

Fall 2026



OUTDOOR CAMPUS

— SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA —

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Summer 2026 Recap

Read about what happened this past Summer for Outdoor Campus programming
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Region 3 Wildlife

Division Note

by Kip Rounds (Region 3 Supervisor)

Fall is a special time of year in South Dakota, always has been and always will be. It's the time of year that outdoor traditions are carried on - year after year, generation after generation. Those traditions are carried on in fields walking for pheasants with an excited bird dog, they're carried on over a warm fire at deer camp, and they're carried on catching a fall walleye bite on a cool autumn afternoon. Here in South Dakota, we're incredibly fortunate to have such rich and diverse outdoor opportunities available throughout the state. We continue to strive everyday to maintain and grow those opportunities for all South Dakotans and its visitors. So as the fall season is upon us this year, we hope you're all able to honor and enjoy those long-standing traditions with your family and friends in the outdoors of South Dakota!

Director's Note:

by David Parker (Outdoor Campus Director)

Fall is upon us and that means hunting season here in South Dakota!

For the Outdoor Campus this means a couple of things.

First, it means that we are back in the season of School Programming. So if you are a teacher looking for a fun, educational, and FREE activity, give us a call and we would love to discuss the variety of opportunities we have available.

Second, fall means Hunting 101 Season. Every year in the summer we take applications for our Hunting 101 Deer Program. Now we are in the season of getting to take those students to the range and then into the field.

Third and finally, fall means the completion of our expansion! Be looking for more information to come about our grand opening of the full facility this November!





Notes from the Friends of The Outdoor Campus

by Tim Kromminga (Board Chair)

We are excited to see the progress on the expanded Outdoor Campus. Construction is expected to be completed in mid-fall, and we can't wait for you to experience the finished project.

The expanded space will create new programming opportunities and provide year-round areas for outdoor activities. A ribbon cutting is planned for November 5, with open house dates and facility-use details to follow.

As school begins and calendars fill with activities, don't forget to make time to get outdoors and enjoy the fall season. The Outdoor Campus offers a welcoming place to experience the changing colors, walk the trails, and enjoy the transition into autumn. With hunting seasons approaching, now is a great time to get ready. The Outdoor Campus can help you prepare by offering opportunities to:

- Practice archery at the outdoor range.
- Stay active on the walking trails.
- Enroll in Hunting 101 to learn about South Dakota hunting opportunities.
- Learn about mentoring opportunities available through the Outdoor Campus.

Board Members

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A Look Back at Summer 2026



Snorkel Spearfishing

On July 10th, the Outdoor Campus held its first snorkel spearfishing class of the Summer at Lake Lorraine (a private pond, the Outdoor Campus has been given permission to program at). This first class had 4 participants with many getting the opportunity to harvest a fish.



Epidemiology Pilot Class

On August 11, the Outdoor Campus partnered with the Sanford PROMISE Lab, SDSU, and the Boys and Girls Club to offer a new program focused on better understanding infectious diseases in both humans and animals. Students spent the morning at the Sanford PROMISE Lab learning about the work done there and understanding the spread of disease. In the afternoon, students learned about diseases in animals and spent time digging deeper into what Chronic Wasting Disease and Chytridiomycosis are.

Familyfest Fun Cruise

On May 30th, the Outdoor Campus participated in the Hood Magazine Familyfest Fun Cruise as their “Swag Bag” Stop. The event attracted an estimated 2,000 individuals with all 500 Swag Bags being given out and 703 participants taking part in fishing, practice casting, or archery hosted by the Campus.



5th Annual Gear Giveaway

On August 8, the Outdoor Campus hosted its Annual Gear Giveaway Event. Over the past year, 200 generous donors gave 1,971 pieces of gear. By 6 AM the day of the event 273 individuals were lined up and by the end of the event 475 individuals had come through the facility. During this same event Super Saturday Fishing was offered with 247 participants taking part in this.



