

Kickapoo Reserve Program Descriptions

Alien Invaders (4th+) Invasive species have important economic and ecological consequences in Wisconsin and around the world. Students learn “citizen science” through hands-on experiments to determine the abundance of invasive earthworms and certain invasive plant species. Emphasis is placed on the importance of biodiversity and the role humans can play to prevent the spread of these “alien invaders”. If time allows, students can participate in the “tug-a-suckle” program to help remove invasive honeysuckle on the Reserve.

Animal Signs (All Ages) Students explore the Kickapoo Valley Reserve to look for signs of animal life. This class focuses on clues that emphasize animal behaviors and habits. Students learn tracking skills; animal identification; and visit different habitats such as woods, wetlands, and open fields. This class is exciting in any season. For younger students, it includes stories, games, and simplified tracking skills.

Animals in Winter (K-3rd) Students explore why winter can be hard for animals and the many ways they have to cope. Through a puppet show, a winter exploration hike, and hands-on activities, students learn how nature has prepared animals to meet the challenges of winter.

Archery (4th+) Students receive solid instruction on equipment selection, equipment use, and safety requirements. We concentrate on introducing the sport to beginners while helping refine archery skills in those students with more background. We use compound bows specifically designed for kids.

Bats (All Ages) Students learn amazing facts about these misunderstood mammals. Through the use of hands-on artifacts, games, and pictures, students explore the myths about bats and learn bat ecology and the important niche these animals fill in the natural world. Followed by a hike to see our bat houses and explore bat homes around the reserve. Includes a variety of activities, some suitable for each age group.

Birds (All Ages) Students will be introduced to bird migration on the KVR and learn some of the resident species (what they look like and sounds like). They’ll learn how to use binoculars and take a birding hike to the bird blind on one of the KVR wetlands to see interesting species up close. In unfavorable birding weather students will explore the hazards of migration with the Great Migration Challenge Game. For younger students, the program will include stories and meeting some of the bird puppets to learn about different ways that birds live.

Busy Beavers (K-3) Students will examine basic beaver morphology, behavior, life cycle, and habitat. Together they will dress and undress a beaver in order to increase their knowledge of animal “adaptation”, and animal roles in ecosystems.

Canoeing (4th +) On one of the Reserve’s small ponds, students learn important paddling techniques and safety skills for canoeing on flat water. These basic skills are important to learn before paddling in moving water (like the Kickapoo River). Students learn important techniques for entering and exiting the canoe and are given the opportunity to experience paddling in both the bow and stern. Each student will be outfitted with paddle and life vest.

Challenge Course (4th +) Our Challenge Course or “low ropes course” is designed to teach students team building skills in positive and productive ways. Each component requires groups to work together and come to consensus to achieve success. Our instructors gently guide students through the process of conquering each element and lead them through a “de-briefing” after each one is completed. This is a great team building exercise that encourages cooperation, communication, and problem solving for grades 3 through adult.

Everybody Needs a Home (K-3rd) Students explore and compare a variety of different habitats and become familiar with some of their inhabitants. They discover through a puppet show, outdoor games, and a habitat hike (where students also learn basic mapping skills) what makes each habitat suitable for certain organisms and not for others.

Flower Power (K-3rd) Through simple hands-on activities students will learn the parts of a flower, go on a flower hunt, play a pollination game and read a story or do a flower craft. A good introduction to the structure and ecology of plants.

Field Notes (4th+) Inspired by the journals of the likes of Aldo Leopold, Annie Dillard, Sigrid Olsen, and Mary Oliver, students will learn drawing and writing techniques that help them explore and observe nature. These techniques will help sharpen their observation, awareness, and identification skills. In the spring time students also learn to identify spring wildflowers.

Geology (All Ages) Students discover the unique landscape of the Kickapoo Valley and the Driftless region through a hike that takes them from valley floor to hilltop exploring the layers of geologic rock formations (and rock shelters!) in between. Students also conduct hands-on activities in the classroom to help them learn common Kickapoo Valley rocks and which rocks demonstrate exciting geologic phenomenon such as erosion and glacial movement. Includes a hands-on introduction to different rock types, and an overview of the geologic time scale.

Herptiles (All Ages) Students learn to recognize the differences and similarities of reptiles and amphibians. This program instills an appreciation of reptiles and amphibians, dispels common myths and fears, and explores contributing factors to the decline of amphibian and reptile populations. Students have a chance to learn common frog/toad calls before taking a hike that leads students on a search for herptiles. Another outdoor activity engages students in thinking about habitat that is suitable for specific herptile species.

