

Nature Fest

2025
SCHEDULE

TYPE OF ACTIVITIES

- Drop-in

Show up anytime within the timeframe
- Guided

Show up at the start time to participate

FRIDAY, MAY 9

FAMILY ACTIVITIES: <i>open to all ages</i>	EcoExcursions: <i>science investigations for all ages</i>
6 - 9 P.M. CANOES & CAMPFIRES <div>Drop-inFarmstead</div> <p>Grab a partner and canoe on Kesling wetland! All equipment is provided. After canoeing relax by the campfire for awhile and s'more fixings will be provided (as supplies last).</p>	8 - 9 P.M. SUNSET STROLL <div>GuidedFarmstead</div> <p>Join us as we hike through parts different parts of the various ecosystems here at Merry Lea. We will discover what life is out and about during the sunset and do some basic ID with the plants and animals we encounter.</p>

SATURDAY, MAY 10

8:45 A.M. EVENT CHECK-IN BEGINS <div>Farmstead Lawn</div>	
9 - 10:30 A.M. NATURE'S DYES <div>Drop-inFarmstead Pavilion</div> <p>Nature provides us vibrant dyes to decorate eggs, add color to fabrics, and create colors to try our hand at creating paintings. Come create your own watercolor masterpiece with the colors from Mother Nature!</p> ABC'S OF NATURE <div>Drop-inKesling Porch</div> <p>Explore nature the alphabet way! Grab a children's book and go for a hike to help guide your alphabet exploration. How many letters can YOU find?</p> SELF-GUIDED OPTIONS & INFO TABLE <div>Drop-inFarmstead Lawn</div> <p>Interested in doing some exploring on your own? We will have hike bags, scavenger hunts, play areas and more ready to go!</p>	TURTLE TROT <div>GuidedBell</div> <p>Get up close and personal with a variety of wild turtles by helping Merry Lea Executive Director, Jason Martin, complete a survey of Kesling Wetland's turtle community. As you walk around the perimeter of the wetland, you will help check live traps, determine what turtle species are present, record important data, and learn about the ecology of these fascinating creatures. Wearing hip waders and entering the water is an optional part of this excursion.</p>
10:30 A.M. - 12 P.M. LET'S HEAR IT FOR HERPS! <div>GuidedKesling Porch</div> <p>Get ready to dive into the fascinating world of herpetology at Merry Lea! Through hands-on activities and an exciting hike, we'll explore the unique ecosystems that reptiles and amphibians call home, including frogs, snakes, and other fascinating critters.</p> NATURE PREK CLASSROOM OPEN HOUSE <div>Drop-inOutdoor Classroom</div> <p>Walk out to Merry Lea's Nature Preschool outdoor classroom to explore how we spend time each afternoon we are in session. Climb logs, build a shelter, cook up a "snack" in our mud kitchen, or try your hand at other activities we often do.</p> MUD PAINTING <div>Drop-inFarmstead Pavilion</div> <p>Paint with differnt muds from around the Merry Lea property! Use paintbrushes, natural materials, or your hands to create a lovely mud masterpeice.</p> SELF-GUIDED OPTIONS & INFO TABLE <div>Drop-inFarmstead Lawn</div> <p>Interested in doing some exploring on your own? We will have hike bags, scavenger hunts, play areas and more ready to go!</p>	AQUATIC CRITTER DIPPING & ID <div>Drop-inWetland Garage</div> <p>Equipped with waders (or your bare feet!) and a dip net, you'll squish your way into the Kesling Wetland and find out what small creatures live in the water. Search and examine the aquatic species at dipping sites along the Kesling Wetland edge.</p>



SATURDAY, MAY 10 (CONTINUED)

