

Prairie State Park's

Tallgrass Tribune

Spring 2019

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.

STATE PARKS WORK – FAMILY HISTORY PROVES IT

By Rebecca Knox

We first visited southwest Missouri in the summer of 1994. We went to attend a cousin's wedding and, while there, family took on us on a tour of the area and introduced us to Prairie State Park. It was then we saw the beauty of the tallgrass prairie and bison for the very first time. A couple of years later, we moved to the area and have been involved in Missouri State Parks ever since.

Our involvement started with attending day camps and homeschool programs at Prairie State Park; soon our entire family was volunteering for various projects and events. Eventually, three of our children went to work for state parks and, now, so do I. In fact, I'm getting ready to celebrate my fifth full year as a park aide, naturalist and interpreter at Prairie State Park. Now, I get to present homeschool and various other programs at the park.

When attending my first training session back in 2015, I was introduced to Stairway to Stewardship. Stairway to Stewardship is the path Missouri State Park leaders hope visitors will take after being introduced to a park in their area. The 'Stairway to Stewardship' is as follows:

Step 1 – Curiosity (What is this about?)

Step 2 – Awareness (I will think about it.)

Step 3 – Understanding (I think I care.)

Step 4 – Care (I do care.)

Step 5 – Care For (I want to help.)

Step 6 – Stewardship (I am engaged and involved.)

Front row – Author, son and husband attending an evening program at Prairie State Park.



State Parks Work cont. -

This is exactly what happened with our family.

Curiosity – We were introduced to Prairie State Park while in town to attend a wedding.

Awareness – We became aware of the beauty and wonder of the tallgrass prairie and saw bison for the very first time during this visit.

Understanding – A couple of years later we moved to the area and visited often. Through knowledge gained by attending homeschool and other park programs, we began to learn and understand more about the unique features of the tallgrass prairie and the plants and animals living there.

Care – During a homeschool program on area coal mining, our youngest daughter, while “mining” a chocolate chip out of a chocolate chip cookie, declared, “This is what I want to do with the rest of my life!” For a moment I was taken aback. “You want to mine chocolate chips out of chocolate chip cookies for the rest of your life?”

“No,” she replied, “I want to work for Missouri State Parks!”

She cared! We all did.

Care For – Our whole family started volunteering to help with park events. Before long three of our children were working for state parks and, now, I do, too.

The one that was mining chocolate chips? She’s in it for the long haul. She has a full-time position at a park in northern Missouri. And, of course, at this point, we had reached the level of **STEWARDSHIP**.

Our family went through the exact steps outlined in Stairway to Stewardship. With sixteen of our eighteen grandchildren regularly attending programs and being involved in programs and events at the park, who knows where this thing could go?

State Parks work and our family history proves it.

Now, how about you and your family? Do you have a state park nearby you and your family enjoy visiting? If so, at what step of Stairway to Stewardship are you on?

At this point, are you just curious about what a certain park might have to offer? If so, go check it out! Have you visited the park a time or two before, but are not really aware of everything the park has to offer or sure what it’s about? Are you aware, but want to know more? Do you and your family care about the park? Are you interested in volunteering and helping out with special events? Maybe your teen is interested in the park and looking for a summer job, or perhaps your college student is looking to lay a foundation towards a fulltime career.

Whatever your interests, Missouri State Parks have a lot to offer! And wherever you are at on Stairway to Stewardship, I would like to encourage you to keep moving forward. Check out your local parks and see what they have to offer. Perhaps someday your family will have a legacy of being a Missouri State Park family, too!



Left photo. Authors’ daughter, on the right, working at a Prairie State Park evening program, The Border Disorder 2005.

Right photo. Author and daughter at Interpretive training school 2016.



~Caption this photograph~

Jerry Decker was our submitter with this perhaps Thanksgiving in mind:
"Hey, wait a minute! What are you gonna do with that hatchet?
Why are you lookin' at me that way?.....Uh, oh."



This was from Explorer Day Camp on birds in 2013 based on the Angry Birds game. Our staff will stop at nothing to get people engaged with nature! Once engaged, we can get them to learn about ecosystems and the plants and animals that need them to survive. Threats to these ecosystems are important to be aware of as well.

