



A Living Laboratory for Educators – and We Provide the Tools!

**H**idden away in southernmost Illinois is one of Nature’s masterpieces: the beautiful, mysterious Cache River Wetlands. Home to some of the oldest living trees east of the Mississippi River, the Cache Watershed includes three National Natural Landmarks and has been designated a wetland of international importance. Its rich diversity of plants and animals includes ancient bald cypress, river otters, eagles, bird-voiced tree frogs and much, much more. This “living laboratory” provides the perfect setting for students to explore many aspects of science and environmental studies. Staff at the Cache River State Natural Area and Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge offer a number of free educational programs and resources, both on site and in the classroom. Read on for more details about the activities, tools and materials available for you and your students.



# CACHE RIVER WETLANDS CENTER



The Henry N. Barkhausen Cache River Wetlands Center is a great first stop for anyone visiting the Cache. The 7,000 square-foot facility, operated by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Cache River State Natural Area, offers a variety of interpretive exhibits and features a wildlife viewing area and walking trails through wetland and prairie communities. Below are just some of the free educational programs available by appointment. For more information, call the Wetlands Center at 618-657-2064.

## **Introduction to the Cache River Wetlands (.5 hour)**

Students watch a 12-minute orientation film and a brief staff overview of the natural and cultural history of the Cache River Wetlands.

## **Wetlands Center Scavenger Hunt (1.5 hours)**

Students collect answers to questions about wetlands, wildlife and the natural and cultural history of the Cache River Watershed, with a focus on conservation messages.

## **Who's Clues (1 hour)**

Students identify animal tracks and other signs of wildlife, and use these as clues to discuss how animals behave and interact with their environment.

## **Migration Challenge (1 hour)**

Students use role-playing to discover the challenges faced by migrating birds.

## **Eco Fitness Trail (1 hour)**

Students visit ten different stations and use the tools and materials found there to answer questions about trees, birds, mammals and reptiles.

## **Butterfly Round-up (1.5 hours)**

Students learn about the natural history and life cycle of butterflies, then try their hand at netting and identifying butterflies and moths (late summer/fall program).

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## SWAMP ECOLOGY CANOE TOURS



Take your students on an unforgettable voyage through an ancient cypress swamp, to learn first-hand about local wildlife and the importance of wetlands to plants, animals and humans. Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge offers free canoe tours to educational groups by appointment, February through October. Tours are scheduled Tuesday through Thursday, and include a 1.5-hour (3 miles) or 3-hour (6 miles) guided trip. With a bit of advance planning, canoe tours can be scheduled on the same day as Wetlands Center activities. For more information, call Cypress Creek at 618-634-2231.

# EDUCATION TRUNKS

*For use in the field  
or in the classroom*



**E**ducation trunks are a fun, easy and interactive way to teach students about wetland ecology and the importance of biological diversity. Each trunk includes step-by-step lesson plans and hands-on activities, plus tools and materials for educators to teach the program on their own. Upon request and subject to availability, a staff member from Cypress Creek or the Wetlands Center may also lead the class, either in the field or at your school.

Trunks can be reserved in advance and checked out for up to two weeks. To reserve a trunk or request a staff presentation, call Cypress Creek at 618-634-2231 or the Wetlands Center at 618-657-2064.

Education trunks currently available include:

## **Aquatic Tolerance (1 to 1.5 hours)**

Students measure three abiotic factors (temperature, pH and dissolved oxygen) and learn about their effects on aquatic ecosystems.

## **Bats in the Cache (1 hour)**

Students discover the special features that help the bat survive, its value to the ecosystem and some of the strategies used to protect its habitat.

## **Biodiversity: The Spice of Life (1 hour)**

Students gain a basic understanding of biodiversity issues, how humans can help ease species loss and the benefits of a biologically diverse system.

## **Hoot and Holler: All About Owls (1 hour)**

Students learn about the owl's special adaptations, and then study its role in the food chain by dissecting an owl pellet.

## **Insect Safari (1.5 hours)**

Students examine the important role of insects by studying the various ecosystem functions they provide.

