

## Exploring Brown County Shelbyville Students Discover the Outdoors

Warm, sunny, and a nice breeze. These are probably weather patterns you look for when picking a day to explore the outdoors. But for a group of Shelbyville Middle School students, a chilly, wet, and muddy early March morning was the perfect backdrop for a Discover the Outdoors field trip at Brown County State Park.

Despite the drizzle falling from the gray skies, the students began their day with a trek around Ogle Lake. While students and teachers alike had a few slips, smiles were still abundant when the group returned to the nature center for lunch.

"I'm so glad I didn't stay home," one student told Katie Beyer, school counselor and the leader of the trip, during lunch. "Even in the rain this was really fun."

Beyer, an avid hiker, leads a mentoring group at the school. Students are put in this program for many different reasons—academic help, peer support, or just needing a place they can call home.

"We focus a lot on our mental health and giving them opportunities that they may not otherwise be able to experience," she said. "This grant helped me to share a little bit of my passion with the students, and it was beautiful to see them in a different element."

For some of Beyer's students, this was their first time visiting an Indiana State Park. Brown County is Indiana's largest, giving them ample opportunity to step away from their electronic screens and enjoy a day exploring the natural environment around them.

After a lunch filled with excited discussion that included students trying to come up with trail names for their teachers, the group headed into the nature center for a reptile program. Led by one of the park's naturalists, the program taught students about Indiana's native snakes and even gave them the opportunity to interact with a prairie king snake.

Elsewhere in the nature center, the students explored exhibits that highlight the area's wildlife, trees, and flowers. While some students enjoyed the time reading the informational displays, others found happiness in the wildlife viewing area. Birdfeeders were visited by countless species, including downy woodpeckers, white-breasted nuthatches, and a few pesky squirrels and chipmunks. Identifying the different types of birds quickly became a fun, challenging way for the group to end their day.

"I am such a big encourager of getting fresh air and clearing your mind," Beyer said. "With this trip we did just that!"

Discover the Outdoors began in 2013, when it was launched in memory of long-time DNR employee Tom Huck. Huck was an ardent supporter of creating outdoor experiences for youth in nature. Since the program's inception, more than 20,000 Hoosier students have visited an Indiana state park at reduced cost for the schools.

Generous donations have allowed Discover the Outdoors to expand and ensure more children receive an education on Indiana's natural and cultural legacy. Visit our website to learn more and to help us inspire the next generation of conservationists.



## Powerful Partnerships are Creating a Vibrant Future

Thanks to our partners at the Emma L. Snyder Charitable Foundation, with support from the Friends of Clifty Falls, Clifty Falls State Park is now home to two color blind viewers, one of which is ADA accessible.

The viewers, located at the park's Lookout Point, will provide some color-blind guests the opportunity to experience a broader range of the park's stunning colors. The viewers are specially designed to help those with red-green color blindness experience clearer, more vibrant color. The addition will help a lot of people; it is estimated that one in 12 men and one in 200 women are affected by varying levels of color blindness.

"We look forward to the enhanced view of Clifty Canyon that this will provide for those who experience color blindness; the installation of these viewers continues our work to provide accessible features at our properties," said Terry Coleman, director of Indiana State Parks. "Our partners help to make that work possible, and we are grateful to the Emma L. Snyder Charitable Foundation, the Indiana Natural Resources Foundation, and the Friends of Clifty Falls for their support."



## Discover the Outdoors: Increased Funding, Increased Impact

Applications for the Discover the Outdoors field trip grant program are being accepted May 1 – June 30.

Thanks to dedicated support from our donors and partners, educators can now request up to \$500 to assist with transportation costs, program fees, and supplies.

Discover the Outdoors field trip grants provide students an outdoor experience that engages them in hands-on learning at an Indiana State Parks property. Working with knowledgeable DNR staff, students will learn about Hoosier wildlife, natural and cultural history, conservation, and much more as they explore one of Indiana's unique natural habitats.

Any educator in a school, school district, or home school group in Indiana from kindergarten to grade 12 can apply.

**Learn more at: [bit.ly/Discover-the-Outdoors](https://bit.ly/Discover-the-Outdoors)**



Celebrate and preserve Indiana's natural legacy by donating to the Indiana Natural Resources Foundation today. Your gifts acquire new public land, restore critical habitat, give Hoosier children outdoor education opportunities, and so much more. Together, we will make a difference for our public lands, wildlife, and current and future generations of Hoosiers.

**Donate at: [indiananrf.org/donate](https://indiananrf.org/donate)**

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# Partners in Planting

## Clif Bar Continues Its Support of the Indiana Tree Project

Along the banks and fields near Greene-Sullivan State Forest's Black Cat Lake, thousands of tree seedlings are taking root and preparing for generations of growth thanks to the continued work of the Division of Forestry and our partners at Clif Bar. In celebration of Earth Day and Arbor Day, the groups joined forces once again to plant 3,000 more trees as part of the Indiana Tree Project.

After a brief instruction from Steve Siscoe, Greene-Sullivan property manager, the volunteers spread out among the grassy field to plant their seedlings. There were many familiar faces in the two groups, allowing Siscoe to keep the instruction short, and making for an efficient planting. Clif Bar has now planted more than 25,000 trees during seven tree planting days, including nearly 10,000 at Greene-Sullivan.

"We very much enjoy spending the day with Clif Bar," said Siscoe. "We enjoy sharing our forestry knowledge and collaborating to support the natural resources of the area while planting trees for the future."

Greene-Sullivan is mostly former strip-mining land, giving property staff the opportunity to strategically grow the young forest. Alongside Clif Bar's plantings near Black Cat Lake, Forestry staff have been expanding the forest on their own as well. The area will look very different in the coming years as around 30,000 trees begin to stretch toward the sky.

This spring's planting featured red and black oaks. Previous Clif Bar plantings at other areas of the property have included walnut and swamp white oak. All are important species for creating habitat in this region. Oaks play a large role in improving soil, air, and water quality in the areas in which they grow.

The 9,000-acre property is broken up by 120 lakes, offering ample fishing, wildlife viewing, and outdoor recreation opportunities. With more than 100,000 trees planted across the property in recent years, those opportunities will continue to expand.

Each of the plantings Clif Bar and our other dedicated partners have supported were also integral in helping DNR and the Division of Forestry meet their larger tree planting

goals. In 2020, Gov. Eric Holcomb launched an initiative for DNR to plant one million trees in five years.

On Arbor Day, we joined Clif Bar, alongside other Indiana Tree Project partners, DNR staff, and Gov. Holcomb to celebrate the completion of that initiative. With many of those million trees planted in Indiana state forests, we're proud that the Indiana Tree Project played a role in exponentially growing Indiana's forested landscape.

Through powerful partnerships, we're growing Indiana's forests, one tree at a time. Individual donors are also important to the ongoing success of the Indiana Tree Project and Hoosier conservation. Visit our website to learn more about how you can support Indiana's forests or our other conservation, education, and outdoor recreation projects and programs.





## Sign-up for our Monthly Newsletter

We're making waves for conservation and outdoor recreation in the Hoosier state, and so can you. Keep up with us by signing up for our e-newsletter. Receive feature stories, news and photos in your inbox each month.

Sign up by visiting **IndianaNRF.org** and click **Subscribe**.



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