



Dear Teacher,

Thank you for choosing the McHenry County Conservation District's "Winter Woodlands" field trip at Prairieview Education Center in Crystal Lake.

The purpose of this field trip is for the students to explore a forest habitat in the winter, learn how forest plants and animals adapt and survive in the winter, and learn how to identify winter trees. The program begins with an indoor introduction followed by a break for washrooms and water. The rest of the program is divided into two short hikes. One hike focuses on plant identification and the other focuses on signs of animal activity.

**Please make sure all teachers and chaperones attending the field trip are aware of the following information.**

1. The field trip is generally 2.5 to 3.5 hours. Please note your start and end time on the permit.
2. Teachers, chaperones, and students should dress in layers, wear pants, and appropriate footwear to hike on hilly terrain, possibly through snow.
3. To assist the field trip leaders in getting to know your class, please have the students wear secure nametags.
4. If you have scheduled the longer field trip time and are having lunch on site, encourage everyone to bring a waste-free lunch! Pack lunches in insulated, reusable containers and include items that can be eaten in their entirety, recycled or composted. Examples are whole fruits and vegetables, drinks in reusable bottles, snacks purchased in bulk and brought in reusable containers, cloth napkins, and reusable ice packs. For additional information on reducing waste visit [www.epa.gov/eapwaste/wycd/index.htm](http://www.epa.gov/eapwaste/wycd/index.htm).
5. A teacher packet for this program is available on the Conservation District website. This packet includes a map to Prairieview Education Center, post-trip evaluation sheet, and pre-trip and post-trip activities. The pre-trip activities are designed to give students background information prior to the program. Take time to do the activities as the information is built upon during the program. The post-trip activities are designed to provide the students with an extension to the activities provided during the program.
  - Download the packet from our website at [www.mccd.org](http://www.mccd.org).
  - To request a packet be sent to your email or school address call Andy Talley at 815-479-5779.
6. Contact us in the event of inclement weather on the day of your field trip. While there is not much room to reschedule, we try to accommodate your needs. We have indoor facilities that can be used as necessary.

We are looking forward to a day of fun and learning with your class. Call 815-479-5779 with any questions.

Sincerely,

Andy Talley, Education Program Coordinator

# **Pre-Trip Activity: Winter Woodlands**

## **Matching Tracks, Home and Food Instructions**

There are many animals that call McHenry County home throughout the year. Some animals stay here through the cold winter months while others, who cannot find food here, must migrate to more suitable climates. The following is a list of seven animals that can be found in McHenry County at some point during the year. As you can read, one of these does not winter here. Have the students draw a line connecting the animal names to that animal's tracks, winter home, and winter food. *The names are mixed up while the track, home and food are correct across the page as a set for each animal.*

The first set belongs to the white-tailed deer. The hind hoof steps into the impression of the front hoof. Deer spend their winters in a concentrated area called a yard or deer yard. Yards consist of a maze of trails in a small area where the deer beds or sleeps and eats.

The second set belongs to the mouse. The mouse's tail drags leaving a line in the snow between the footprints. The mouse's territory is rarely more than a quarter-mile in diameter but the trails within this territory are usually much longer since the mouse will investigate every log, rock, hollow or crevice within their territory. Mice will create nests anywhere that is warm and small. They will store nuts and seeds in a number of locations for winter survival.

The third set belongs to the cottontail rabbit. Cottontails sleep in forms. Forms are small hollows above ground among grasses and leaves. Contrary to belief cottontails do not live underground in burrows. At times they will inhabit old woodchuck dens or burrows but they will remain near the entrance. Cottontails too are active through the winter months.

The fourth set belongs to the swallow. Swallows, like many other birds, migrate in the winter to a warmer climate such as Florida. Let's not forget that some birds remain here during the winter. In fact, Illinois is the migration destination for some birds such as the junco or the white-throated sparrow who spend the spring and summer north in Canada.

The fifth set belongs to the skunk. Skunks are dormant animals. They do remain active in early and late winter eating fruit, mice, shrews, garbage or grains. In mid-winter skunks will sleep in old woodchuck or squirrel dens with as many as 12 skunks in one den. During this time the skunk's temperature drops and its breathing slows. Unlike a woodchuck a skunk is not in a deep sleep over an extended period of time but rather wakes to eat.