A Look Back at Summer 2026

Xcel Energy Donation

In 2025 Xcel Energy provided support to the Outdoor Campus and its internship program through an allotment of funds through the Xcel Energy Foundation. These funds helped the Outdoor Campus to accomplish the following four things:

1. Purchase the materials for students in our Intern led Native SD Bats class to create their own bat box that they could take home with them.
2. Purchase dirt and seed to replant the Outdoor Campus Native Pollinator and Butterfly Garden, which is maintained yearly through the efforts of staff, volunteers, and our Horticulture Intern.
3. Purchase a wild game cookbook, kitchen shears, and processing knives to be used by participants in the program as well as taken home with them after the program. This program was a unique edition of our Women's Try It Night called our "Winter Edition". Interns helped to lead various parts of the program including a portion on cleaning and processing pheasant.
4. Purchase new reels for the numerous fishing programs that staff and interns lead throughout the year.

We are so thankful for the support that Xcel Energy has given over the past year to help provide for the growth of our interns in the field of Wildlife Management through outdoor education.



Butterfly Garden Updates

With our recent Outdoor Campus Expansion Project, the area where our original Butterfly Garden footprint existed was affected. Because of this, we were given the opportunity to pick out a new location for our Butterfly Garden and were given a clean slate to try some new things out.

Over the past year, Staff, interns, volunteers, and various volunteer groups have been donating time to help us rebuild the Garden.

Along with this physical help, we also had a variety of donors who have helped with the project:

1. Xcel Energy helped with the purchase cost for black dirt to build up the garden area (to help with drainage) as well as seeds to help repopulate the garden.
2. Friessen Construction helped by providing the topsoil at a discounted price, allowing our dollars and donated dollars to go further.
3. Knife River Corporation helped by donating all of the gravel material for the trail that will wind its way through the garden.

Once this project is done, there will be a variety of native plants to attract pollinators, a trail to take visitors through the space, and also a variety of benches to sit at and enjoy watching the native pollinators at their work.



Campus Updates

Hunting 101:

This program is a unique education opportunity that walks students through deer hunting safety, tactics, and ethics, followed by time at the range and finally, a hunt. If a successful harvest, the class also includes time processing the deer.

- **Traditional:**

This year, 45 students of varying ages have been selected to take part in the 2026 Hunting 101 Season. Students will purchase a Youth, Mentored, or Apprentice Tag and accompany a GFP staff or GFP Volunteer Mentor into the field this fall to work on harvesting a deer.

- **Bow Hunting:**

2026 is the pilot year for this program and will consist of 3 participants. Through a generous partnership with SD Bow Hunters Association, these students will be accompanied into the field by SD Bow Hunter Association Volunteer Mentors. Further all participants recently took a "proficiency test" to ensure they can make an ethical shot. All 3 participants passed successfully and are ready to head into the field this season (see photos).

- **Disabled Veteran:**

The Mule Deer Foundation over the past few years has continually applied for Disabled Veteran Any Deer Tags. The Outdoor Campus works in conjunction with the Mule Deer Foundation to help in connecting this program with locations to hunt and other resources.



Keep your eyes open for future 101 Programs including: Turkey Hunting, Pheasant Hunting, and Rabbit Hunting.

SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH AND PARKS

HUNTSAFE

HUNTER SAFETY AND FIREARM EDUCATION

2026 Traditional Courses:

Dates:

September 15, 17, 19

September 22, 24, 26

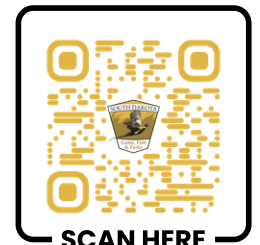
September 19, October 1, 3

Logistics:

- **Tuesdays and Thursdays** are held at the **Outdoor Campus.**
- **Saturdays** are held at **Crooks Gun Club.**



REGISTER NOW



SCAN HERE

Campus Updates - Expansion Construction

Phase 2

As we enter into the late summer, construction continues at a steady pace. The classroom area, new restrooms, and game processing spaces have been turned over to the Outdoor Campus and are currently being used. It is exciting to be able to have new, larger classrooms to help in offering more classes. The Game Processing Room also comes at a perfect time for the Hunting 101 program that is about to start.

