

FALL / WINTER 2025 - 2026



ELKHART  
*Environmental*  
— CENTER —





# Visit Us!



## Visitor's Cabin

Monday - Friday  
8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

## Trails

Dawn - Dusk  
Every Day



1717 E Lusher Ave, Elkhart, IN 46514  
574-293-5070  
[EEEmail@coei.org](mailto:EEEmail@coei.org)



# Highlights from Spring/Summer 2025

## Site Improvements

### Spring Planting

We kicked off spring with a major native planting project! Starting in March, we began planting 1,850 native ephemerals and ferns around the property. We concentrated most of the planting around the River Greenway Trail's wooded areas in spaces that volunteers have removed large swathes of honeysuckle. See if you can spot them!

### River Greenway

After knocking out the first round of planting, we decided to plant 400 large plugs along the River Greenway Trail. These plants were a mix of ornamental and native. They were installed around the newly planted trees as part of a more purposeful landscaping effort in our overflow parking lot area. They have really transformed the trail!



## Programs & Events

- ★ We have hosted 21 programs and events since March, and seen 1,028 visitors!
- ★ Some popular programs, like our House Wren Box, Recycled Oriole Feeder, and Bat House Workshops, made another appearance.
- ★ We also hosted some brand new programs, such as our Birds, Bees, & Beyond: Building a Backyard Habitat, Hummingbird Yard Art, and Hummingbird Banding programs.
- ★ Our most popular program this spring was our Rain Barrel Kit--we sold 40 kits! This program had a lot of buzz this year. It will definitely be back again!
- ★ Our most popular program this summer was our Nature Play Day--over 90 kids and parents came out to play and explore at the EEC!
- ★ We also hosted a brand new event: Pollinator Promenade. For details, check out **page 11**!

## Contents

- 2 Spring Programs
- 3 Summer Programs
- 4 Fishing Clinic
- 5 Junior IMN Day Camp
- 6 Upcoming Programs/Events
- 8 Volunteer Opportunities
- 9 Volunteer Highlights
- 10 Earth Day
- 11 Pollinator Promenade
- 12 Whose Tracks Are Those?
- 13 Our Winter Owls



# Spring Programs



## House Wren Box Workshop

This popular program returned this spring! Participants learned all about house wrens, including their life history and habitats. Afterwards, participants assembled their very own house wren box to take home and install in their own backyard!



## Birds, Bees, & Beyond: Building a Backyard Habitat



This program is the perfect way to kick off spring! Participants learned about a variety of ways to support local wildlife right in their own backyard. It doesn't take much to provide vital resources to our local insects, birds, and other critters and this program helps generate ideas for all sizes of spaces. Not only that, but participants also got a packet of native seeds to get their garden project started!

## Beginner Birder Series

This was a brand new series! We had a great group of birders who came out each month to learn about local and migratory birds, hike the trails to spot some feathered friends, learn the tools of the trade, and dive into a fun hobby!

They got to start off strong with their very own bird ID guide book and a pair of binoculars



## Easter Egg Hunt

Our annual Easter Egg Hunt took visitors all over the site searching for pastel painted wooden eggs. Almost all eggs were found this year! Successful searchers got to take home a bag full of Easter- and nature-themed goodies!

## Rain Garden & Rain Barrel Workshop

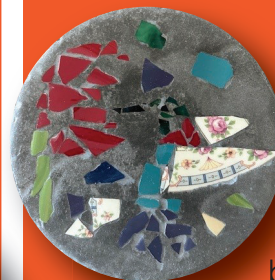
Rain gardens and rain barrels are a great way to save water! Rain barrels sold out very quickly this year, keep an eye out for more in spring!

## Recycled Oriole Feeder Workshop

This popular workshop was back again! Participants learned all about the life cycle of orioles and how to attract them to their own backyards. They also built their very own oriole feeder to take home and set up for future feathered visitors!



## Hummingbird Yard Art Workshop



This new program combined art and education! Participants learned about the migratory Ruby-throated Hummingbird before creating a mosaic homage using upcycled tile and ceramics. This was a ton of fun, not to mention super popular! Registration for this program quickly sold out!



# Summer Programs

## Nature Play Days

Our annual summer Nature Play Days are always a hit, but this year we had more visitors than ever before!

These drop-in programs offer a fantastic variety of fun activities--games, crafts, hikes, and more!--to keep kids engaged outdoors.

Visitors enjoyed messy fun in the mud kitchen, creating nature framed art, doodling with sidewalk chalk, playing games, and all sorts of other fun activities!



## Bat House Workshop

This is one of our most popular programs each year! We often host back-to-back workshops to keep up with demand.

Participants learn all about local, native bats--their life cycles, habits, and the health of local populations.

Afterwards, they build their very own bat house to take home with them.



## Junior Indiana Master Naturalist Day Camp

We hosted our first ever Junior Indiana Master Naturalist Day Camp this year, and we had a blast! For pictures and more details about this 5-day adventuring marathon check out **page 5**.

## Leaf Casting Workshop

This program is a fun one! Participants get to combine their love of exploring nature with their love of crafting!

It starts with a fun hike to find the perfect leaf, and ends with taking home a concrete casting that can be used as the perfect decoration or a nature-molded dish!



## Hummingbird Banding Workshop

This program was another first! We invited Allen Chartier from Great Lakes HummerNet to lead this exciting new opportunity. Participants learned about the HummerNet research project and opportunities to participate, as well as hints on how to attract and feed hummingbirds at home and hummingbird-friendly gardening tips.

Not only that, but participants also got to see a banding demonstration with hummingbirds caught at the Elkhart Environmental Center!





# Fishing Clinic

Our 4th annual Kids Free Fishing Clinic was another huge success!

The event ran from 8 AM to 12 PM and saw over 426 kids and family members come out to complete the 1-hour clinic and earn a free rod and reel. Participants learned about basic tackle, conservation and stewardship, casting, local fish and habitat, knot tying, and (new this year!) water safety.

Stations were led by volunteers as well as staff from the Elkhart Environmental Center and the Aquatic Biology, Parks & Recreation, and Fire Departments.

We are especially grateful for volunteers who gave up most of their Saturday to support this event! Volunteers arrived before the event began to help with setup and complete an orientation and some stayed to help with cleanup (which meant that some volunteers were there for least 6 hours straight!). This event is a long day for volunteers and we are so grateful for those who are generous enough to share so much of their time and skills with our community.

If you are interested in helping with our Kids Free Fishing Clinic, sign up for notifications on our volunteer website at [elkhart.galaxydigital.com](http://elkhart.galaxydigital.com).



## fishing Clinic by the Numbers

Girls	Boys	Adults	Total
109	134	183	426

**Total Kids: 242**  
**1st Time Anglers: 169**







# Junior IMN Day Camp!



We just wrapped up our first ever Junior Indiana Master Naturalist (IMN) Day Camp in June, and we had a BLAST!

Nine campers got a week packed with nature exploration and volunteering in order to earn their patches.

Guest speakers from around the Elkhart area came to talk with campers about their subject of expertise, from soils and geology to water and fish, from botany to people and natural resources, from zoology to sustainability.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to make this an exciting and memorable week!

If you are interested in signing up for a Junior IMN course, you're in luck! We will be hosting another day camp in Summer 2026. Stay tuned for more info!



# Upcoming Programs & Events

Details for upcoming programs & events can be found on our website ([elkhartindiana.org/eec](http://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](http://elkhart-environmental-center.ticketleap.com).

Spanish translations are available upon request!



September



**Natural Dye Workshop**  
with Julie Tourtillotte  
Friday, September 19  
5:30 PM - 7:30 PM

**Check our website for  
updates about tree planting  
events this month**

## Waggin' in the Woods



Sunday, September 28 | 11 AM - 3 PM

Join us for our 5th annual dog- and family-friendly event! Featuring a costume contest, dog-friendly vendors, food, \$15 microchipping, puppy therapy, and so much more!

Visit [waggininthewoods.com](http://waggininthewoods.com) for more info!

October

## HAUNTED WALK THROUGH THE WOODS

Thursday, October 23 | 5 PM - 9 PM  
Friday, October 24 | 5 PM - 10 PM  
Saturday, October 25 | 5 PM - 10 PM



Join us for our 6th annual Haunted Walk event! Thursday features live music, vendors, food vendors, and our kid-friendly trail. Friday and Saturday, check out the kid-friendly & scary trails, vendors, food vendors, and live music. Scan our QR code or visit [elkhartindiana.org/haunted-walk](http://elkhartindiana.org/haunted-walk) for details.

Volunteers needed! See page 8 for more info.



**Pumpkin Hunt**  
Month-long



**Bat House Workshop**  
Tuesday, October 14  
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

**COME SEE US AT  
ISLAND PARK  
TRUNK OR TREAT  
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18**

November



**Owl Prowl**  
Wednesday, November 19  
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

**Check our website for  
updates about tree planting  
events this month**

## Holiday Lights Recycling

November 15 - January 31

Recycle your old/broken holiday string lights! Drop them off in our collection bin on our front porch or take them directly to Schupan Recycling. The drop-off bin at the Elkhart Environmental Center accepts old/broken string lights 24/7.



