

FALL / WINTER 2024-2025



ELKHART
Environmental
— CENTER —



Visit Us!



Hours

Visitors' Cabin	Monday - Friday 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Trails	Everyday DAWN - DUSK





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Highlights from Spring/Summer 2024

Earth Day

We had our most successful Earth Day yet! To start, we set an attendance record with around 700 people visiting to check out booths, enjoy activities, and, of course, pick up a free tree! Thanks to Lisa Yoder State Farm, we were able to give out larger trees (2-5 ft. tall). We gave away all 216 trees and planted about 100! During the event, visitors and volunteers built 10 wood duck houses for us to install on city property. And on top of all of that, we had **58 volunteers** give **over 162 hours** to make this event happen--making this our most supported year to date! We want to extend a big THANK YOU to volunteers for making the event possible, Freshieez for providing enough delicious pizzas to feed all our volunteers, Truma Corps and Lisa Yoder State Farm for sponsoring the event, and all of our vendors and exhibitors for making the event fun!

Fishing Clinic

Together with the City's Parks and Aquatic Biology Departments, we hosted the 2nd annual free Fishing Clinic which, like our Earth Day event, was a rousing success! This year, we extended the event by 2 hours and hosted activities 8 AM - 12 PM at High Dive Park. We also doubled the amount of free rods and reels given away--we gave away 200 by 10 AM! The clinic saw a total of 279 kids (including 177 first-time anglers). With help from over 14 volunteers (who came out at 7 AM and gave over 70 hours to help with the event), the clinic hosted stations to teach kids about basic tackle, stewardship, knot tying, casting, conservation, and other fishing skills. Parks & Recreation stationed their new concession trailer at the event and families who completed the clinic received a ticket for a free lunch.

We appreciate the support from volunteers (especially so early in the morning!) and sponsors, such as Winchester Mansion, Kem Krest, St. Joseph River Valley Fly Fishers, ClearH2O Tackle, Elkhart Festivals Inc, and community donations.

We're looking forward to growing the event and we hope to see everyone next year! If you're interested in helping out, let us know!

Solar Eclipse Party

To celebrate the solar eclipse, we had a watch party! The event sold out and we provided 200 eclipse glasses to attendees, along with eclipse-themed snacks (star-shaped cheese slices with crackers, Sun Chips, Eclipse gum, and sugar cookies for visitors to decorate), and music.



Spring/Summer Programs

Eco-Valentine's Day

Our annual Valentine's Day program featuring an eco-friendly way to celebrate! Attendees made recycled and nature-themed valentines for friends, family, and wildlife and enjoyed some holiday treats before hitting the trails to explore a Valentine's Day-themed nature scavenger hunt.

Bluebird Box Workshops

One of our most popular workshops, by far! Once again, we hosted back-to-back options and both sold out. Participants learned about the history and habits of our local Eastern Bluebirds, along with tips on how to be good hosts to these lovely birds in their own backyards before building their own nesting box to take home and install.



Natural Egg Dyeing Workshop

A creative and eco-friendly way to celebrate the holiday! Participants experimented with dyes made from natural items like cabbage, beets, spices, and more! The great thing about dyeing eggs this way means that you get to decorate your eggs and eat them, too!

Recycled Oriole Feeder Workshop

Another hugely popular workshop! This year, we were very excited to host an English and a Spanish version. Participants used recycled materials to make Oriole feeders after learning about the life and habits of these colorful visitors.



Easter Egg Hunt

Our annual Easter Egg Hunt was a hit again this year, bringing in lots of curious visitors hunting the trails for the brightly painted wooden eggs. For the second year in a row, not all eggs were found/returned. Those who did find and return an egg got a reusable gift bag with a puzzle, hand puppet, bubbles, animal-themed card game, and Easter tattoos!

House Wren Box Workshop

This was a new one, and popular right out the gate! Participants learned about the fascinating nesting habits of this tiny but mighty bird and how to support them in their own backyard before building their own House Wren nesting box to take home and install.



Rain Barrel & Rain Garden Workshop

Once again, this workshop sold out and we worked with Jenna Wait from Elkhart County Soil & Water Conservation District to offer 2 sessions! This info session taught all about installing and maintaining rain gardens and rain barrels at home to manage excess stormwater. Residents of Elkhart County who participated in this workshop are eligible for a rebate program with ECSWCD.