Exotic invasive plants and animals are significant threats to our natural communities. Missouri recently initiated the Missouri Invasive Plant Task Force with the purpose of eliminating invasive plants and improving natural ecosystems in the process. Information is available at the link below where you can also sign a pledge to help stop the spread of invasive plants. <http://mojinvasives.org/>

~Mystery plant~

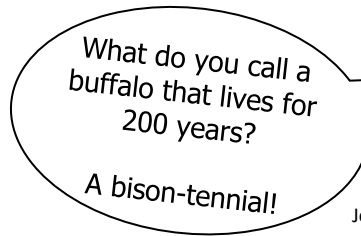
What's the plant in the center of the photo?



Send your answer to prairiestatepark@dnr.mo.gov the first correct response will be published in the next newsletter.

Hey Kids!

Welcome to the kids' section of the *Tallgrass Tribune*! This portion of the newsletter is dedicated to our younger audience. It is dedicated to learning about life on a prairie. Kid-friendly activities such as word searches, puzzles, mazes or other activities will be showcased. Let us know what you think!



Joke by Andrew C., Gaithersburg, Md.

This issue you can learn about prairies and build one of your very own. Add the grasses, wildflowers and animals. Then you get to learn how to manage your prairie.

<http://games.bellmuseum.umn.edu/prairie/>

Kids!

Send us your best prairie-themed joke with your name and town, and it could be featured in a future issue of *Tallgrass Tribune*!

2019 Calendar of Events

~Activities will meet at the Regal Tallgrass Prairie Nature Center ~

March 29, 7 p.m.

***Popcorn and a Movie:**

Otters – River masters of Yellowstone

Join us for Popcorn and a movie. This one is on otters. Did you know that we had otters verified in the park last year? Learn about this whimsical animal and its role in the ecosystem. **Registration is required. Please call 417-843-6711 to register by March 22.**

April 6, 10 a.m.

***Bison Hike**

Spring has sprung and the prairie is greening up! Come out to the park for a guided bison hike to see what the prairie has to offer. Don't forget your cameras. Be prepared for a two-mile hike over uneven terrain. The prairie winds can be fierce so dress for the weather. **Please call 417-843-6711 to register.**

April 6, noon to 1 p.m.

Public Information Meeting

The public is invited to an informational meeting to share comments about Prairie State Park and its operations. Staff will be on hand to provide information and to answer questions. Input from the public is important to Missouri State Parks. These informational meetings, which are being held in all state parks and historic sites, help create two-way communication with the public. The meetings give park staff the opportunity to let people know the current status and future plans for the park and they offer visitors the opportunity to comment on the facilities.

April 12, 9:30 – noon HS

***Native American Trade Beads**

Native Americans were in tune with the land. They used the resources available. Learn about beadwork and make a representation of some for yourself. **Registration is required. Please call 417-843-6711 to register by April 5.**

May 4, 10 a.m.

***Bison Hike**

Flowers and birds are adding wondrous hues to the prairie. Be sure to look at them as we take a guided bison hike. Don't forget your cameras! Be prepared for a two-mile hike over uneven terrain. The prairie winds can be fierce so dress for the weather. **Please call 417-843-6711 to register.**

May 10, 9:30 – noon HS

***Monarch Magic**

As Monarch butterfly numbers decline, what is it that you can do to help? It is as important to know what not to do as it is to know what to do. Learn how to attract them to your yard, their migration, dos and don'ts, and get some free seeds or plants to help them. **Registration is required. Please call 417-843-6711 to register by May 3.**

May 25, 2019 10 a.m.

Wildflower walk

Wildflowers are now going strong with colors matching a painter's palette. Come and enjoy a walk on the prairie as we learn about what is in bloom. Bring your camera and be sure to wear sturdy shoes. The prairie winds can be fierce so dress for the weather.

June 1, 10 a.m.

***Bison Hike**

Summer is near and the prairie is ready to show off. Wildflower abound and the prairie is truly a marvel this time of year. Don't forget your cameras! Be prepared for a two-mile hike over uneven terrain. The prairie winds can be fierce so dress for the weather. **Please call 417-843-6711 to register.**

June 8, 10 a.m.

Wildflower walk

The July heat doesn't bother the deep rooted prairie plants. They are ready to flower anyway. Come and enjoy a walk on the prairie as we learn about what is in bloom. Bring your camera and be sure to wear sturdy shoes. The prairie winds can be fierce so dress for the weather.

June 22, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Hug a Herp Day!

Herpetology is the study of reptiles and amphibians. This day is dedicated to snakes, turtles, lizards, frogs, salamanders and toads. See some. Touch some. Learn a bunch about these often misunderstood animals. Make crafts and be ready to learn.

Nature Bingo

April 27, 10 a.m.

May 18, a.m.

*** Denotes preregistration required.
HS for homeschool programs**



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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