

SPRING / SUMMER 2024



ELKHART
Environmental
— CENTER —



Visit Us!



Hours

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

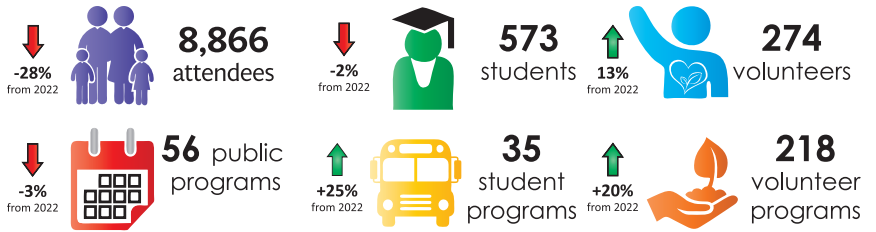




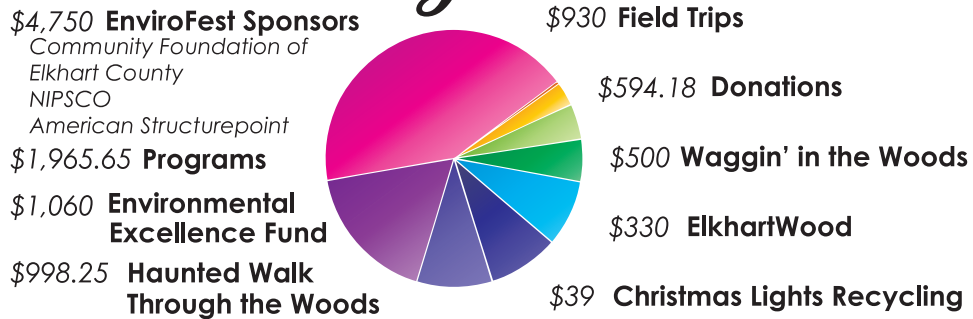
Highlights from 2023

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Fundraising



2023 Programs/Events

This year, we hosted 48 programs (listed to the right) and 5 large events (Earth Day, FishFest, EnviroFest, Waggin' in the Woods, Haunted Walk Through the Woods). Programs featured new DIY projects, live animals, hikes, presentations, and all kinds of fun activities for children, adults, and families.

Our Bluebird and Bat House Workshops were so popular that we held overflow sessions for both! The Nature Play Days, Oriole Feeder Workshop, and Pumpkin Hunt also all grew significantly in popularity. Do you have a favorite program or are you looking for a new program we haven't hosted yet? Let us know! We hope to see you at our programs and events in 2024!

We are thankful to the organizations who partnered with us to support our goals and make our programs possible:

2023 Programs

- Nature Story Hour
- DIY Workshop Series
- Cat Tower Workshop
- Winter Nature Play Days
- Eco-Valentine's Day
- Bluebird Box Workshops
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Natural Egg Dyeing Workshop
- Oriole Feeder Workshop
- Seed Bomb Workshop
- Rain Garden & Rain Barrel Workshop
- Build-a-Barrel Workshop
- Nature Play Day
- Birds of Prey
- Bat House Workshops
- How Native Plants Bring Your Garden to Life
- Monarch Tagging & Migration Workshop
- Wood Duck Workshop
- Holiday Hoorah
- Winter Wildlife Workshop

2023 Partners

- American Structurepoint
- Garden Club
- Borden Waste-Away
- Inside Outside Michiana
- Community Foundation of Elkhart County
- Kelleys Island Field Station
- Concord Elementary School
- Michiana Master Gardeners Association
- Eastwood Elementary School
- NIPSCO
- Elkhart Area Career Center
- Olive Elementary School
- Elkhart Aquatic Biology
- Penn HS Environmental Awareness Club
- Elkhart Parks and Recreation Department
- Penn HS Science National Honors Society
- Elkhart County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Sound Management
- Elkhart County Parks
- Soaring Hawk
- Elkhart HS Society for a Better Earth
- Tracking in the Shadows
- Foxwood Wildlife Rehabilitation
- Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Elkhart
- Freshieez
- Wild Ones South Bend

2023 Education

This year we saw students from grades K- 12, scout troops, and summer camps. Many groups contributed stewardship projects to help remove invasive honeysuckle and help plant native trees.