Homestead Hike (4th+) Students take a walking tour from the Reserve's Visitor Center to explore the history of the La Farge Lake and Dam Project. The tour includes several old homestead and farm sites, the Old Highway 131 trail, the covered bridge, and the dam site. Students also learn about Native American use of the land and 19th century white settlement.

Ice Caves Hike (4th+) This is the winter version of the Geology Hike. In winter, students are treated to beautiful ice formations formed at the mouth of many of the rock shelters they may visit on the Reserve.

Life Under the Ice (All Ages) What is life in the pond like under a layer of snow and ice? We'll auger holes and take several measurements to find out! Students will collect data to prove or disprove their hypotheses on what is happening under the pond ice. The closed winter pond system offers a unique glimpse of the amazing adaptations of pond life in winter.

Orienteering (4th+) Students learn how to use a compass, read contour maps, and measure distance with paces. These important life skills are useful in so many outdoor activities from hunting and fishing to simply enjoying wild areas. Students use their new knowledge of maps and compass to complete an outdoor orienteering course.

Patterns in Nature (K-3) Students will explore the Kickapoo Valley Reserve to look for patterns in nature. Patterns can be located using the senses of sight, hearing and feeling. The students will take a hike to locate natural patterns.

Planet Walk (4th+) The size of the planets and the distances between are difficult to imagine. Most models and charts of our Solar System show the many worlds as very close together. This lesson lets

students construct a scale model of our solar system showing the relative sizes of the worlds orbiting our Sun and the immense distances between them.

Raptors (4th+) Through the exploration of different raptor species common to Wisconsin, students learn the delicate balance of predator/prey relationships, the ecology of raptors, and the importance of population dynamics. Includes a hands-on collection of raptor artifacts, an owl pellet dissection, and a hike to explore raptor habitats.

Rendezvous Games (4th+) Students participate in a variety of activities and games that are based on historic life skill activities and which also teach a cultural history lesson. Students take a trip back in time to experience skills and games used by the pioneers, lumbermen, and Native Americans of long ago.

Safe Solar Viewing (4th+) This unit is designed to let students explore the star closest to the Earth, the Sun. Students will study shadows, prisms and will use equipment such as telescopes and rainbow glasses to safely view the sun.

Seeds Everywhere (K-3rd) Through fun games and activities, students get a look at the many kinds of seeds that can be found in nature. Students learn about the special adaptations seeds have for getting themselves around, and learn to hone their observational skills along the way!

Snowshoeing (4th+) The Kickapoo Reserve now has about 60 pairs of snowshoes in sizes to fit toddlers through adults! Come explore the beauty of the Reserve in winter. Students learn snowshoe history and technique and get a close-up look at winter ecology.

Survival Skills (4th+) Situations in which wilderness survival skills are needed can happen almost anywhere. This lesson provides students with the basic skills for tackling such experiences with thought and care. Students learn proper fire building techniques, proper site selection, and techniques for building shelters and will explore the hierarchy of human needs.

Trees (All Ages) This curriculum provides students the opportunity to explore tree identification by learning to use a dichotomous key to identify distinguishing characteristics of some of the Reserve's native trees. A chromatography activity allows students to learn about the cycles of deciduous tree growth and begin to appreciate the important role of trees in ecosystems and for human use.

Water Quality Ecology (All Ages) Adapted from a Project Wild Aquatics class, this hands-on course allows students to investigate a stream or pond using water sampling techniques. Students collect and identify macro invertebrates and relate their presence as indicator species to the overall health of the body of water. For younger students, a simplified introduction to water quality and a hands-on approach to studying the local pond inhabitants along with stories and games.

Where are We? (K-3rd) Students will use hands-on activities to look at cues and methods used to recognize their surroundings and orient themselves in the natural world.

Wintergreen Trail Hike (4th+) This newly created KVR trail offers students a glimpse of several fascinating ecosystems. Highlighting the ancient relic Hemlock Forest, students learn how geology and human history have affected the land as we see it today. Students also are introduced to unique plant communities and plant adaptations. Nature Awareness skills are also emphasized on this hike through thoughtful, hands-on activities.

Wild Edibles (4th +) This workshop is intended to teach students the first steps in identifying and foraging wild edible plants of our area. Historical and present day background information will be shared to show the significance of these plants to the human species. We will explore plants of yards, forests, and meadows and learn which plant parts are available for collection in various seasons.