The extension of the gallery is taking shape with the ceiling being painted and the backdoor getting glass. Further the indoor archery range is getting its final touches with trim work going in.

With all of this going on, a few new areas are also starting to take shape!

First, the auditorium is getting a face lift (top photo). It just recently had all the carpet removed as well as the old sound room in the back has been demoed. Soon the construction crew will get in there to put in new seats and new carpet.

Second, the old classrooms are starting to look very different (see middle photo). The locations for the cook stations are being framed out and soon the cabinets, flooring, and other items will be added.

Finally, work on the building exit to the South is continuing. The crew has been building the new retention wall and now are starting work to mark out the new sidewalk. The great part of the sidewalk is that it will connect the old trail that used to be on the East side of the building to the main trail and cause the access to the bridge over the oxbow to be paved on the Outdoor Campus side.



Fall 2026 Programming and Highlights

Fall Booklets are out and registration is open and ongoing. QR code below takes you to registration.



Intro to Walleye Fishing (2-Part Series)

Thursday, September 10 from 6-7:30pm and
Friday, September 11 from 6:30-8:30pm

or

Thursday, September 24 from 6-7:30pm and
Friday, September 25 from 6:30-8:30pm

If you are looking to start walleye fishing this class is for you!

- Day 1 - We will go over the types and techniques for walleye fishing including the equipment you need for success.
- Day 2 - The class will meet at Twin Lakes to test out new skills under the careful guidance of your instructor.

Participants must be able to attend both days.



Fly-Tying Club - Ladies Only

Thursday, October 1 from 10-11am

A beginner level of classes to introduce women into the fly tying world. This group will start by meeting once a month learning about fly-tying equipment and techniques with a different fly featured each month. The hope is to create, encourage, connect, and support women and fly fishing.

Need Help with Registering?

Call the Outdoor Campus: 605-362-2777

or

Call the Brandt Help Desk: 1-800-238-4168



Rabbit Hunting

Saturday, November 14 from 10-11:30am

Cottontail rabbit hunting is a great way to enjoy a brisk fall day. This class will go over the basics of rabbit hunting, cleaning, and preparing.

Fall 2026 Programming Highlights



What to Expect During your First Season with Your Dog...featuring Sodak Sami!

Tuesday, September 22 from 6:30-8pm

A dog's first hunting season is about much more than filling a game bag - it's about building confidence, creating positive experiences, and developing the partnership that will last for years to come. This session covers what to realistically expect from a young hunting dog, common challenges encountered during the first season, and practical tips to help both dog and handler enjoy a successful start. Whether you're preparing for your first hunt or looking to make the most of a young dog's introduction to the field, participants will leave with realistic expectations and valuable tools for future success.

Sami Jo Strutz is a professional dog trainer, avid hunter, and outdoor educator with a passion for helping people and their dogs succeed in the field. Combining years of dog training experience with a love for hunting, she enjoys teaching handlers how to build confident, reliable hunting partners while fostering an appreciation for the outdoors and the traditions that come with it in both upland and waterfowl hunting. Her current pack consists of Black Labs and an English Setter.

Outdoor Campus Expansion Celebration!

Saturday, November 7 from 10am-2pm

Join us at the Outdoor Campus to celebrate the completion of our expansion!

- Tour the indoor archery range, processing room, and new classrooms.
- Participate in fun activities for all ages.

Keep an eye on Facebook for more details!



The Return of the River Otter: A big Sioux River Success Story

Saturday, November 21 from 1pm-3pm

Join us at The Outdoor Campus on November 21st for an afternoon focused on river otters in the Big Sioux River! Friends of the Big Sioux River, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, and a member of the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe are partnering to bring you an afternoon of education and fun. When you think of the Big Sioux River, river otters may not be the first critter that comes to mind, but they are an active and important part of the watershed. Learn about the reintroduction of otters to the Big Sioux River, their diet, habitat needs, population trends, and more! We will provide activities for kids while parents attend the speaker presentations and discussion. If you have ever been curious about our local river otters, this is the event for you! This event is free to attend, and no pre-registration is required. A full event schedule will be coming soon!

