Silver Creek Conservation Area

The scenic backdrop of Prairieview Education Center is the landscape view of Silver Creek Conservation Area and its expansive acreage of wetland, prairie and savanna communities. The wide open view highlights a mixture of native grasses and colorful wildflowers, including compass plants, coneflowers, and many species of asters. The woodlands and savannas feature grand oak and hickory trees that invite a wide variety of songbirds, hawks, and owls to fly among the branches while deer, coyote and an occasional red fox travel below. Sedge meadows and fens located along Silver Creek, within a designated Illinois Nature Preserve, provide habitat for saturated soil loving plants such as marsh marigolds and skunk cabbage, as well as a number of species of frogs, salamanders, snakes and turtles.

Natural Communities

Grasses and Forbs
Restored Prairie
Sedge Meadow/Fen
Water

Symptoms Key
- Canoe Rest Stop (no launch)
- Cross Country Skiing
- Drinking Water
- Fishing
- Hiking
- Information
- Parking
- Picnic Area
- Pedestrian Bridge/Boardwalk
- Restrooms
- Scenic View

Textures Key
Grasses and Forbs
Restored Prairie
Sedge Meadow/Fen
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Environmental Education for All Ages

The 10,000 square foot Prairieview Education Center serves thousands of McHenry County residents each year through participation in free or low-cost nature interpretation programs, summer camps, school field studies, scout programs and other staff guided activities. The facility also hosts periodic exhibits, an environmental reference library, and the Exploration Station, a family drop-in activity room. Visitors have the opportunity to explore the prairie, savanna and wetland natural communities of the Silver Creek Conservation Area while learning how to identify different bird species, finding animal tracks, or using binoculars to observe some of the creatures that call this conservation area home. Helpful staff is always on hand to provide visitors with program information as well as answers to nature-related inquiries.

Exploration Station

Located inside Prairieview Education Center, this interactive room features many hands-on activities that help children learn more about the natural world surrounding them. A puppet theatre, themed book bags and nature boxes, books, board games and puzzles are just a few of the materials available. The theme of the Exploration Station changes seasonally to highlight the changes taking place in the environment. Children must be accompanied by an adult while in the Exploration Station.

Natural resource materials you can borrow for free!
The Education Services Department offers a wide selection of materials you can borrow for use offsite or while you visit, covering a variety of topics. Materials are appropriate for teachers, parents, and youth group leaders seeking curriculum supplements, family activities, or assistance with badge requirements. The District has created themed Naturelist in a Box trunks for grades 1-8 and Backyard Buddies boxes geared toward ages 3-7. You’ll find books, field guides, games, songs, craft ideas, DVDs, lesson plans, posters, hands-on activities and more, all based on the theme for the kit. We are also a lending site for the resource trunks and field trip packs available through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Borrow up to two kits for up to two weeks. Reservations are recommended. For more information or to make a reservation, call (815) 479-5779.

Prairieview Field Pack is for adult use (ages 18 and up). Choose from a list of items to include in your pack based on your interests, to enhance your time while on the trails.

Map & Compass Packs are designed for families or youth groups wishing to use the outdoor map and compass course at Prairieview. Packs include maps, compasses and map reading activities for up to 24 participants. One adult should accompany every four children using the course.

Prairieview Education Center

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