers, and/or eggs. The utilization of physical props to demonstrate concepts that can otherwise be difficult to visualize by verbal description is a great asset to educational programs. They also allow participants to examine fine details and mechanics and “discover” the concepts on their own.

## **Macroinvertebrate Fishing**

Macroinvertebrate fishing is led by staff educators. We utilize the marsh side of Howell (south pond) to look for aquatic invertebrates with nets, trays, and magnifiers. This is a perfect activity for those learning about insects, life cycles, water quality, or if you are just interested to find out what lies beneath the water surface.



# OFF-SITE PROGRAMS

To register, please visit  
[www.wesselmanwoods.org/education](http://www.wesselmanwoods.org/education)

## Registration and Pricing

Our outreach programs serve schools, daycares, scout troops, religious institutions, and other public organizations. We ask that any group sign-up for a program at least two months in advance. **Program days are Wednesdays and Fridays during April - May, and Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays during September - November.** The cost of an outreach program includes the cost of human traveling, wildlife traveling, and up to 75 participant fees. If there are more than 75 participants, we will work with group to formulate pricing to reflect such.

\$150 Vanderburgh and Warrick counties.

\$180 for Posey, Gibson, and Spencer counties.

## Group Capacity

Wesselman Woods thrives in small group discussions. This allows us to offer a more hands-on, personal experience. If the group is larger than 30, please consider dividing the group up to do the program in rotations.

## Curriculum and Topics

Programs can be catered to meet current curriculum. We make specific adjustments to each program to match Indiana Academic Standards and Earth Charter principles. These programs will occur on grounds of the school or organization. A class may be broken up into groups if the space allows.

*See examples of popular programs on next page.*



## \$150 / outreach

*Includes up to 75 participants*

**If there are more than 75 participants,  
we will work with the group on pricing.**



# OFF-SITE PROGRAM *Topics*

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## **5 Senses**

Geared towards preschoolers, this program allows educators to bring the woods to you, providing a hands-on learning opportunity. By engaging all five senses through biofact exploration and animal encounters, participants can discover the various textures, smells, colors, and sounds of the forest.

## **Birds of Prey**

Students will be able to meet one of the resident avian ambassadors up close and have a discussion with educators on the birds' role in the ecosystem. Although students will not be able to hold or pet the birds, we will have various biofacts for hands-on exploration.

## **Fossils and Geology**

Our collection of fossils, gemstones, rocks, and petrified wood is a treasure trove of geological wonder that has been carefully curated for educational purposes. Each item in the collection offers students an opportunity to explore the wonders of geology and paleontology up close and in person.

## **Reptiles of Southern Indiana**

In our animal ambassador program, we feature various species of snakes, box turtles, and snapping turtles. The snakes and box turtles are considered "touchable" animals, which means that participants can enjoy a hands-on experience by petting them. However, handling the snapping turtles is restricted to WW staff only.

## **Still Life Drawing**

Ideal for art classes. WW staff will bring a live animal ambassador as well as some biofacts for a still life drawing. A still life is a work of art that typically depicts similar objects which are either natural or man-made. These objects all come from the Wesselman Woods biofact (biological artifact) collection. Biofacts are great art subjects due to their immobility.



# OFF-SITE PROGRAM *Activities*

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## **Live Animal Encounter**

Staff educators will lead animal encounters. Wesselman Woods has numerous animal ambassadors that assist in educating the community through interactional and informational-based sessions.

*Outreach program animals include: box turtles, snapping turtles, peregrine falcon, turkey vulture, screech owl, and [rat, garter, king] snakes. We cannot guarantee the birds will cooperate the day of program - please keep in mind that we may need to adjust which animals to bring.*

## **Biofact Exploration**

Further hands-on learning is encouraged with the use of biofacts (biological artifacts). These may include taxidermy, skulls, furs, nests, feathers, and/or eggs. The utilization of physical props to demonstrate concepts that can otherwise be difficult to visualize by verbal description is a great asset to educational programs. They also allow participants to examine fine details and mechanics and “discover” the concepts on their own.

## **Guided Activities**

Wesselman Woods will help administer nature-based activities, such as bird watching, bug hunting, and flora and fauna identification, which are geared towards exploring and appreciating the local green spaces around the school.



# SELF-GUIDED TOURS

*Wesselman Woods or Howell Wetlands*

For more information, please visit  
[www.wesselmanwoods.org/education](http://www.wesselmanwoods.org/education)

Visiting groups are welcome to participate in a self-guided program while adhering to their own preferences. Regular admission fees will apply, granting access to the Nature Center, trails, the Welborn Baptist Foundation Nature Playscape, and the Bernhardt Family Bird Sanctuary. It is also permissible to plan a picnic outing in the area. However, we cannot assure the availability of indoor classrooms for use. Wesselman Woods does not manage the shelter houses located in Wesselman Park. To reserve a shelter house, contact the Evansville Parks and Recreation Department.

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**Groups can schedule a self-guided tour for Tuesday -  
Saturday, 9AM-5PM (4PM in the winter).  
General admission is \$5 per adult, \$3 per child under 12.  
Ages 3 and under are free.**