Outdoor Campus Resources

The Outdoor Campus has a variety of FREE resources that you can utilize your classroom or other educational venues to bring in a unique and experiential component.

Critter Crates

The Campus has a variety of crates that can be checked out ranging from fishing to GPS. If you are looking to augment learning this summer or a way to get out and enjoy the outdoors, we have a crate this right for you. To learn more visit our website: gfp.sd.gov/toc-east to see all the crates that are available.



Virtual Reality Tours

The Game, Fish and Parks education team create a virtual reality tour that takes the user through a variety of locations in Western South Dakota to provide context for students in understanding elk. Further, the VR tour gives participants access to information directly from professionals in the field of conservation. No VR tech is required for this, just a computer. To learn more, visit: <https://gfp.sd.gov/elk-vr/>



Curriculum Resources

The Game, Fish and Parks education team in partnership with SDSU and SDSU Extension has created an Aquatic Invasive Species Curriculum that is geared towards Middle School Students. Introduce your students into the aquatic world and the role that Wildlife Managers play in slowing the spread of aquatic invasive species. To learn more or download the curriculum, visit: <https://gfp.sd.gov/ais-ed/>



Campus Volunteers

by Paige O'Farrell (Volunteer Coordinator)

There's something exciting about the change of seasons at the Outdoor Campus. As summer winds down, the pace shifts, new programs begin, and we prepare to welcome school and homeschool students back through our doors. Before we jump into fall, I wanted to take a moment to look back at a busy summer and celebrate the incredible volunteers who helped make it all possible.

This summer, 79 volunteers donated more than 1,800 hours to the Outdoor Campus—Sioux Falls. Volunteers assisted with programs, greeted visitors at the front desk, cared for our education animals, worked in the garden, and helped with countless other projects, all while working around an active construction site. I truly can't imagine hosting the volume of programming we do without the support of our amazing volunteers!

Olivia, our Volunteer Coordinator Intern, was also busy throughout the summer interviewing and onboarding new volunteers. From May through the end of August 2026, 31 individuals applied to volunteer with us, bringing new energy and helping us continue to grow our volunteer community.

Our volunteers weren't the only ones making a difference this summer. Six volunteer groups came out to help with projects around the Outdoor Campus. Resources for Human Development visits us every week to assemble fish card packets for visitors at various GFP locations. We also welcomed several corporate teams who helped move rock, weed the garden, maintain the playscape area, and cut back invasive buckthorn.

To all of our volunteers and volunteer groups: thank you! Thank you for continuing to show up, lend a hand, and support the Outdoor Campus in so many different ways. Your time and hard work make our facility a better place and create a better experience for the visitors we serve.

As we head into fall programming, thank you in advance for your continued commitment to the Outdoor Campus. We appreciate your flexibility, patience, and resilience as we continue navigating an ever-changing construction project. We know construction hasn't always made volunteering easy, and we are incredibly grateful for your willingness to roll with the changes.

We're all looking forward to the day the construction is complete, and to all the classes, programs, visitors, and memories we'll make together in our new and improved facility!

Happy fall, and thank you for everything you do for the Outdoor Campus!



Brookings Outreach

by Jason Nelson (Outreach Coordinator)

During the summer the Outreach Team focused on providing 74 high level programs to over 4,200 participants in towns all around the Southeast ranging from Canton and Lennox to Crooks and Harrisburg.

As Summer transitions to Fall, several interns will be hired and placed in Brookings to provide programming out of both the Brookings County Outdoor Adventure Center and the Dakota Nature Park. All of these programs are FREE to the public, so if you are in the Brookings area, consider swinging by and enjoying some outdoor education!

BROOKINGS PROGRAMS

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Time:</u>	<u>Program:</u>
9/10	4-6 PM	Archery
9/17	4-6 PM	Archery
9/23	4-5 PM	SD Animals
9/24	4-6 PM	Archery
10/1	4-6 PM	Archery
10/8	4-6 PM	Archery
10/15	4-6 PM	Archery
10/22	4-6 PM	Archery

Scan the QR Code to learn more about volunteering:

