

# WET and WILD in the Classroom

Story By Valerie Keener

**E**verybody could use a good lesson when it comes to environmental education these days. It's why environmental studies are increasingly common in classrooms everywhere.

But who teaches the teachers about our environment? Four national programs—delivered by an amazing network of volunteers—provide exactly the kind of training instructors need to bring the great outdoors into the classroom.

Projects WILD (Wildlife in Learning Design), WILD Aquatic, Learning Tree and WET (Water Education for Teachers) are national, supplemental environmental education programs providing activities for teachers to incorporate into existing curricula. Attendance at a



**Western Illinois University professor and Project Learning Tree facilitator Don Powers helps two future teachers with an activity on leaves.**

workshop of at least four and one-half hours in length is required in order to receive the activity guide.

The DNR Division of Education sponsors these programs in Illinois but relies on a group of trained volunteer facilitators to provide the workshops.

The majority of these volunteers are university professors who incorporate Projects' training as part of their college courses for students planning to teach after graduation.

By learning about the programs while in college, preservice teachers have the opportunity to incorporate them into their curriculum from the first day in their classroom. Correlations to the Illinois Learning Standards are emphasized and can be included in lesson plans.

The activities in the Projects programs encourage taking steps from environmental awareness to environmental action. These future teachers will reach thousands of students—stewards of our environment in the coming years. The more we emphasize the importance of our environment to these students and provide hands-on lessons for their training, the brighter the future of Illinois' natural resources will be.



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# Safety Education Volunteers

Story By Jeff Hopkins

**A**cross Illinois, a network of 1,700 certified volunteer instructors reach out each year to help more than 22,000 students learn how to safely hunt, boat, snowmobile and trap.

Many of these students are following in the footsteps of their parents, and even their grandparents.

The first organized safety education class, then called the Hunter Safety Program, started in March 1959, with trained volunteers conducting classes for voluntary participants. Today, the Department of Natural Resources Safety Education Section is charged



(Photo by Neil Waters.)

**Volunteer Hunter Education Instructors receive training on proper tree stand use at a statewide training workshop.**

with administration of Illinois' mandated safety education programs and to provide educational materials for volunteer instructors and students. Since the onset of all four programs, volun-

teers have carried the responsibility of teaching the courses to the citizens of Illinois, collectively amassing an astounding record of 17,419 classes and 474,206 certified students.

With nearly 600 courses taking place each year, DNR would not be able to offer these classes—or reach the citizens of Illinois—without the time and continued dedication of the volunteers who believe strongly in their chosen recreational activity. Volunteer instructors form the backbone of the Department's safety education programs and quality programs could not be offered without their knowledge, expertise and dedication.

DNR, and everyone who has ever participated in a safety education program, owes these many volunteers a debt of gratitude.

