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PROPERTY PROFILE

Sugar Ridge
Fish & Wildlife Area

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Southside Outdoors

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CONTENTS

3 Property profile: Sugar Ridge F&W Area

6 MALC offers unique training near Edinburgh

10 Take your fun to a higher level in a treehouse

12 Five ideas for a great outdoor stay-cation

14 Learn about geology at Monroe Lake

Sugar Ridge Fish & Wildlife Area



SUGAR RIDGE | PHOTO COURTESY OF DNR

DESCRIPTION

Sugar Ridge Fish & Wildlife Area is unique in that much of the land has been strip-mined. Sugar Ridge FWA is made up of six separate areas, totaling approximately 8,500 acres. The strip-mined land now features about 100 pits and lakes, along with rows of overburden from the mining operation. The land that has not been mined is mostly rough and rolling.

ACTIVITIES

All visitors must obtain a one-day access permit before entering the field, regardless of their activity.

Fishing

Sugar Ridge FWA provides approximately 145 acres in 24 major fishing pits. Major fish species include bluegill, redear, channel catfish, and largemouth bass. Shoreline fishing is available at some pits. Bow and spear fishing is permitted according to state fishing laws.

Boat ramps are available at most pits on Areas I, II, III and VI. Electric motors only, 12-volt max. No boat rental is offered.

Hunting

Deer, quail, rabbit, squirrel and wild turkey are common at Sugar Ridge FWA. Spring turkey hunting opportunities during the first five days of the season are allocated through a preseason online draw.

Self-service check in is required on Areas I, III, V and VI. Daily permit cards must be in the possession of the hunter to enter the field.

Quail and rabbit hunting is permitted during legal

hunting hours on Wednesday and Sunday only. There is a 50-shell limit for dove hunting and hunters must use nontoxic shot. Night and predator hunting is provided by self-service check in. Dog training is permitted on Area III, west of County Road 300 E.

Deer stands are allowed overnight between Sept. 15 and Jan. 10 and must be marked with the owner's name, address and phone number or the owner's DNR Customer ID Number.

Trapping

Trapping is only available through a drawing held the first Saturday in October. Contact the office for details.

Wildlife watching

8,500 acres of upland game habitat, wooded reclaimed mine areas and stripper pits attract a wide variety of songbirds, woodpeckers, hawks, and waterfowl. Mushrooms, berries and nuts may be gathered; however, a written permit is required to remove plants, animals, rocks and fossils.

Shooting range

Free shooting ranges for shotgun, rifle and archery are open to the public on a first-come, first-served basis. Visit <https://www.in.gov/dnr/fish-and-wildlife/properties/dnr-shooting-ranges/> for information.

Location/contact

2310 E. State Road 364
Winslow, IN 47598
812-789-2724

Office hours: M-F, 7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Email: SugarRidgeFWA@dnr.IN.gov



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FIELD TRAINING

Hone your outdoor skills with former military instructors

STORY BY GREG SEITER | PHOTO FROM ADOBESTOCK

It may not quite be the equivalent of U.S. Navy SEAL training but unique and very specialized courses on topics such as firearms, survival and personal protection are being offered in Edinburgh to civilians.

The MALC Training Institute, with instructors who are active or former military, law enforcement, firefighter, medical and other specialized subject matter personnel, has quietly provided a variety of training sessions since 2010. With an emphasis on what is described as “success and survivability through superior training,” MALC stands for Military, Agency, Law Enforcement and Civilian ... the four categories under which various courses are classified.

“Before this all started, a few of us were instructors at Camp Atterbury and at one point, we noticed a couple of units were having issues. There was one large unit in particular that was getting ready to deploy but they had a few soldiers, who weren’t infantry, that couldn’t qualify on their handguns,” said J.R. Grounds, director of training at MALC. “Back then, trying to

get range time for nine people at Atterbury was difficult so we told the sergeant of that group we would spend a few hours with them. We did that and they were able to get qualified and ship with their company.”

Because of that and similar instances, Grounds and his fellow instructors quickly earned a reputation at Atterbury that enabled them to later help other units with similar problems.

“We weren’t teaching them anything new. We were just reinforcing what they already knew,” he said. “But we did create some weird, outside-the-box training.”

Soon thereafter, the group began to receive non-military specific requests.

“We started getting calls from law enforcement personnel who were interested in having a spouse or children become familiar with firearms in the house. So, we started doing civilian training in the backyard of a range we had access to in Nineveh,” Grounds said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

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Hanging with friends outdoors? Nothing beats a treehouse

BY TRACEE M. HERBAUGH/ASSOCIATED PRESS



Jessica Brookhart's treehouse in Gold Hill, Colorado.
CHELSEA BEAMER, AP

Anthropologists believe our ancient human ancestors spent their time in trees, so it should be no surprise we love treehouses today.

Treehouses of all kinds are experiencing a renaissance.

