

Making the Grade: School Program Menu for 7th Grades 2025-2026



Katie Cantu kcantu@jasperia.org

Greg Oldsen goldsen@jasperia.org

The following is a list of presentations offered to seventh grade classes in Jasper County. This is not a complete list, and for other options or questions about a program, please contact the naturalists. We work with teachers to fit our programming with their curriculum!

- All programs are free and materials will be provided unless otherwise noted.
- Although descriptions are for in-class, all programs can be adapted for outdoor locations.
- Please call or email at the beginning of the school year to guarantee your desired day and time.
- Plan for 30-40 minutes per program.
- Have your students come up with a list of questions for the naturalists before the scheduled program time.
- Please plan to sit with your class and enjoy the presentation along with them!

Enviroscape

The Enviroscope is a watershed model that demonstrates the effect of soil erosion, chemical and fertilizer use, and other water quality issues. Water quality problems will be identified on the Enviroscope and students will work together to solve those issues, using conservation practices to improve water quality. We will also discuss a little history of land-use in Iowa and prepare students for their Mariposa Park field trip (see below). Students will be expected to follow and fill in an outline provided by the naturalists.

***MS-LS2-1, MS-LS2-2, MS-LS2-4, MS-ETS1-1**



Watershed Investigations at Mariposa Park

Upon arrival at Mariposa Park, students will take a bus ride around the watershed to identify conservation practices that are beneficial or harmful to the watershed. They will perform chemical water tests, go pondnetting to determine species diversity in the lake, and take an observational hike on the nature trail to identify problems and improvements in the watershed. At the end of the day, they will give the watershed an overall score and write a short report justifying their score.

***MS-LS2-1, MS-LS2-2, MS-LS2-3, MS-LS2-4, MS-ETS1-1**



Neal Smith Wildlife Refuge Field Trip

Another local option for a fall field trip is to visit the Neal Smith Wildlife Refuge, located just southwest of Prairie City. Here, students will learn about Iowa's natural history, geology, and the present work being done to protect and restore our natural resources. Students will take part in a stewardship activity, which can include but is not limited to, seed harvesting, seed cleaning, planting, and creating seed packets for pollinator garden distribution. Please notify Jasper County Naturalists when scheduling this field day, so we can make ourselves available to help with activities. The refuge can provide money for bus transportation, please ask about this when scheduling. Information can be found at www.tallgrass.org.

****MS-LS1-4, MS-LS1-5, MS-LS1-6, MS-LS2-1, MS-LS2-2, MS-LS2-3, MS-LS2-4, MS-ETS1-1***

Astronomy and Telescopes

The naturalist will hand out sky maps for the current month and help familiarize students with the night sky. A special guest presenter from the Des Moines Astronomical Society (DMAS) will also attend this program to answer astronomy questions and demonstrate the differences between reflecting and refracting telescopes. Pictures taken by DMAS members of various deep-sky objects will be shared with the class and discussion of current events will take place.

****MS-ESS1-1, MS-ESS1-3***

Spring Field Days

End-of-the-year spring field trips have been very popular with 7th grade classes. We save the last 2 weeks of May for programs such as these. Ideal locations for a day-long program include Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve, Mariposa Recreation Area, the Izaak Walton League grounds in Newton, or other county or city parks close to your school. Activities we can provide include archery, global positioning systems (GPS), fishing, hiking, orienteering with a compass, canoeing, kayaking, teambuilding activities, and stewardship projects such as planting trees, picking up litter, clearing brush, etc. Please refer to our Physical Education program menu for a more detailed description or contact the naturalists.

Schoolyard Habitat Project

Your students can make a difference by providing local wildlife habitat on school grounds, no matter what size of space is available. Students will gain real life skills by exploring and researching the needs of local wildlife and developing a master plan to create a schoolyard habitat. Examples for habitat include but are not limited to:

- Pollinator Garden
- School Courtyard Planting
- Aquatic Habitat Construction
- Raised Produce Beds

Naturalists will be available throughout the planning and implementation process of the project.

****MS-ETS1-(1,2,3)***

Migrating Monarchs

The naturalist will discuss the current monarch butterfly population status and how it has changed in the past 20 years. Students will brainstorm what resources monarchs require during each stage of their life cycle, where they find those resources, and how the annual migration requires scientists to look at multiple habitat needs of these creatures. Real butterflies will be brought in and tagged as part of the MonarchWatch program, if available.

****MS-LS2-1, MS-LS2-2, MS-LS2-4***