## **Snakes of Southern Illinois (1 hour)**

Students explore the role of snakes in the ecosystem and learn to identify the venomous species found in southern Illinois.

## **Water Canaries (1 hour)**

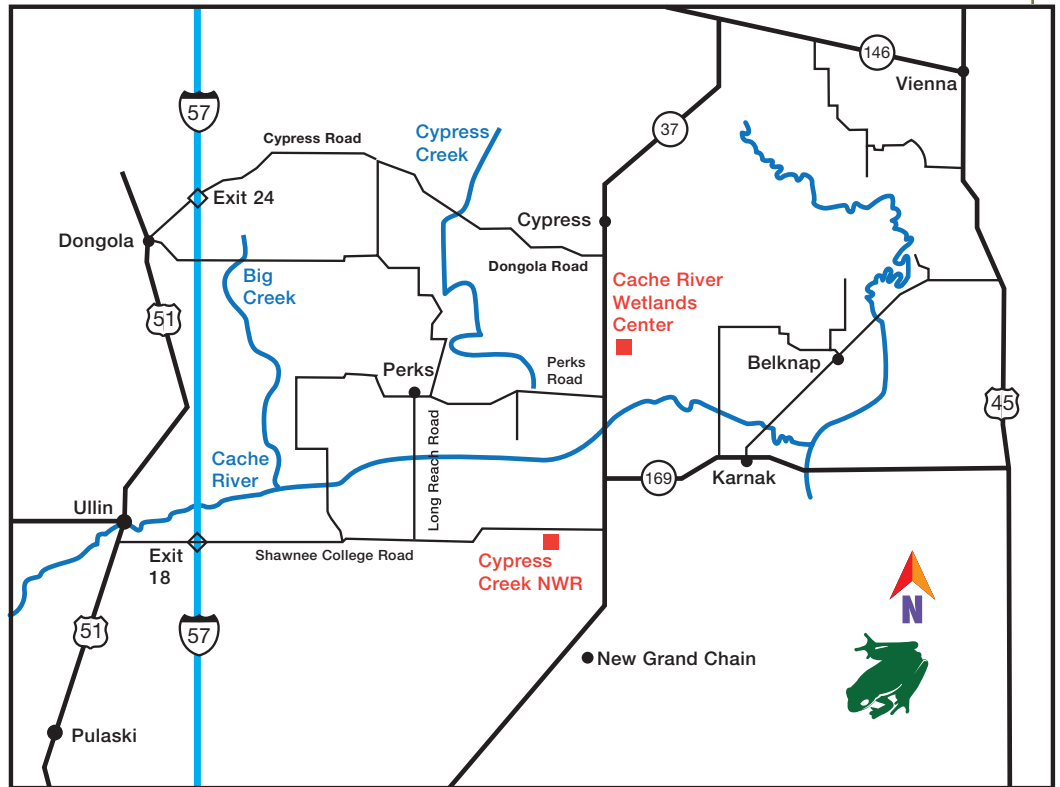
Students investigate aquatic life and its important role in the wetland community.

## **Wetland Birds and Their Habitat (1 hour)**

Students learn about bird adaptations, the value of habitat and techniques used to protect and restore wetland communities.

## **Wetland Wilds: Focus on Mammals (1 hour)**

Students study mammals of the Cache by examining actual examples of their pelts, skulls, footprints and other artifacts.



# HOW TO FIND US

## Cache River Wetlands Center

8885 State Route 37 South  
Cypress, IL 62923

618-657-2064

Hours: Wed-Sun, 9am-4pm

Located on Route 37, about three miles south of Cypress.

## Cypress Creek NWR Office

137 Rustic Campus Drive  
Ullin, IL 62992

618-634-2231

Hours: Mon-Fri, 7:30am-4pm

From Route 37, turn west on Shawnee College Road and follow the signs.



*Educational programs are sponsored by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, AmeriCorps, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Shawnee Community College and Friends of the Cache River Watershed.*