Students explored the site on hikes, helped remove invasive species and plant native trees and seeds, explored the world of worm composting, dissected owl pellets, played fun environmental-themed games, and more!

Compared to 2022, almost 4 times as many students gave stewardship time during their field trips!

Interested in bringing a group out for a program or want to help out with the kids in 2024? Give us a call!



- Pre K
- Grade School
- Middle School
- High School
- 39% Summer Camp
- 7% Scout Troops



- EnviroFest Planning Committee
- Adopt-A-Trail
- Adopt-A-Plot
- Potting trees for Earth Day giveaway
- Earth Day
- Fishing Clinic
- Quilt Garden
- Rain Garden
- Elkhart River Cleanup
- Monarch Tagging
- Waggin' in the Woods
- Haunted Walk Through the Woods
- Invasive species removals
- Native planting
- Field Trips

2023 Volunteers

Volunteers are the heroes of the EEC--they do everything: support programs, make events possible, take care of and improve the site for visitors and wildlife. We could not serve the community the way we do without the time and effort from our volunteers.

We cannot express enough how grateful we are to the many generous and passionate community members who give their time and talents to making everything we do possible.

In 2023, a total of 274 volunteers gave over 1,290 hours to support a variety of programs and projects (see list to left). Of the 274, 205 were completely new volunteers. We were especially excited to see 69 volunteers return to help with some of their favorite projects!

We absolutely love our volunteers and we look forward to working with you in 2024!

Highlight



This volunteer group from OmniLife came out with family and friends to plant 14 trees in December! It took them less than 2 hours to get the 8-10 ft trees planted along the newly paved River Greenway Trail. This mix of oak and catalpa trees will provide a good source of habitat to wildlife and be a great source of shade for passersby!



Coming in 2024 The City of Elkhart is getting a brand new volunteer software! Volunteers will be able to sign up and request volunteer opportunities online for all city departments at the click of a button. Stay tuned for details!

2023 Site Management

The AmeriCorps team and our hardworking volunteers have continued to chip away at our honeysuckle invasion! They have made a significant impact along the newly paved River Greenway Trail, clearing out large sections and treating the freshly cut stumps with herbicide to prevent regrowth. For regular visitors, the difference may be stark: what was once a dense understory is now opened up. This is great news for native species! There is plenty of space and sunlight for wildflowers and young trees to move in and reclaim the space.

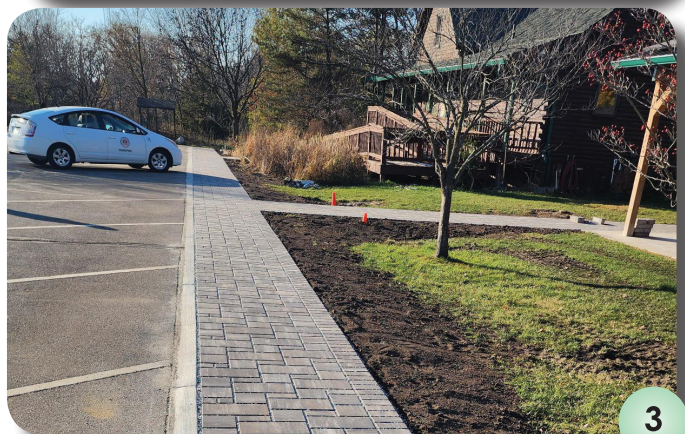
Staff and volunteers have also started beautifying the River Greenway area. The garden around the River Greenway sign has been replanted with flowers and shrubs that will provide year-round color and wildlife interest. Native grasses and wildflowers are also being planted along the edges of the paved trail and landscaping efforts will continue through 2024.

Readers of our last newsletter will recall a highlight of volunteers installing new nest boxes and bat houses around the property in spring 2023. This winter, staff mounted volunteer-constructed barred owl boxes around the property as part of our continued efforts to improve habitat for local wildlife. See if you can spot them from the trails!

