

TEACH Outdoors

provides Girl Scouts wood duck education

Staff Report

Learning about waterfowl conservation, building and placing wood duck boxes to provide habitat for Illinois wood ducks and getting professional tips on duck calling techniques – indeed, dozens of youngsters received invaluable experience in a single day at Camp River Trails in Sheridan.

Inspired by *Illinois Outdoor News'* annual Wood Duck Challenge, several Girl Scout Troops entered a springtime wood duck educational event organized by T.E.A.C.H. Outdoors, a nonprofit entity whose purpose is to get children outside, pass along outdoor values, and teach the conservation and ethics of being an outdoor person.

T.E.A.C.H. stands for "Tradition, Education, Adventure, Conservation and Habitat," and it began just over a year ago. The goal is to host eight to 10 free annual events that include fishing derbies, campouts, hunter safety and ethics classes, conservation teaching, habitat projects, nature walks, and duck calling.

Jim Smith, president of T.E.A.C.H. Outdoors (www.teachoutdoors.org), said the organization is solely funded by donations and sponsors.

The wood duck box event at Camp River Trails featured T.E.A.C.H. partnering with Buck Gardner Calls pro staff members – Smith and fellow T.E.A.C.H. officer Bob Wilkins – for educational sessions about the wood duck, its habitat and the importance of conservation. Students learned that wood duck hens typically build their nests in cavities near wetlands. In many areas, woodies have difficulty finding suitable natural nesting sites. Thus, wood duck boxes provide a human-made alternative, where hens can nest in relative safety from predators.

At the T.E.A.C.H. event, question and answer sessions were held and each Girl Scout received hands-on experience in building their own wood duck box. When all of the scouts had completed the seminars and the building of their own duck boxes, T.E.A.C.H. donated the boxes to the Girl Scouts to place along Illinois waterways. Smith and Wilkins later hosted a seminar on duck calling and taught Girl Scouts and their troop leaders how to call ducks. Each girl received a duck call.

Illinois Outdoor News conducts its Wood Duck Challenge each February, offering tips and information on wood ducks in a special issue. Watch for 2018 details next winter in the newspaper or visit the Wood Duck Challenge page at outdoornews.com!



Above are some of the Illinois Girl Scouts who participated in the T.E.A.C.H. Outdoors wood duck box event at Camp River Trails in Sheridan. The youngsters learned to make wood duck boxes and how the boxes aided in wood duck conservation.

Photos provided