FAMILY ACTIVITIES: open to all ages		EcoExcursions: science investigations for all ages	
12 - 12:30 P.M.	LOOSE PARTS PLAY Drop-in Farmstead Fire Ring Sticks, blocks, leaves! Come play with nature's loose materials and display your creativity! How will you make use of the great outdoors?	11 - 1:30 P.M. (FOOD TRUCK - LUNCH) THE ROOTED SPUD - FOOD TRUCK! Farmstead Lawn <i>Serving gourmet loaded baked potatoes, fresh brewed tea & more! *Gluten free!</i> <i>*Accepts cash or card</i>	
	SELF-GUIDED OPTIONS Drop-in Farmstead Lawn Explore the outdoors on your own. We will have trail bags, scavenger hunts, and play areas ready to go!		
	ECOEXCURSION TABLE Drop-in Farmstead Lawn Come to the table for event info and science-related games/activities that are going on.		
12:30 - 2 P.M.	TRASH CLEAN-UP Guided Bell April Showers bring May flowers, but before that, they make all the trash visible along the edges of Merry Lea. Now is the time to pick up the bottles, wrappers and other debris that won't biodegrade before the vegetation grows up around it. If you are available, we'd love your help to collect and bag the trash. We will start at the Farmstead and move over to Rieth Village.	NATIVE PLANT & ID HIKE Guided Bell Merry Lea is home to hundreds of native plants, do you know their names? Let's take a walk together and see who is in bloom and who will be soon! Participants are encouraged to download the iNaturalist app to record their observations. No experience with plant identification or iNaturalist is necessary. We will go over the basics along the way.	
	LOOSE PARTS PLAY Drop-in Farmstead Fire Ring Sticks, blocks, leaves! Come play with nature's loose materials and display your creativity! How will you make use of the great outdoors?		
	SEED STARTING Guided Farmstead Pavilion Join us at the Teaching Farm for a seed starting workshop! Participants will take home their freshly potted seed to place in a sunny window and watch it grow. Learn more about plant families and companion plantings. Just like people, plants have relatives and friends they like to grow with! Pots, soil and several types of herbs, flowers and vegetable seeds are provided to choose from.		
2 - 3:30 P.M.	NATURAL ART SUPPLIES Guided Carpenter Shop Come experiment with art supplies made from materials gathered at Merry Lea. Make pictures from plant pigments, make your own paint brushes and try them out, use charcoal paint, berry ink, and more.	SELF-GUIDED OPTIONS & INFO TABLE Drop-in Farmstead Lawn Interested in doing some exploring on your own? We will have hike bags, scavenger hunts, play areas and more ready to go! CANOEING Drop-in Kesling Wetland Grab a partner and canoe on Kesling Wetland! Canoes, paddles and life jackets are provided.	
	SPIDER WEB EXPLORATION Drop-in Farmstead Porch Explore webs found in Indiana created by spiders! At this booth you can observe different examples of webs and the spiders that made them! You can also try your hand at weaving your own web using yarn and natural materials.		
	INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT Guided Farmstead Fire Ring Help Merry Lea continue to manage invasive plants! We have been working on several populations for many years and need to keep up the work to be effective. We will travel off trail over uneven terrain to look for garlic mustard and pull it. Long pants and closed toed shoes are required. This activity does not require heavy lifting, but there will be quite a bit of bending.		
SELF-GUIDED OPTIONS & INFO TABLE Drop-in Farmstead Lawn Interested in doing some exploring on your own? We will have hike bags, scavenger hunts, play areas and more ready to go!		BIRD BASICS FOR BEGINNERS Guided Bell Want to learn how to find and identify birds? In this program you will learn how to use binoculars, field notes, and your senses to locate birds and determine what species they are. No birding apps allowed! CANOEING Drop-in Kesling Wetland Grab a partner and canoe on the wetland! Canoes, paddles and life jackets are provided.	
		GARDEN ROCK PAINTING Guided Meet at Pavilion Have fun painting rocks outside by the garden! Then go look for painted rocks hidden around the garden space. You can rehide them, or take one home with you.	

