

# Wetland Ecology

*Cache River Wetlands in Southernmost Illinois*

## Cache River Wetlands Canoe Tours

Join us at Cypress Creek for a canoe tour through the Cache River Wetlands of Southern Illinois. Take the opportunity to see wetlands that are rich in wildlife and home to ancient bald cypress trees, river otters, bald eagles and more.



Photo: Jan Sunberg

**T**he Cache River is a fascinating and important area recognized as a “Wetland of International Importance” for its rich biodiversity. Meandering slowly through a wide, flat floodplain that was created over 13,000 years ago by the Ohio

River, the Cache River provides water essential to rich floodplain forests, swamps and sloughs. Today, the Cache River Wetlands include 91% of Illinois’ last remaining high-quality swamp wetlands, and harbor a remarkable diversity of plants, animals and natural landscapes. The area’s rich resources provide many opportunities to investigate water quality and life in the swamp.

The program includes a 3–6 mile canoe tour. Students will learn about the local plants and animals and their role in sustaining a healthy wetland, the importance of wetlands to both wildlife and humans, and the functions of a wetland. Canoe tours are available Tuesdays through Thursdays weekly (by appointment) and include a 1.5 or 3 hour guided trip.

- Cost:** Free  
**Who:** Students/groups of no more than 24 people (6th grade & up)  
**Where:** Lower Cache River Access  
**When:** Tuesday through Thursday, February through October

Tours are sponsored by Shawnee Community College,  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and  
Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

For more information or to make reservations,  
call Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge at (618) 634-2231.



# Exploration and Discovery

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## Education Trunks

Cypress Creek Refuge offers education trunks as a fun and easy way to teach about this unique area. The activities in these education trunks focus on developing a life-long appreciation of wetlands and associated biological diversity. The trunks include step-by-step activities and related tools and materials for educators to lead the program on their own; or, subject to availability, a staff member may lead the class.



Photo: Michael Jeffords

**Cost:** Free  
**Who:** Educators of grades 4-12  
**Where:** In the classroom or in the field  
**When:** First come, first served, reserved up to two weeks



Contact Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge at (618) 634-2231 to reserve an educational trunk.

### **Snakes of Southern Illinois**

Students will gain a better understanding of a snake's role in the ecosystem and how to identify the venomous species found in southern Illinois. (Grades 4-8)

### **Hoot and Holler: All about Owls**

Students will learn about an owl's special adaptations and will also dissect an owl pellet to learn about its role in the food chain. (Grades 4-8)

### **Wetland Wilds**

Students will learn about wetland animal adaptations through hands-on instruction with pelts, skulls and other bio-facts. (Grades 4-8)

### **Wetland Birds and Their Habitat**

Program will focus on bird adaptations, the value of habitat, and management techniques used to protect and restore wetland communities. (Grades 4-8)

### **The Spice of Life**

Students will learn about the current status of biodiversity issues, how humans can help ease species loss, and the benefits of a biologically diverse system. (Grades 6-12)

### **Insect Safari**

Students will learn the importance of insects to all living organisms and study the various ecosystem functions insects provide. (Grades 6-12)

### **Aquatic Tolerance**

Students will measure three abiotic factors (temperature, pH, and dissolved oxygen) and learn about their effects on aquatic ecosystems. (Grades 6-12)

### **Water Canaries**

Students will investigate aquatic life and its importance and interaction within the wetland community. (Grades 6-12)