

Prairie State Park's

Tallgrass Tribune

Spring 2016

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.

Stewardship: what is it?

By Dana Hoisington

We often hear about stewardship, but what does it mean? The Merriam-Webster dictionary gives this as the simple definition: "the activity or job of protecting and being responsible for something." Let's try and put it in perspective for everyday use. If you are a parent, you are **responsible** for **actively protecting** your children. You want to make sure that they are cared for well and grow to be responsible people.

Merriam-Webster also has a more detailed definition:

"1 : the office, duties, and obligations of a [steward](#)

2 : the conducting, supervising, or managing of something; *especially* : the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care <*stewardship of natural resources*>"

Ok. Now we are getting into the meat of it. Look at those words: **duties, obligation, conducting, managing, careful, responsible**, and the most important to us, **entrusted**.

You, the people that care about the natural resources of this state, have entrusted staff at Prairie State Park with the job of carefully and responsibly managing this great natural resource the tallgrass prairie. It isn't easy. We use a multitude of methods to do it. We have ongoing research projects regarding the health of the prairie. Hours are spent sitting on the prairie identifying and assessing prairie plants so we better understand how our management is affecting the prairie and whether we need to adjust what we are doing.



Staff do Christmas bird counts, frog and toad surveys, butterfly counts, prairie chicken surveys, migratory bird counts and Mead's milkweed surveys to name a few. Those are just the ones that park staff and volunteers conduct. University students also do research for advanced degrees.

Some of the tools in our management toolbox are bison, prescribed fire, chainsaws, tractors, cultipackers, string trimmers, sprayers, and electric and woven wire fences.

So what again is stewardship? It's using our tools with the knowledge that we have gained over the years to manage this prairie so that everyone can enjoy the sights and sounds of a tallgrass prairie in Missouri.

Simply put, stewardship is what we do.



~Mystery item ~

Red-shouldered Hawk

Jerry Decker correctly identified this as a red-shouldered hawk. These are primarily woodland hawks that often are quite tolerant of people and will often let you get close for nice photographs. The orange-colored barring on the breast is distinctive as are the black and white bands on the tail.

They feed primarily on small mammals, reptiles and amphibians they locate while they are perched usually close to water. They do not spend time soaring like other members of the buteo hawks such as the red-tailed hawk that are well known for their soaring ability while searching for prey.



What is the federal status of this plant that is found at Prairie State Park?



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.

Calendar of Events

~Activities will meet at the nature center~

April 2, 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 28 6:45 p.m.

Prairie Restoration at Battle of Island Mound State Historic Site

Prairie restoration is more than just putting seeds in the ground. Join us at Battle of Island Mound State Historic Site to learn about prairie restoration. Learn how fire, seeding rates, mowing and their timing are essential in managing your prairie. You will be taking a walking tour on the site to see how this restoration is progressing.

May 7, 10 a.m.

Bison Hike

There should 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 13, 9:30 a.m. -noon

***Prairie Pollinators –HS**

Without pollinators, we would have much less food available. Learn the important role that bees, wasps, beetles, butterflies and moths play in the ecosystem. Learn what you can do to help out the Monarch butterfly. Milkweed seeds or plants will be available to take home.

May 14, 9:30 -11 a.m.

***Prairie Pollinators – Public program**

The program is similar to home school program, but for the general public.

May 21, 10 a.m.

Wildflower Walk

The wildflowers are blooming and the prairie is alive with color! Come out and see the vibrant colors the prairie has and the wildlife that depends on these plants for survival.

Wear close-toed shoes and don't forget your camera!

HS denotes home school program.

***Registration is required.**

Please call 417-843-6711 to register.

Spring on the Prairie

By Rebecca Knox

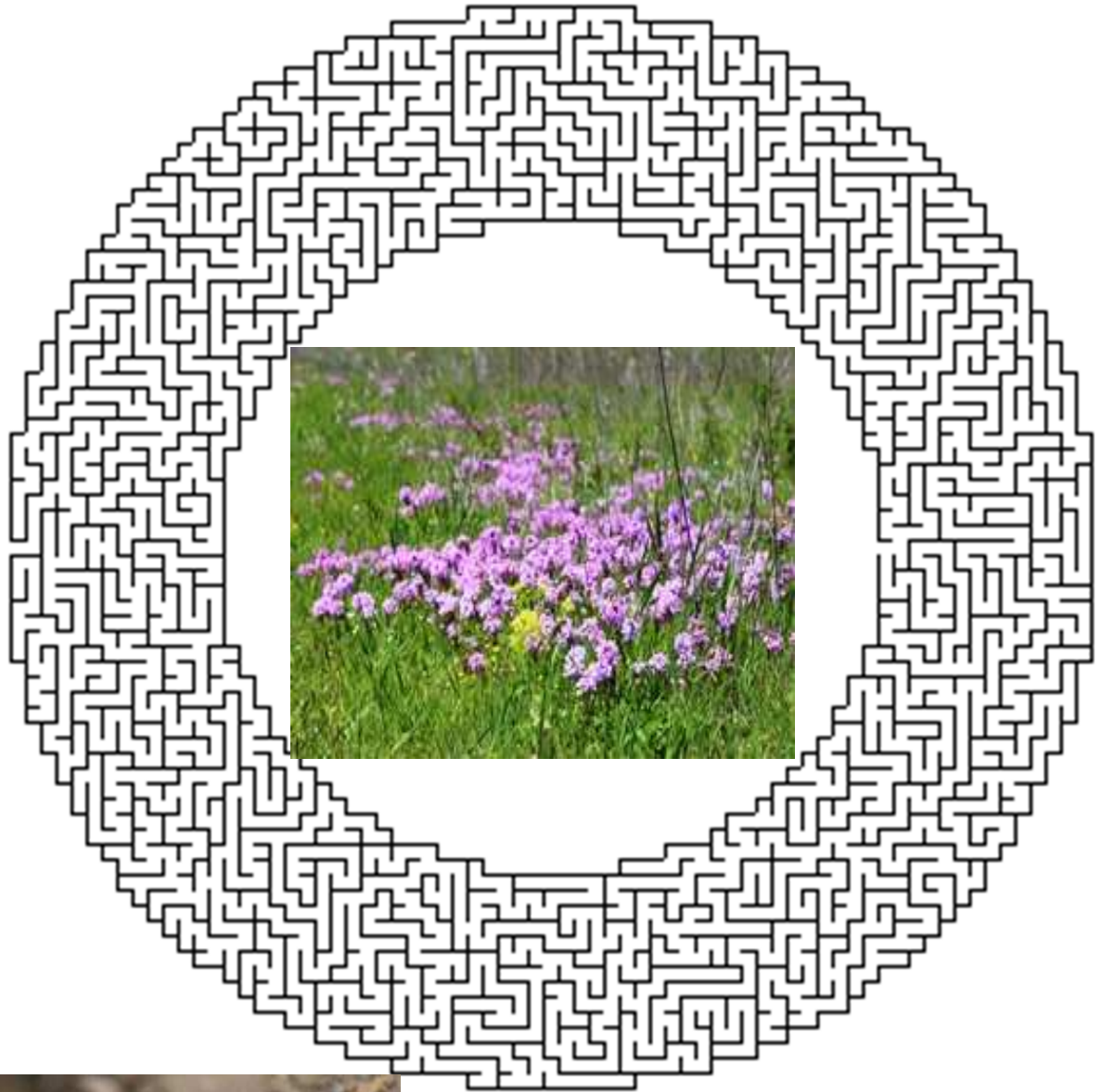
As winter loosens its grip here in the Midwest, spring looms large on the prairie. After a long winter's rest, spring rains bring new life to the awakening prairie. Green grass and delicate wildflowers appear underfoot and fuzzy, pumpkin-orange baby bison dot the prairie landscape with their presence. Everywhere you look, new life is springing forth as windy days and warmer breezes prevail.



If you visit Prairie State Park during the month of April, you will notice signs at the beginning of each of our six trailheads that indicate that the trails are closed from 4 p.m. until 9:30 a.m. each day. This is due to the fact that early spring is prairie chicken breeding season. The birds 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 close 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, 2016.

Hey Kids!

Spring is upon us. One of the great rites of spring are the reptiles and amphibians getting active after a long winter of dormancy. Warm days and moist weather are great combinations for reptiles and amphibians respectfully.



Help the baby turtle find his way onto the prairie where it will find the insects it needs for food!

Signs of stewardship



Mead's milkweed survey. This population had not been seen since the mid 1980s and was rediscovered in 2014.



White-tail deer fawn found while doing the Mead's milkweed survey. Photo by Joe Neal



Research being done on the Henslow's sparrow afforded State Parks Youth Corps worker Jessi Perry help with mist netting the birds.

Dickcissel nest found while conducting vegetative monitoring.



While doing the vegetative monitoring, this clump of rose gentian was nearby.



Check out our Facebook page for photos, interactive posts, information on upcoming programs and events.
Give us a "like".
<https://www.facebook.com/PrairieStatePark>

Prairie State Park, 128 N.W. 150th Lane
Mindenmines, MO 64769
prairie.state.park@dnr.mo.gov
417-843-6711