The sixth set belongs to woodchuck. This is the only mammal listed here that hibernates in the winter in a burrow. Hibernation can begin in September or October and lasts anywhere from January to March. When a woodchuck hibernates, its body temperature may drop as low as 38 degrees Fahrenheit. Its breathing slows to about once every 6 minutes and its heartbeat drops significantly. During this time the woodchuck is in far more than a deep sleep.

The last set belongs to the human. Many humans eat both plants and animals but some are called vegans and eat only plant material. Humans like most animals are active in the long winter months. Unlike other mammals we must go to the store to purchase food. Some humans preserve food through canning or freezing fruits, vegetables, or meats.

**Pre-Trip Activity**  
**Winter Woodlands-Matching Activity**  
**Lesson Expansion**

To expand this pre-trip activity, students might research one of the animals listed or others such as shrews, beaver, coyote, fox, opossum, raccoons, squirrels, voles or weasels. Have students gather information about the animal's winter tracks or habits and behaviors.



**Post-Trip Activity**  
**Winter Woodlands-Fill in the Blank**  
**Teacher Answer Key**

The answers are as follows in the same order as the blanks:

BURROW, HIBERNATION, FARMLAND, ACTIVE, BRUSH,  
WARM, MIGRATION, MORE THAN ONE, DORMANT

**Post-Trip Activity**  
**Winter Woodlands-Animal Homes Mapping**

Have the students review their hike at Prairieview Education Center with this mapping and drawing activity. Ask them to list at least five, or more, animal homes they saw on their hike; including the name of the animal that used the home. Next, using the woodland trail map provided, ask students to draw pictures of the five animal homes they remembered in the places they remember seeing them. Finally, ask students to label each home. Another map option to use with this activity would be to ask the students to draw their own map based on their memory of the trail at Prairieview.

# Post-trip Activity: Winter Woodlands

FILL IN THE BLANKS WITH THE WORDS FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE



Hello, I am a woodchuck and I live in a deep hole in the ground called a \_\_\_\_\_. I am one of the few animals that sleep through the cold winter months. This is called \_\_\_\_\_.



Hello, I am a red fox and I like to sleep in the wooded areas of \_\_\_\_\_. I must go out and find my own food in the winter months. I am an \_\_\_\_\_ winter animal.



Hello, I am a cottontail rabbit and one of the places I like to sleep is in thick \_\_\_\_\_. I too am an active winter animal.



Hello, I am a swallow and I prefer to spend my winters in \_\_\_\_\_ places. In the Spring I fly up North, this is called \_\_\_\_\_.



Hello, I am a skunk and I too sleep in burrows but I prefer to share my home with \_\_\_\_\_ skunk. I spend my winter sleeping but I wake up and look for food on warm days. This is like hibernation but it is called being \_\_\_\_\_.