# Upcoming Programs & Events

## Holiday Hoorah!

Friday, December 12 | 5 PM - 8 PM

Kick off the holiday season with fun, eco-friendly activities! Bundle up for a winter hike, dive into a craft, enjoy some hot cocoa, and get ready for winter!

Come see us at  
the WinterFest Parade  
Saturday, December 6  
in Downtown Elkhart

December



### Upcycled Wind Chime Workshop

Friday, January 16  
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM



**Birds, Bees & Beyond:  
Building a Backyard Habitat**  
Wednesday, January 28  
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

## Winter Nature Play Day

Friday, January 2 | 1 PM - 3 PM

Stop by any time between 1 PM and 3 PM for some adventurous winter fun! Check out a variety of activities designed to get kids out exploring in nature. Activities are primarily self-guided, but staff are available to help. Don't forget to dress for the weather! Registration is free, but necessary for weather/program updates.

January

## ÉCO-VALENTINE'S DAY

Saturday, February 7 | 10 AM - 12 PM

Celebrate Valentine's Day with the EEC! Join us for eco-friendly crafts, holiday treats, and explore our site on a heart-themed nature scavenger hunt. Registration is limited. Cost is \$1 per person.



**Bluebird Box Workshop**  
Wednesday, February 18  
Thursday, February 19  
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM



**Pileated Woodpecker Box Workshop**  
Wednesday, February 25  
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

February



# Volunteer Opportunities

Details for volunteer opportunities can be found on our website ([elkhartindiana.org/eec](http://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](http://elkhart.galaxydigital.com).



## Quilt Garden (end of fall)

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

## TREE PLANTING DAYS

Date, Time, & Location To Be Determined

Funding for our Trees for the Hart program has been restored! Our goal is to start planting trees around the city this fall. We will be planting trees in every district in the city over the course of the program.

Please stay tuned to our website and social media for updates on dates, times, and locations for future planting events while we finalize orders and logistics.

If you are interested in helping with a Tree Planting, sign up with our volunteer software, [elkhart.galaxydigital.com](http://elkhart.galaxydigital.com).

## HAUNTED WALK THROUGH THE WOODS



Thursday, October 23	5 PM - 9 PM
Friday, October 24	5 PM - 10 PM
Saturday, October 25	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!

October

## EEC Ambassadors

We're starting a brand new volunteer opportunity: EEC Ambassadors! The Elkhart Environmental Center is getting more and more invitations to participate in community events and we need YOUR help! We're looking for volunteers to travel to community events to represent the EEC, spread the word about our upcoming programs and events, and invite newcomers out to visit. If you're interested in being an EEC Ambassador, email [EECmail@ceel.org](mailto:EECmail@ceel.org).

This opportunity is open to experienced EEC volunteers and newcomers! EEC Ambassadors will receive a special staff T-shirt.

Anyone new to volunteering with the EEC will receive a brief orientation.

NEW: Ongoing



# Volunteer Highlights: Spring/Summer

## Earth Day

### TREE PREP DAY

The most popular part of our Earth Day event, the free tree giveaway, is also the one that takes the most prep work! This year, to make things easier for volunteers and for tree-adopters, we decided to bundle the tree roots in wood chips to keep them hydrated and make them easier to carry.

Volunteers came out on chilly, rainy afternoon to help prep all 500 trees that we had ordered for the event.

**We had an unexpected turnout of over 20 volunteers who prepped all 500 trees in under 3 hours!**



### Rods and Reels Prep Day

We love being able to give away free rods and reels to kids who complete the Kids Free Fishing Clinic! It is especially neat to see kids fishing with their new rods and reels around High Dive Pond just after completing all of the stations. But it would not be possible to provide these free gifts without help from volunteers.

Two days before the Fishing Clinic, volunteers gathered at High Dive Pavilion to assemble the rods and reels. They ran the fishing line and knotted hooks on each one and carefully stacked them for transport to the event. **They prepped 400 reels in under 3 hours!**

Volunteers also bundled bags of bobbers, weights, and hooks to give away at the event alongside the rods.

Our events not be possible without our volunteers. They also wouldn't be nearly as special or impactful.

