

Prairie State Park's

Tallgrass Tribune

Spring 2017

Missouri State Parks

Prairie State Park's Mission Statement

To preserve and interpret the largest remaining example of original tallgrass prairie in Missouri. The park further provides healthy outdoor recreation for all visitors. The park is dedicated to sustaining a large tallgrass prairie in its native form for future generations to learn from and enjoy.

Springtime on the Prairie

By Rebecca Knox

As winter gives way to longer days and milder temperatures, many changes are taking place on the prairie. Beneath blue sky and the subdued and fading colors of last year's tallgrass growth, the entire prairie world is awakening to the promise of spring.

Enjoy a hike at Prairie State Park early in the season and you will notice tiny tufts of green grass scattered here and there as tender new plants push their way through the tough and tightly woven prairie sod. You will also notice a whole host of tiny wildflowers growing underfoot. Spring beauties, bird's foot-violet, white trout lily and the ever-so-delicate bluets are among the first to welcome spring. As the season progresses, prairie blue-eyed grass, rose verbena, wild hyacinth, wood betony, yellow star grass and Indian paintbrush will join the others in a succession of brightly colored splashes among the greening up prairie landscape.

As the grasses and flowers are emerging in the world of flora, changes are taking place in the animal kingdom as well. Northern harriers and short-eared owls prepare to return to summer breeding grounds in the far north. Other birds, such as the dickcissel and Bell's vireo, that have overwintered in warmer climates to the south, prepare for their journey back to the tallgrass prairies of southwest Missouri where they will make their nests, raise their young, and enjoy the abundance of summer. Soon fuzzy, pumpkin-colored baby bison will be romping and frolicking on the prairie and spotted, white-tailed fawns will be seen alongside their mothers.

If you visit Prairie State Park during from March and April, you will notice signs at the beginning of each of our trailheads that indicate that the trails are closed each day from 4 p.m. until 9:30 a.m. the next day. This is due to the fact that early spring is prairie chicken breeding season. Prairie chickens are most active in late afternoon and early morning and it is during these hours that their mating rituals generally take place. Due to the loss of substantial habitat and declining numbers of prairie chickens in Missouri in recent years, staff closes the trails in an attempt to give the birds every chance of reproducing within the park. The trails will reopen to their regular dawn-to dusk schedule on May 1, 2017.

Nature Bingo returns again this year!

Prizes will be awarded!

Bring your family and learn about Missouri plants and animals at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on these dates:

March 18

April 15

May 20

June 17



~Mystery item ~

Short-Eared Owl

A couple of people correctly identified our mystery item as a short-eared owl, but we didn't get a correct answer on their range. They have a wide distribution in North America, South America, Africa, Asia and Europe.



They are winter residents here and depend on grasslands for all parts of their life. They have excellent camouflage, easily blending in with the dead grasses.

<http://www.planetofbirds.com/strigiformes-strigidae-short-eared-owl-asio-flammeus>

With their eyes closed, they blend in with the grass.



Their yellow eyes make them easier to spot.



Prairies are rich with prey they need like mice and voles, which make up the bulk of their diet. They are also a ground-nesting bird and the tallgrass prairie affords them protection and a ready food supply for their growing young. The average clutch size is five-seven eggs, although 14 have been reported. The young owlets grow quickly and fledge from the nest in about four weeks. Unlike most owls, short-eared owls will often be seen during the daylight hours or dusk. Come out at dusk and search for them. As the weather warms, they will soon head north to their breeding grounds in Canada and Alaska, although they are occasionally seen here during the summer.

Prairie State Park is a safe winter refuge for these birds. Protecting the tallgrass prairie is important for many reasons. This is just one bird that needs tallgrass prairies for survival.

What bird laid these eggs?



Photo by Dana Hoisington

Send your answer to prairie.state.park@dnr.mo.gov and the person with the first correct answer will be listed in the next newsletter.