Wildlife aren't the only ones seeing upgrades on the trails! NIBCO and BIMBO Bakeries generously donated several new benches for visitors to enjoy. New trash and recycling bins will also be making a debut.

Inside the Visitor's Cabin there are new digital displays that cycle through information about upcoming programs, picture and video highlights from volunteers and past events, and a live feed breakdown of the solar and wind power generated onsite. See page 9 for details!

Last, but not least, some show-stopping pervious pavers were installed along the parking lot and up to the pavilion. These pavers allow rain and water collected on the parking lot to drain into our rain garden, preventing erosion and pollution from runoff and watering our native plants. If the ground below the EEC wasn't clay-capped, the pervious pavers would also help rain replenish our groundwater. As an added bonus, they look great and make our pavilion more accessible than ever!



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.



March

EASTER EGG HUNT

Month-long (or until all eggs are found)

Hunt for hidden Easter Eggs and the chance to win a prize! Eggs (12 total) will be hidden around the EEC. Return a found egg to the EEC for a prize—limit 1 egg per family. Eggs will remain hidden month-long until found. Eggs will be visible from trail and don't require digging or climbing.



Wood Duck House Workshop

Saturday, March 9
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM



House Wren Box Workshop

Friday, March 22
5:30 PM - 7:00 PM



Natural Egg Dyeing Workshop

Sunday, March 24
12:00 PM - 2:00 PM

April



Recycled Oriole Feeder Workshops

Thursday, April 11 & Friday, April 12*
5:30 PM - 7:00 PM
*Espanol



Rain Garden & Barrel Info Sessions

with Jenna Wait, ECSWCD
Tuesday, April 23 & 30
5:00 PM - 6:30 PM



Bat House Workshops

Thursday, April 25 & Friday, April 26
5:30 PM - 7:00 PM



Earth Day

Saturday, April 20 | 10 AM - 1 PM

Celebrate Earth Day with a free tree give-away, Spring Seeds & Starters Plant Exchange, forest restoration project, local food vendors, LIVE fish demonstration, and lots of fun booths!

Scan our QR code or visit elkhartindiana.org/earthday for details.

Volunteers needed! See **page 6** for more info.



Solar Eclipse Party

Monday, April 8
2 PM - 3 PM

View the solar eclipse: featuring eclipse glasses, snacks, music, and more! Don't miss it!

May



The Art of Mushroom Foraging:

A Beginner's Guide at the EEC
with the EEC AmeriCorps

Saturday, May 4
11:00 AM - 1:00 PM
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM



Upcycled Hummingbird Feeder Workshop

Tuesday, May 15
5:30 PM - 7:00 PM



The How & Why of Migration

with Jan McGowan, Wild Birds Unlimited
Saturday, May 18
8:00 AM - 10:00 AM



Gardening for Wildlife Workshop

with Indiana Wildlife Federation
Saturday, May 11
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM



Build-a-Barrel Workshop

with Jenna Wait, ECSWCD
Tuesday, May 21
5:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Upcoming Programs & Events

June

Fishing Clinic

Saturday, June 1 | 9 AM - 1 PM
at High Dive Park

Join the EEC and City Parks for our annual free fishing clinic! Kids ages 5+ will complete multiple stations and receive a free fishing pole (while supplies last).

Go to elkhartindiana.org/fishfest for details.

Volunteers needed! See **page 6** for more info.



Nature Play Days

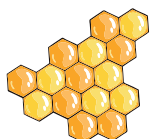
1st & 3rd Tuesdays
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM



Butterfly Program

Thursday, June 20
5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

July



DIY Beeswax Wrap Workshop

Thursday, July 18
5:30 PM - 7:00 PM



Birds of Prey

with Soarin' Hawk Raptor Rehab

Friday, July 26
6:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Pollinator Promenade

Saturday, July 13 | 10 AM - 1 PM

New this year! Join us for a fun "run" around our newly planted prairie. Enjoy food, spreading native seeds, and celebrating our local pollinators! Stay tuned for details!

Visit elkhartindiana.org/pollinatorday for details.

Volunteers needed! See **page 6** for more info.