Our annual Quilt Garden planting is a BIG project! It takes several hours to trace out the design, drill the holes, divide and plant the flowers, fertilize, and clean it all up.

This year, we had some extra helping hands who sped the process up. **We were able to completely install the quilt garden in 1 day, shaving off about 5 hours from last year!**

Not only that, but volunteers also helped weed the garden and replace dead plants throughout the season, keeping the design fresh.



We are always battling invasive plants. We had many wonderful volunteers who helped remove invasive plants from our rain garden and newly blooming native wildflower prairie. **They helped remove poison hemlock, Japanese hops, dame's rocket and more all through the hot summer months!**

## Quilt Garden

## Weeding







# Pollinator Promenade

We had a blast hosting our first annual Pollinator Promenade event!

The event featured fun competitions around our newly planted 4 acre wildflower prairie, as well as exhibitor and vendor booths, a food truck, and kids activities and games. Visitors competed in a speed walking race, scavenger hunt, and costume contest where 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners received native plants as prizes.

We had some amazing help from volunteers (many of whom dressed up as well!). Volunteers helped set up spaces for the exhibitor and vendor booths, kids area, and the judges table around the prairie and helped put everything away after the event ended. Volunteer judges provided Gatorade and water to competitors and collaborated to name the winners of the costume contest. We were so delighted to have so many excited volunteers helping kick off this brand new event!

Despite the heat, the event drew in around 75 visitors. We're looking forward to growing the event next year!

If you have feedback from this event, or ideas you'd like to share with us for next year, let us know! We are always looking for input and would love to work with volunteers to grow and improve this event! Contact staff at [EECmail@coei.org](mailto:EECmail@coei.org).



*Photos by Rose Goyette*



# Whose Tracks Are Those?

## Opossum Tracks

Recognizable for  
resemblance to human  
hand prints

**Fun Fact:** Opossums are  
Indiana's only native  
marsupial (mammal that  
raises its young in a pouch)



## Coyote

Generally 2.5 -3.5 in long.  
Sometimes the 2 middle  
claws will make an imprint

**Fun Fact:** Coyotes are  
omnivorous and will eat  
grasses, fruits, and berries  
in summer and fall months



## Wild Turkey

Massive tracks measure  
around 3.75 - 5 inches in  
length

**Fun Fact:** Although male  
turkeys can weigh up to 25  
lbs. and females up to 12.5  
lbs., turkeys can reach up  
to 60 mph when flying





# Our Winter Owls

Winter is an excellent time to listen for owls that are around the area. Most of these are year-round residents in our area with the exception of the Snowy, Long-eared, and Short-eared Owls. Scan the QR Code by each bird to listen to its call.



## Great Horned Owl

Length: 18.1-24.8 in  
Wingspan: 39.8-57.1 in  
Weight: 32.1-88.2 oz  
(That's 2-5.5 lbs or the weight of an average cantaloupe!)



## Barred Owl

Length: 16.9-19.7 in  
Wingspan: 39.0-43.3 in  
Weight: 16.6-37.0 oz  
(That's 1-2.3 lbs or the weight of a quart of grapes!)



## Barn Owl

Length: 12.6-15.8 in  
Wingspan: 39.4-49.2 in  
Weight: 14.1-24.7 oz  
(That's 0.88-1.5 lbs or the weight of two medium oranges!)



## Eastern Screech-Owl

Length: 6.3-9.8 in  
Wingspan: 18.9-24.0 in  
Weight: 4.3-8.6 oz  
(That's 0.27-0.54 lbs or the weight of an average apple!)



## Northern Saw-whet Owl

Length: 7.1-8.3 in  
Wingspan: 16.5-18.9 in  
Weight: 2.3-5.3 oz  
(That's 0.14-0.33 lbs or the weight of a small stack of envelopes!)



## Snowy Owl

Length: 20.5-27.9 in  
Wingspan: 49.6-57.1 in  
Weight: 56.4-104.1 oz  
(That's 3.5-6.5 lbs or the weight of 2 quarts of juice!)



## Long-eared Owl

Length: 13.8-15.8 in  
Wingspan: 35.4-39.4 in  
Weight: 7.8-15.3 oz  
(That's 0.49-0.96 lbs or the weight of two pears!)



## Short-eared Owl

Length: 13.4-16.9 in  
Wingspan: 33.5-40.5 in  
Weight: 7.3-16.8 oz  
(That's 0.46-1.05 lbs or the weight of an average paperback book!)





## Earth Day



## Fishing Clinic

# Share with us!

Is 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](mailto: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



## Pollinator Promenade