Bat House Workshops

Another of our most popular workshops, we held back-to-back options for this one, as well! This workshop covered the interesting lives of bats (globally and locally), and visitors built their very own bat house to take home! Bats are great mosquito-eating neighbors!

The Art of Mushroom Foraging: A Beginner's Guide at the EEC

This was a brand new program put together by our AmeriCorps team and was so popular we had to open a second session! Visitors learned the basics of mushroom foraging and explored the EEC on a guided hike to find in-season mushrooms.



Upcycled Hummingbird Feeder Workshop

Another brand new program! Visitors learned about Ruby-throated Hummingbirds along with tips on how to support these tiny feathered friends in their own backyards before creating their very own feeder (using recycled materials) to take home and install.

Build-a-Barrel Workshop

Following up the Rain Barrel & Rain Garden info sessions, the Elkhart County Soil & Water Conservation District returned to help participants build their own rain barrel to take home with them! The barrels not only help conserve water around the home, they also help prevent erosion from storms.

Nature Play Days

Back by popular demand, this series was a hit again! Kids of all ages came out to enjoy nature, crafts, trail exploration activities, and more! We did have to post-pone one of the days due to excessive heat, but we still had tons of fun!

DIY Beeswax Workshop

Another sold out show! Participants made their own reusable wrap and got tips on how to reduce food waste at home.

Birds of Prey

Soarin' Hawk Raptor Rehabilitation made their annual visit with their raptors to show off some of the fascinating birds of prey in Indiana and talk about the work they do at the center to take care of sick and injured raptors and return them to the wild.



Upcoming Programs & Events

Details for upcoming programs & events can be found on our website (elkhartindiana.org/eec) or our Facebook page. We're always adding more, so check online for updates! To register or purchase tickets for upcoming programs & events, please visit elkhart-environmental-center.ticketleap.com. Spanish translations are available upon request!



September



Doug Tallamy Book Club with Elkhart Public Library

Monday, September 9
6:30 PM - 7:30 PM



Monarch Tagging Workshop

Saturday, September 21
2:00 PM - 3:30 PM



Hoosier RiverWatch

Friday, September 27
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Waggin' in the Woods

Sunday, September 29 | 11 AM - 3 PM

Join us for our 4th annual dog-friendly event put on with Tracking in the Shadows! Enjoy dog-friendly vendors, puppy therapy, food vendors, \$15 microchipping, a dog agility course, Pooch Parade (costumes optional), and so much more! Find more details about the event and suggestions for donations for entry at www.WagginInTheWoods.com or scan the QR code.



October

HAUNTED WALK THROUGH THE WOODS

Thursday, October 24 | 5 PM - 8 PM

Friday, October 25 & Saturday, October 26 | 5 PM - 10 PM

Join us for our 5th annual Halloween event! This year, the event will run for 3 days. Thursday will only feature the kid-friendly trail. Both the scary trail and kid-friendly trail will be open on Friday and Saturday. Tickets are \$5 per car. For more info, scan our QR code or visit www.elkhartindiana.org/HauntedWalk.



Fall Foraging

Saturday, October 5
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM



Screech Owl Box Workshop

Friday, October 11
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM



The How & Why of Migration with Wild Birds Unlimited

Sunday, October 13
8:00 AM - 10:00 AM



Pumpkin Hunt

All Month-long
(or until all pumpkins are found)

Search for pumpkins hidden along the trails. Turn one in for a prize!

November



Bat House Workshops

Wednesday, November 13
& Friday, November 15
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM



Owl Prowl

Friday, November 22
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

Holiday Lights Recycling

November 18 - January 31

Drop off your used/broken string lights for recycling! Collection boxes are located on the front porch 24/7, so you can drop them off whenever is convenient for you! All collected lights will be taken to Schupan for recycling.

Upcoming Programs & Events

December

Holiday Hoorah!

Saturday, December 14 | 12:00 PM - 3:00 PM
at the Elkhart Public Library

Join us for our annual Holiday Hoorah! Come check out recycled holiday crafts, snacks, and more! For details, check out our Facebook event page.



January



Winter Nature Play Day

Friday, January 3
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM



DIY Lip Balm Workshop

Friday, January 24
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM



Upcycled Wind Chime Workshop

Friday, January 31
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM



February

Eco-Valentine's Day

Sunday, February 9 | 12 PM - 2 PM

Join us for our annual Eco-Valentine's day event! Check out fun, recycled crafts and explore the trails on a nature scavenger hunt. Stay tuned to our Facebook page for details and updates.



Bluebird Box Workshops

Wednesday, February 19
& Friday, February 21
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM



Volunteer Highlights

Society for a Better Earth

This spring students from Elkhart High School's Society for a Better Earth club came out to help improve our wetlands! For an hour after school, 1 teacher and 11 students planted around 180 native skunk cabbage in our 'original' wetland (it's been documented here on surveys since the 1800s!) and the wetlands along the River Greenway Trail.

In total, we planted 2,000 native plants around our wetlands forested areas this spring, so it was wonderful to have some extra helping hands!



Northwood High School

A class from Northwood High School spent an hour helping prep our trees for our Earth Day tree giveaway. EEC staff brought the trees to the school where students unbundled the trees, wrapped their roots with sphagnum moss (to help keep them hydrated), packaged up the roots and moss, and added an ID tag to each tree.

This year, trees were much larger (ranging from 2-5 ft. tall), so we opted not to pot them to keep them easily portable for their future adopters at the event.

The students were a great help and sped through tree prep!

Mary Beck After School Club

An after-school volunteer club from Mary Beck Elementary walked out to the EEC along the River Greenway Trail to help plant trees in the woodland areas along the trail. The students worked in an area that had previously been cleared of large invasive honeysuckle plants by volunteers. For half an hour, 1 teacher and 10 students planted a variety of native trees to repopulate the area, marking each with a purple flag so we can monitor their progress (and survival from being eaten by the local deer population).

The students were so excited to help out that they also pulled invasive garlic mustard and collected trash on their way back to school!



Logan Center

Throughout June and July two groups from the Logan Center alternated coming out to volunteer for 2 hours every week. The groups helped remove invasive plants from our rain garden and along our trails, they picked up trash from around our new prairie loop, weeded our terrace garden, and helped prep wooden butterflies. The butterflies were painted by summer school groups and visitors and put on display around the EEC to highlight our butterfly quilt garden and celebrate our local pollinators.

Lippert Group

Four volunteers from Lippert (who were in town from various states for a meeting) decided to come out to volunteer together. For the hour and half they were out here, they planted 61 native water-loving trees in our wetland along the River Greenway Trail!



Volunteer Opportunities

Details for volunteer opportunities can be found on our website (elkhartindiana.org/eec) or our Facebook page. We're always adding more, so check online for updates! To sign up for volunteer opportunities, please visit elkhart.galaxydigital.com.



October

HAUNTED WALK THROUGH THE WOODS

Thursday, October 24 | 5 PM - 8 PM

Friday, October 25 & Saturday, October 26 | 5 PM - 10 PM

Be a part of the spooktacular event of the season!

Setup/Decoration

Help us get the event started! Decorate a family-friendly and/or scary trail, hang lights, set up fog machines, and get the EEC looking Halloween-ready.

Parking

Help direct parking--one of the most important jobs of the day! Check tickets, direct cars to parking lots, help keep the drive clear for traffic, and direct safe pedestrian crossing.

Photographer

Help us get candid shots of the event! Snap photos of the different booths and activities and get some great pics of families and volunteers. We use these photos every year to promote the event, send special thank-yous to our sponsors and volunteers, and to celebrate our accomplishments at the end of the year. Volunteers will need to provide their own camera.

Scarers

Feeling extra spooky? Sign up to be a scarer! Dress up in your spooky best and help make the scary trail a frightening experience for everyone.

Cleanup

Help us wrap the event up! Grab decorations, lights, and all the bits and pieces to store in the Visitor's Cabin.

Volunteers will receive free snacks throughout the event and breaks to grab food from the food vendors/explore the trails, if they want. Feel free to volunteer with friends and family!



Elkhart River Cleanup

Date and Location TBD

(based on weather and river conditions)

Originally planned for Saturday, August 24, but delayed by all the summer rain, we are tentatively looking to host a river cleanup event in October. As always, the date and location will ultimately be determined by the weather and the condition of the river for safety and logistical reasons.

If you would like to receive email updates about river cleanup events, email EECmail@coei.org to be added to our email list. Updates can also be found on our website and Facebook.

This Fall



Quilt Garden (end of fall)

Help us remove the dead plants from this year's quilt garden after they've passed their prime.



Adopt-A-Trail (year-round)

Great for groups or individuals! Pick a trail, walk it regularly (on your own schedule), and let us know if it needs anything. It helps us to have reliable eyes on the trails!

NEW!

We have a brand NEW software to manage volunteer sign ups Meet: Elkhart Helping Hearts. We are working with other city departments to make this software city-wide so it is easier to sign up for all your favorite volunteer opportunities in one place (and without filling out a waiver each time). All EEC volunteer opportunities can be found on this site and once you fill out a waiver, you're all set! You can also manage your account through their app, Causer. Click the link above or scan the QR code to check it out!

Eye on Phenology

~ at the Elkhart Environmental Center ~

By Emma Brewer

Hitting our trails this season? Watch for these changes (and others) happening in nature - they can clue you in to what's going on with the environment on a larger scale!

Watch for late-blooming wildflowers at the end of summer and in early fall.

Species like goldenrod and asters are important late-season sources of nectar for our native pollinators!



September

Many species will begin prepping for winter in late summer and early fall. Keep an eye out for chipmunks and other critters gathering and hoarding food ahead of the cold winter months.



October

Male Wood Ducks will be molting into their breeding plumage beginning in October! These striking colors will remain until the end of the breeding season in early spring.



November

In October & November, White-Tailed Deer are engaged in breeding. Males will leave "rubs" on trees to mark their territory...look for these marks along our trails!



December

Avian winter migrants will be making their way to our area in late fall and early winter. Some notable species include Dark-eyed Juncos, Brown Creepers, Pine Siskins, and American Tree Sparrows.



January

Some trees, like oaks and beeches, maintain their leaves throughout the winter in a phenomenon known as *marcescence*. Watch for those leaves to drop in early spring!



February

Phenology ~ the biological, seasonal timing of things in nature

Winter What To Dos

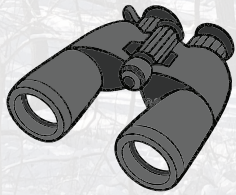
by Ally Pudlo

As fall begins to make its exit, winter will make its entrance. For many of us, winter seems like a time where there are not many opportunities to get outdoors. There are, however, many ways that we can still enjoy the natural world around us and be sustainable during the holiday season!

Below are a few ideas and tips for you and your family to try this upcoming winter:



- Make your own bird feeder using recycled materials
- Play Birdwatcher BINGO (see below)
- Create your own hot chocolate mix using ingredients in your kitchen
- Participating in the Audubon Christmas Bird Count (check out their site for more info!)
- Hand make your own holiday cards
- Reuse newspaper or gift wrap for Christmas gifts
- Go on a winter walk (make sure to bundle up well depending on the wind chill!)
- Look for animal tracks in the snow
- DIY winter decorations
- Make a snow painting using snow and food coloring
- Catch snowflakes and study their shapes (place a piece of dark colored cardboard or construction paper outside at least 10 minutes prior to snowing.)
- Attend one of our upcoming workshops or programs (follow us on Facebook or Instagram to check out our upcoming events!)



To get a Birdwatcher BINGO sheet, go to <https://www.fws.gov/story/birdwatcher-bingo> or scan the QR Code! The first sheet, "Bird Feeder BINGO", is the best one to use for our area!





Bat House Workshop



Recycled Oriole Feeder Workshop



Earth Day



Share with us!

If there is a program you loved and want to do again? Is there something you would love to try, but we haven't offered yet? Let us know! We're always looking to provide new programs, activities, events, and site features. We want to hear from you!

- ✉ Email EECmail@coei.org
- ☎ Call (574) 293-5070
- 💬 Message us on Facebook
- 👤 Stop by during office hours (M-F 8 AM - 5 PM)
- 📧 Mail a letter to 1717 E Lusher Ave, Elkhart, IN 46516