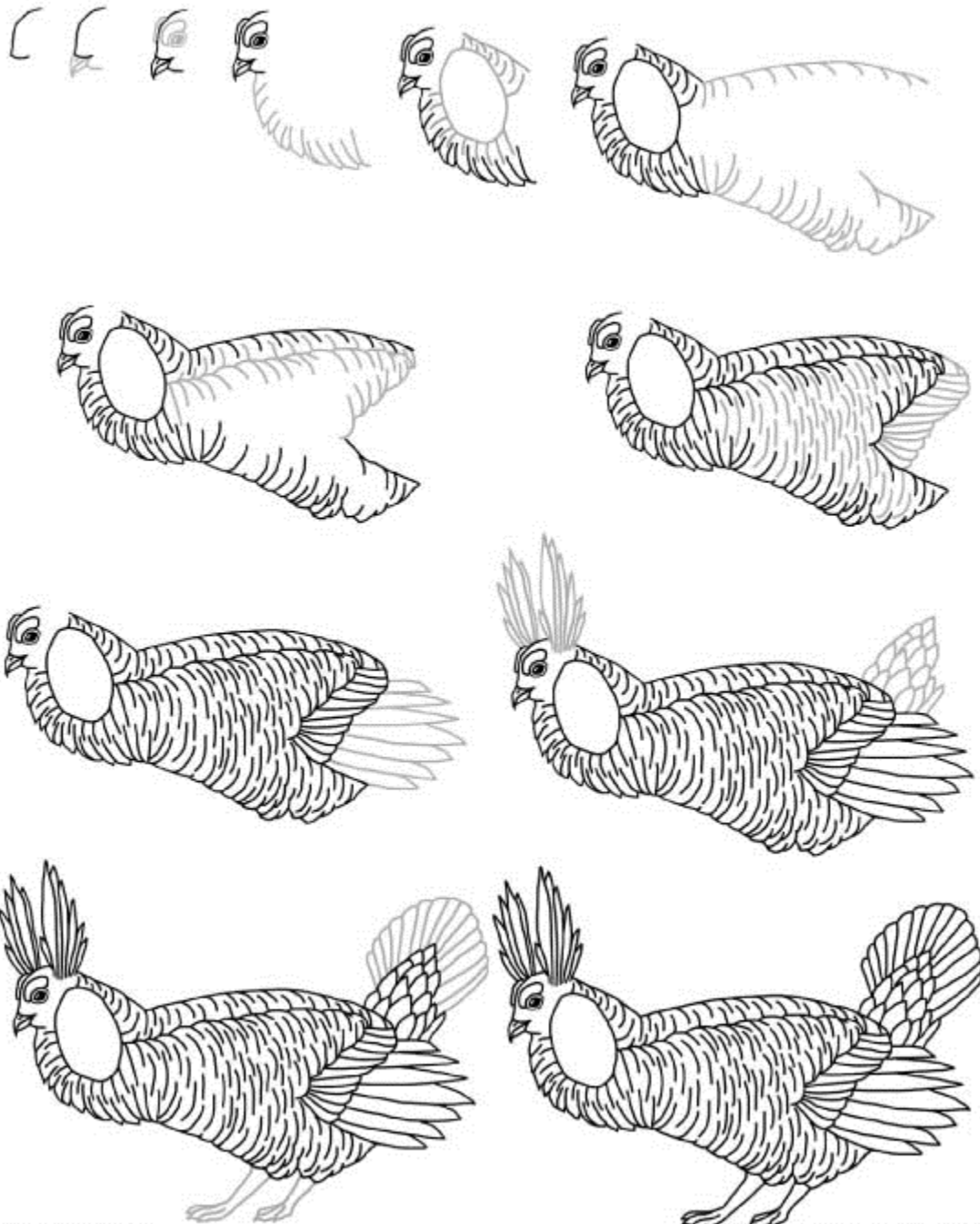
Hey Kids!