August

Elkhart River Cleanup

Saturday, August 24 | 8 AM - 12 PM
location to be determined

Join our annual river cleanup! Bags, trash pickers, and canoes will be provided. Please dress for the activities and weather (we recommend closed-toed shoes, and for those on land: long pants/sleeves).

PLEASE NOTE: The date is tentative and will ultimately be determined by the weather and river conditions, so stay tuned for updates!

Volunteers needed--see **page 6** for more info.

EnviroFest

Saturday, August 10 | 3 PM - 8 PM
at Island Park in Elkhart

Our annual EnviroFest is back with local food vendors, booths by environmental/sustainability-oriented organizations, live music, Kids Area, kids entertainment, silent auction, and more! Tickets are \$5 per family (of any size).

Scan QR code or visit ElkhartEnviroFest.com for details.

Volunteers needed--for planning and day-of! See **page 7** for more info.



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 signup.com/go/aMFHGWP.



April



Earth Day

Saturday, April 20 | 8 AM - 2 PM

Help us celebrate Earth Day! We need lots of extra hands for this event:

Setup

Help us get the event started: setting up tables, chairs, and getting everything ready for visitors!

Adopt-A-Tree Booth

Help us give away FREE trees! Volunteers at this booth do one of 3 things:

- hand out tree species info to help visitors pick their tree
- hand out trees from our storage nursery
- help our GIS team map where the tree will be planted

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 community partners, and to celebrate our accomplishments at the end of the year. Volunteers will need to provide their own camera.

EEC & Event Info Booths

Help us spread the word about the EEC and answer questions about activities happening around our Earth Day event. All info will be provided at the booth.

Cleanup

Help us wrap the event up! Cleanup is usually very quick: grabbing tables, chairs, and event materials and getting everything put away.

Volunteers will receive free snacks and lunch. They also get first pick for a free tree (but must pick up their tree before the event starts). A brief orientation will take place before the event, but additional training is available for anyone who would like it (please contact EEC staff to schedule). Don't forget to sign up for your preferred area online or with EEC staff. Bring family and friends with you!

June

Fishing Clinic

Saturday, June 1 | 8 AM - 2 PM

at High Dive Park

Volunteer orientation and setup will begin at 8 AM and the fishing clinic will start at 9 AM.

Setup - Help get stations set up and ready for volunteers and visitors: tables, chairs, canopy tents

Registration - Getting kids signed up and assigned to a station

Conservation Station - Teach kids about the conservation side of fishing and how to be responsible anglers

Stewardship Station - Teach kids about how to be good stewards of our natural resources

Basic Tackle - Teach kids about rods/reels, tackle, lures, and all the basics to get started

Knot Tying - Teach kids basic fishing knots (e.g. improved clinch, uni, palomar)

Safety & Casting - Teach kids how to cast with a spinning rod and staying safe while fishing

Cleanup - Help pack everything up to leave the park as we found it!

Breakfast, snacks, and lunch will be provided for volunteers. Bring friends and family with you!

July

Pollinator Promenade

Saturday, July 13 | 9 AM - 2 PM

This new event needs helpers for:

Setup - Help set up tables, chairs, canopy tents, activities, and the "running" track

Registration - Help get runners signed up and registered for their events and get them organized for the different "races"

Kids Activities - Help run a variety of fun crafts and games for kids and families

Cleanup - Help put away everything we got out!

TBA - We're still working on the logistics, so stay tuned for additional volunteer needs we didn't anticipate as the event gets closer!

Volunteer Opportunities

EnviroFest



EnviroFest Committee

First Monday of the month
6 PM - 7 PM

We need some party planners to help us throw a fun event for the community! Pick an area (or two!), like the Silent Auction/Kids Area/Music/Etc. to put your own special spin on. Meet up once a month to collaborate on fun ideas--and enjoy free, tasty snacks. We always need new members! Bring your friends and family with you!

Want more info or to be added to our email list? Contact EEC Staff at EECmail@coei.org or 574-293-5070.



Saturday, August 10 | 8 AM - 9 PM
at Island Park in Elkhart

EnviroFest is our biggest event of the year and it could not be a success without the help of our amazing volunteers! We need help with:

Setup

Help us kick things off with tables, chairs, and helping vendors and booths get unloaded.