When an acre-size slice of land in Gold Hill, Colorado, came on the market earlier this year, Jessica Brookhart, 41, snapped it up for \$80,000.

The draw for her: The house was a treehouse.

It was a place she could hang out with her husband and two young boys.

"I had never been inside it, but had admired it from a distance," she said, admitting it was an emotional purchase.

The man who owned the land had built the treehouse with materials from a recycling center in neighboring Boulder. The structure can fit two adults and two children. There's no bathroom or running water, and a squat potty is outside down on the ground. There's a camping stove for cooking, and water has to be brought up.

Treehouses have proliferated during the pandemic. There are stylish backyard ones built by professionals, and makeshift ones thrown up just to escape the four walls of home. There are listings on sites like Airbnb for treehouses to camp in.

Unlike the rickety treehouses of yore, many of these new ones have been upgraded. Most are still accessed with a ladder, however, requiring you to climb.

As pandemic lockdowns droned on, Nanci and Ethan Butler of Newton, Massachusetts, decided to build a backyard treehouse for their two kids. Ethan, an engineer, found treehouse floor plans online and modified them to accommodate their family.

Building the house was a family affair, and in about three months, the Butlers had

a beautiful hideaway with built-in bunk beds and a front deck. They enjoyed some nights camping out in it.

More people have been drawn outdoors and into nature during COVID, and treehouses are part of that pattern, said Jeff Galak, associate professor of marketing at Carnegie Mellon University's Tepper School of Business.

"They are an attempt to do something fun and interesting and away from other people," Galak said.

Part of treehouses' popularity, he said, is parents' desire to create more backyard amenities so kids will go outside.

"Nostalgia is a huge driver for consumers in general," he said.

Business is booming for Aaron Smith, who owns the Fort Collins, Colorado-based treehouse architecture firm Treecraft Design-Build. He started it in 2015, and now employs a second designer and eight carpenters.

"In COVID times, I saw a spike in requests for backyard treehouses just because everyone was at home and the kids needed to get out of the house too," Smith said.

His treehouses have ranged from a basic backyard structure costing around \$10,000 to a livable treehouse with indoor plumbing for half a million. He has clients all over the country.

For many people, basic is OK for treehouses. Jim Brook, a 71-year-old grandfather in Breckenridge, Colorado, built his three grandsons a small platform treehouse nestled among some aspen trees a few years ago.

"I love to introduce them to nature and encourage them to play outdoors, so a simple structure with a metal pole 'fireman' exit seemed like it would be fun," Brook said. "At times we have also set a small tarp overhead and a carpet remnant on the plywood platform."

A large advertisement for Clearview Christmas Tree Farm. The background is a dense forest of green pine trees. Overlaid on the image is text in orange and white. At the top, it says "Celebrating 30th Anniversary!" in orange. Below that, "Clearview Christmas Tree Farm" is written in large, bold, orange letters. Underneath, the address "8451 W 100 S" and "Arlington, IN 46104" is displayed in white with orange outlines. At the bottom of the ad, there is a banner for "PUMPKINS AMONG THE PINES" dated "October 2-3 2021". Below the banner are three small images: a white barn with a windmill, a woman with a white dog, and a person in a green alien costume.

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5 family stay-cation ideas that won't break your budget

BY E-LIVINGTODAY

Family vacations are a great way to bond and take a step back from the hectic schedules that accompany everyday life, but sometimes time or money (or both) make planning an elaborate trip a non-starter. However, a stay-cation — a vacation you take right in your hometown (or nearby) — can be much less expensive and fit into nearly any amount of available time with the added bonus of skipping out on potentially stressful travel. Consider these stay-cation ideas to take advantage of your local area's attractions and prove you don't have to go far to spend quality time together.

- 1.** Visit local landmarks. Just because it's not a traditional vacation doesn't mean you can't pretend to be tourists. Start by visiting the places you recommend to friends and family from out of town or pick up a city guidebook to uncover hidden spots you may not even know exist. Seek out historic sites, visit local landmarks like museums or try an out-of-the-way restaurant (or two) you've never eaten at before.
- 2.** Camp out in the backyard. Camping doesn't have to be done far from home. In fact, it can be done right in your own backyard. Pitch a tent to sleep under the stars and plan a night full of traditional camping activities like roasting s'mores, telling spooky stories by flashlight and trying to identify stars and constellations.



- 3.** Have a home spa day. If you're looking for some relaxation but don't want to splurge on the full spa treatment, plan an at-home oasis instead. Light some candles, run a bubble bath and break out the facial masks and fingernail polish.
- 4.** Visit an amusement park. No matter where you live, there's probably an amusement or water park within driving distance. A quick online search before you arrive can help prepare a strategy for hitting the most popular thrill rides and waterslides while skipping those that may not provide quite the same entertainment value.
- 5.** Set up a picnic in the park. Pack a basket with sandwiches, fruit and other treats and head to the park. You can enjoy a casual meal then take advantage of the open space for a family walk or game of tag before retreating to the playground to let the little ones expel any leftover energy.