**ACTIVE**

**BRUSH**

**BURROW**

**DORMANT**

**FARMLAND**

**HIBERNATION**

**MIGRATION**

**MORE THAN ONE**

**WARM**



Road

Driveway

The Basin

Hill top

Parking Lot

Small Barn

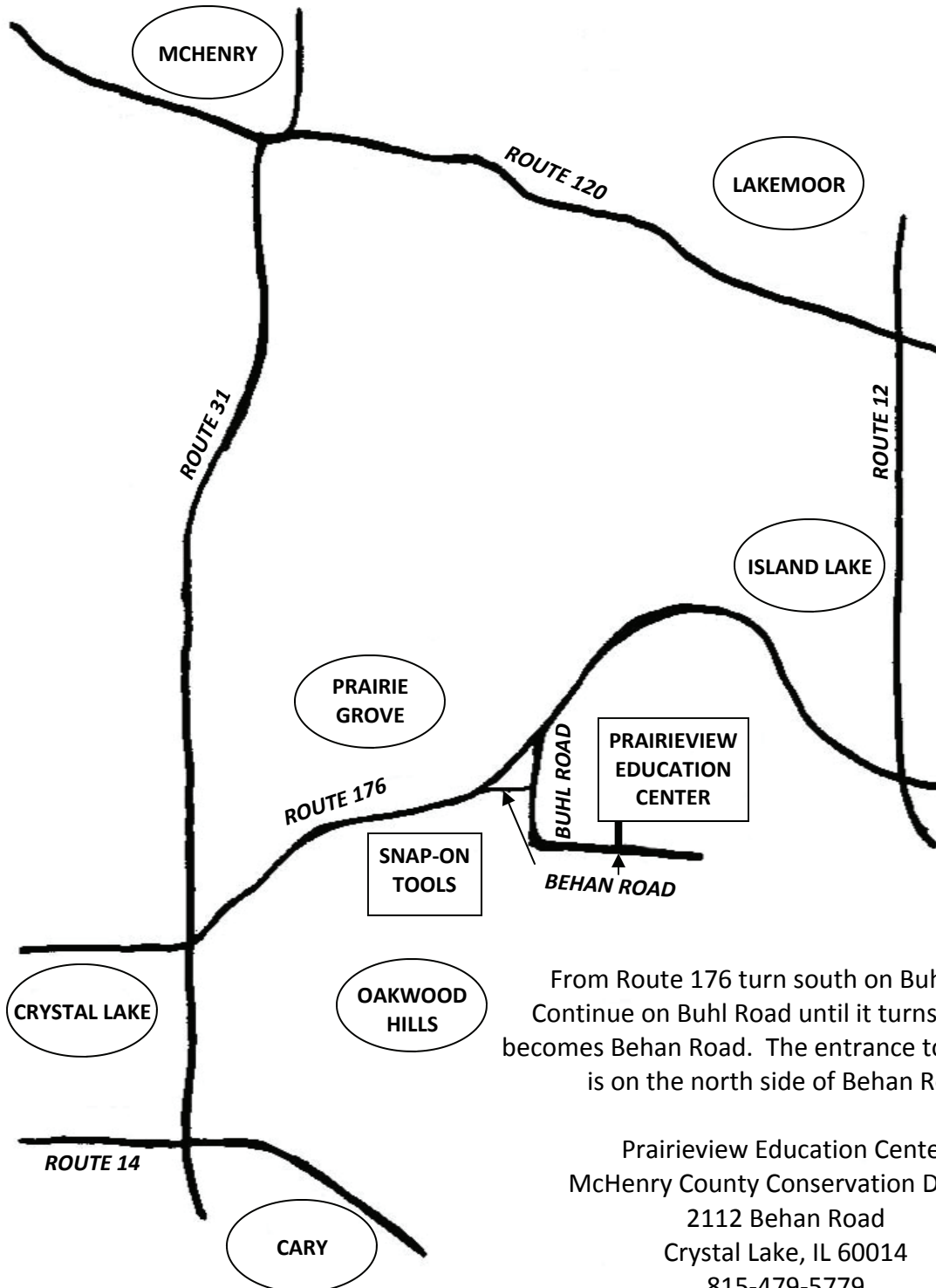
Big Barn

Road



*McHenry County*  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

**HOW TO GET TO PRAIRIEVIEW EDUCATION CENTER**



From Route 176 turn south on Buhl Road. Continue on Buhl Road until it turns east and becomes Behan Road. The entrance to the center is on the north side of Behan Road.

Prairieview Education Center  
McHenry County Conservation District  
2112 Behan Road  
Crystal Lake, IL 60014  
815-479-5779



# Field Trip Evaluation

**Mail or fax your form to:**

Education Services Manager, Prairieview Education Center, 2112 Behan Road, Crystal Lake IL 60014  
Tel 815-479-5779 / Fax 815-479-5766

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Thank you for participating in a McHenry County Conservation District field trip with your class. The Education Services Department wants to make sure the field trips are the best they can be, so that you meet your classroom goals. We sincerely appreciate your feedback on the field trip you attended.

School Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_ Teacher's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the Program \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Field Trip \_\_\_\_\_

Conservation District Leader Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

1. Did you choose to receive your field trip packet by mail, email, or did you download it from our website?
2. How was the field trip packet helpful in preparing you and your class for the trip? What activities did you use? How could the packet be improved?
3. What were your goals for the field trip? Were they met? How could the program better serve your goals?
4. Were the trip activities and information educational and stimulating for the children? What activities do you recall that worked especially well? What activities could use revision?
5. Was your field trip leader well informed about the subject matter and enthusiastic about working with the group?
6. Would you participate in another Conservation District field trip?
7. Do you have any additional suggestions, comments, or remarks?

If you would like to receive our Environmental Education Opportunities Teachers' Guide electronically (Adobe pdf format) please provide an email address here. \_\_\_\_\_