EEC & Event Info Booths

Help promote the EEC and provide info about what's happening at this year's EnviroFest. All info will be provided at the booth.

Kids Area

Help lead games and activities to keep the kiddos entertained.

Ticket Booths

Welcome visitors to the event! Take tickets and keep track of how many attendees come in.

Silent Auction

Answer questions about silent auction packages (all info provided), and post winners throughout the event.

Volunteer Station

Help volunteers get what they need: checked in, info about their shift, their free t-shirt, and food and drinks for a break.

Event Helpers

Help give breaks to volunteers throughout the event by sitting in on different shifts, help staff switch out trash and recycling, and be a runner for spur-of-the-moment requests.

Cleanup

Help wrap up the event by packing up tables, chairs, and pop-up tents, directing traffic, and helping vendors load up.

Volunteers will receive free snacks and meals throughout their shifts, as well as a free ticket to the event. They also get a free event t-shirt (but supplies are limited, so register asap!). Brief, optional orientations are available before the event. Family and friends are welcome to volunteer together!

Starting in Spring



Quilt Garden

(May - September)

Help us plant and take care of our fabulous new quilt garden design! Great project for groups to come out throughout the summer.



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.



Adopt-A-Plot

(March - November)

Adopt a plot in our Learning Garden to grow your own fruits, veggies, or flowers! Weed your plot(s) at least twice a month in the summer and keep whatever you grow.

August

Elkhart River Cleanup

Saturday, August 24 | 8 AM - 12 PM

Join us for our annual Elkhart River Cleanup! Bags, trash pickers, and canoes will be provided.

Date/location determined by weather and river conditions. Email EECmail@coei.org to be added to the email list. Updates can be found on our Facebook and website.

Let's Talk About

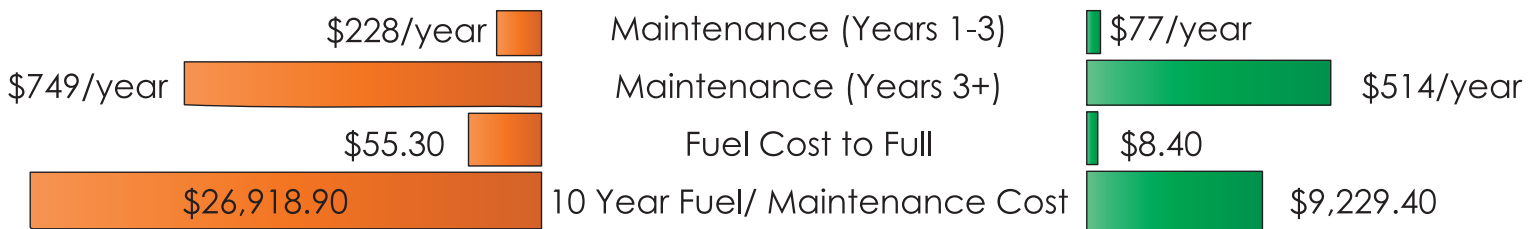
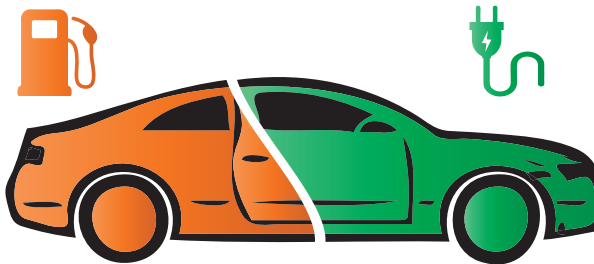
Electric Vehicles

Exploring some FAQs: Frequent Anxieties/Qualms about E.V.s

EVs are more expensive than regular ICE (Internal Combustion Engine) cars...