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CAN YOU DIG IT?

Earth Science Week highlights geology

Monroe Lake will offer daily programming on local geology Oct. 10-16 during its annual Earth Science Week.

The program schedule includes activities that require advance registration (with limited space available) and others that are open to everyone without registration, plus two virtual programs that will air on Facebook Live.

Detailed program descriptions, registration links for programs requiring advance signup, and viewing links for the virtual programs are at bit.ly/earthscience2021.

Oct. 10: Geology Story Beads, 2 to 3:30 p.m., Paynetown SRA, no registration required

Oct. 11: Facebook Live: Rocks Tell a Story, The Geology of Monroe Lake at 8 p.m., virtual program

Oct. 12: Crinoid Fossil Bed Hike at 10 a.m., Allens Creek SRA, free but limited to 20 people, advance signup required

Oct. 13: Facebook Live: Monroe County Geology "Hot Spots" at 10 a.m., virtual program

Oct. 14: Monroe Lake Geology Driving Tour, 8 a.m. \$20 per person and limited to 20 people, advance signup required

Oct. 15: Digging for Fossils, 10 to 11:30 a.m., Paynetown SRA, no registration required



Oct. 15: The Fossilization Game, 5:30 to 7 p.m., Paynetown SRA, no registration required

Oct. 16: Hoosier Gems, 10 to 11:30 a.m., Paynetown SRA, no registration required

Oct. 16: Plaster Cast Fossils, 2 to 3:30 p.m., Paynetown SRA, no registration required

Oct. 16: Rock Pendants, 5:30 to 7 p.m., Campground Playground at Paynetown SRA, no registration required

For programs at Paynetown State Recreation Area, the daily entrance fee of \$7 per vehicle with Indiana license plate and \$9 per vehicle with out-of-state license plate applies. Indiana State Park Annual Entrance Permits are also accepted.

Questions about Earth Science Week programming should be directed to Jill Vance, Monroe Lake's Interpretive Naturalist, at jvance@dnr.IN.gov or 812-837-9967.

> FIELD TRAINING

The "C" in MALC originally stood for "Contractors" but according to Grounds, with a notable increase in non-military requests for training, it was changed to "Civilian" sometime between 2014 and 2015.

Over the years, the MALC facility menu has grown to include a dedicated range-training area, a K-9 training area, a dirt track for vehicle-related instruction and even a classroom.

"We're getting ready to build a fire and rope rescue facility soon," Grounds said.

Specific to firearms, MALC offers various types of training in handguns, rifles, shotguns, and precision rifles, just to name a few.

"We do an intro to hunting firearms class and there are two tracks. The one for people without much firearm experience at all puts a lot of focus on safety, proper storage and handling. The other track is dedicated to those with basic knowledge," Grounds said.

"If you're just looking at firearms training, you're missing a lot. You also need to have situational awareness and even some understanding of legal requirements."

MALC, with a willingness to provide courses 365 days per year, even has an intro

to archery class. However, civilian outdoor enthusiasts may be more interested in courses that relate to wilderness survival and recreation.

"We have some pretty cool survival courses that cover things like how to build a shelter and how to make fire but we also have wilderness medical courses that teach people how to treat common injuries like making a splint out of sticks," Grounds said. "There are obviously some survival skills that aren't really applicable in Indiana. In fact, around here, all you really need is a cell phone, a credit card and the ability to walk a mile downhill if you need help."

According to Grounds, courses offered through MALC are as appropriate for beginners as they are for highly experienced individuals.

"On one end, you get people who are inexperienced and completely unaware yet they decide they want to get outdoors. So, they find a trail head, take a single bottle of water with them and head out," he said. "The thing is, in the heat of summer, they don't realize how quickly their body is losing fluid so they get off the path for whatever reason and suddenly, they're teetering on the verge of heat stroke. Then, they start to panic and things quickly go downhill. I

call that person a happenstance hiker."

Grounds believes people rely too heavily on cell phones to get them out of trouble.

"In Brown County, you can easily get into a valley where there's no cell service.

"Unprepared people don't realize how quickly things can go wrong," he said.

With more experienced individuals, complacency can be a problem.

"There are also people out there who have many years of outdoor experience and they believe their skills are incredibly superior so they push themselves harder than they should," Grounds said.

Ultimately, he also insists that MALC Training Institute has something for everyone.

"We see a large number of families who are looking to get outside and do something fun together and we also see a lot of mother-daughter and father-son combinations," Grounds said. "This isn't a military atmosphere. We want people to have fun, to learn and take something away so that someday, if necessary, they may be able to save their life or someone else's."

More information and a listing of available courses can be found at www.malctraining.com.



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