All right kiddos! Spring is just around the corner! When we think spring here, that means booming time for the Greater Prairie Chicken. Listen for them at first light on their leks. For more information on them, check out this website:

<https://nature.mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/field-guide/greater-prairie-chicken>

Here you can learn how to draw a prairie chicken!

Draw a Greater Prairie Chicken



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www.exploringnature.org

http://www.exploringnature.org/graphics/drawing/prairie_chicken_drawing72.jpg

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2017 Calendar of Events

~Activities will meet at the nature center ~

March 4, 10 a.m.

Bison Hike

Spring is coming soon and the bison are ready for it. Join us as we go out and see these majestic animals on their native habitat. Dress for the weather! Spring winds can really sting. Be prepared for a two-mile hike.

March 10, 10 a.m.

***Preschool – Tracks**

Children will explore the fascinating world of animal tracks.
Please register by March 3.

March 18, 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Nature Bingo

Come play nature bingo. Learn about Missouri plants and animals and win a prize!

March 24, 9:30 a.m. - noon

***Springtime on the Prairie – HS**

Celebrates spring's debut as you learn about baby animals and spring wildflowers as the prairie wakes up from its winter slumber.

April 1, 10 a.m.

Bison Hike

Spring is officially here! Join us as we go out and see these majestic animals on their native habitat. Dress for the weather! Spring winds can really sting. Be prepared for a two-mile hike.

April 14, 10 a.m.

***Preschool – Grow as We Go**

Explore the life cycles of familiar wildlife and understand that living things grow and change. **Please register by March 31.**

April 15, 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Nature Bingo

Come play nature bingo. Learn about Missouri plants and animals and win a prize!

April 21, 9:30 a.m. -noon

***Nature Photography – HS**

Bring your camera or phone and join us as we explore, observe and record nature through the lens.

May 6, 10 a.m.

Bison Hike

There could be baby bison to view now! Come join us as we learn about bison, prairies, wildflowers and more. Be prepared for a two-mile hike. Dress for the weather. May can be warm or cool. Insect repellent, snacks and water are recommended. Wear close-toed shoes. Don't forget your cameras!

May 12, 10 a.m.

***Preschool – Backbone Bonanza**

Children will learn about vertebrate animals and some characteristics that distinguish them. **Please register by May 5**

May 19, 9:30 -noon

***Snakes – HS**

Snakes are one of nature's most misunderstood and often feared animals. We will learn about these critters, and that knowledge will help dispel myths that are often attributed to them.

May 20, 10 a.m.

Wildflower walk

Wildflowers are blooming in abundance. Join us on a journey of the floral display of Prairie State Park. Bring water and comfortable shoes.

May 20, 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Nature Bingo

Come play nature bingo. Learn about Missouri plants and animals and win a prize!

June 3, 10 a.m.

Bison Hike

Summer is nearly here! Join us as we go out and see these majestic animals on their native habitat. Bring your cameras as the wildflowers will be in full force. Be prepared for a two-mile hike.

June 10, 10 a.m.

Wildflower Walk

Summer is coming and wildflowers are blooming in abundance. Join us on a journey of the botanical world of Prairie State Park. Bring water and comfortable shoes.

June 10, 2 p.m.

Missouri's Wild Cats

Come learn about the facts, habits and habitats of two of Missouri's most amazing and beautiful mammals – the bobcat and mountain lion.

June 17, 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Nature Bingo

Come play nature bingo. Learn about Missouri plants and animals and win a prize!

June 17, 7:30 p.m.

Public Meeting/Night Hike

Prairie State Park will conduct its annual public meeting to allow people to find out about park plans and goals. Visitors will have the chance to provide feedback about what they would like to see. The meeting will be followed with a guided night hike on the prairie.

HS denotes home school program.

***Registration is required.**

Please call 417-843-6711 to register.



Check out our Facebook page for photos, interactive posts, information on upcoming programs and events.
Give us a "like".

<https://www.facebook.com/PrairieStatePark>

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