Over their lifetime EVs are typically less expensive than ICE cars for 2 reasons: cost of electricity vs. gas, and ICE cars require more frequent and involved maintenance due to their construction

and components. However, EVs tend to come with more upfront costs: new EVs are more expensive than new ICE cars (but EVs are eligible for up to \$7,500 tax credit), and that can influence insurance rates. EV technology is constantly improving and becoming more affordable. The least expensive EV model on the market now is the 2023 Chevrolet Bolt at \$27,495 (\$19,995 after tax credit), not much more than the least expensive ICE car, the 2024 Nissan Versa at \$17,245.



(average)	Fuel Cost	Capacity	Rate	Range	Maintenance
Gas Vehicle	\$3.95/gallon	14 gallons	25.4 miles/gallon	355.6 miles/tank	\$.101/mile
Electric Vehicle	\$0.14/kWh	60 kWh	3.5 miles/kWh	210 miles/charge	\$.061/mile

Range Anxiety: They don't have a big enough driving range and there aren't enough chargers...

The average range for an EV is around 250 miles/charge. The longest range for an EV on the market today is 516 miles. A typical range for ICE cars is between 300-400 miles. On average, drivers only rack up about 40 miles/day.

Currently, the *longest* distance between public chargers in Indiana is around 70 miles (similar to national average), but most are much closer together and chargers are constantly being added around the country. Indiana is planning to invest nearly \$100 million to add more EV chargers.

Even if it has a decent range, it will take forever to charge...

Public use chargers are typically Level 2 (4-10 hours to charge 80% from empty/10-20 miles per hour of charging) and Level 3/DC Fast Chargers (20 min - 1 hour to charge 80% from empty/180-240 miles per hour charging).

It gets too cold here--the batteries will never hold a charge...

Below freezing temperatures can sap as much as 25% of range, which wouldn't affect day-to-day driving if you're plugging in at home, but could add some charging stops to long-distance trips. Parking inside or adding a battery blanket can help reduce the impact.

Elkhart's Most UNWANTED

Invasive plants and animals have a devastating impact on ecosystems and economies. Invasive plants take over areas and out-compete native plants, becoming the only thing growing in that area. Invasive animals overfeed on local plant/animal populations. Both invasive plants and animals can quickly become destructive and expensive adversaries.

Invasive species are a community enemy: they impact large swathes of land at a time and everyone can make a difference in the fight against them.

Honeysuckle



Description:

Type: shrub
 Berries: red/orange
 Leaves: opposite
 Bark: grayish, long flaky strips
 Other: stems and branches have hollow centers

WANTED FOR: overshading understory
REWARD FOR REMOVAL: wildflowers & saplings

REMARKS: Often found in forest/woodland areas: first to leaf out in spring, last leaves left in winter; will overtake any area
RECOMMENDATION: Cut and herbicide on sight

Japanese Knotweed



Description:

Type: bamboo-like
 Flowers: white
 Leaves: alternate
 Stems: red, brown
 Other: stems like bamboo canes with purple speckles

WANTED FOR: hostile takeover
REWARD FOR REMOVAL: freedom from terror

REMARKS: Often found in low-lying and disturbed areas; spreads via rhizomes: **difficult** to remove
RECOMMENDATION: Seek help; herbicide when flowering

Spotted Lanternfly



Description:

Type: planthopper
 Wings: spotted, gray, red
 Eggs: mud-like mass, easy to miss
 Other: feeds on grapevines, walnut trees, among others

NEW: BE ON LOOK OUT

WANTED FOR: mass tree murder
REWARD FOR REMOVAL: trees

REMARKS: Often found in forest/woodland areas: feeds on tree of heaven, but will decimate native tree populations
RECOMMENDATION: Destroy eggs on sight; report

Tree of Heaven



Description:

Type: tree
 Leaves: palm-like
 Leaf scar: heart-shaped
 Bark: like cantaloupe
 Other: leaves smell like rancid peanut butter when crushed

Known accomplice

WANTED FOR: invasion and accomplice to mass tree murder
REWARD FOR REMOVAL: healthy ecosystem and trees

REMARKS: Often found in full- and part-sun areas: first food choice of spotted lanternfly
RECOMMENDATION: Cut and herbicide on sight



Wood Duck



Bat House Workshop



House Workshop



Monarch Tagging Workshop



Elkhart River Cleanup



Haunted Walk Through the Woods



Waggin' in the Woods

