

# Prairie State Park's

## Tallgrass Tribune

Spring 2015

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.

An article in a previous newsletter gave a visitor's perspective on the prairie. This article gives the perspective of a seasonal employee and their experience at Prairie State Park.

#### My Prairie Experiences

By Meagan Duffee-Yates

I was fortunate enough to become a seasonal interpreter at Prairie State Park in the spring of 2012. At that time, I was a graduate student at Pittsburg State University working toward my master's degree in biology. I had worked as a naturalist at my university, but I could not pass up the opportunity to work at Prairie State Park. Through this opportunity, I was able to join the state park system, get firsthand experience with the park staff and the public and learn all the work that goes into preserving tallgrass prairie.

I presented programs before to the public but this experience gave me much more valuable information pertaining to the tallgrass prairie, its natural ecosystem and the bison and elk that call this park home. I was able to learn how to present programs to a wide range of audiences. I also learned the details of operating a nature center, planning for special events, and writing articles for this newsletter.

In addition to learning the naturalist side of my job, I helped with prescribed burns, which are done on a three-to-four year rotation in order to keep woody vegetation from invading the prairie ecosystem. I did a few prescribed burns during my class on wildlife management and ecology but this was the first time I was able to take what I had learned and put it to actual use. Doing prescribed burns on a large scale involves a lot of detail. The weather must be perfect for such events and the safety of everyone involved is of the utmost importance. I have discovered that taking part in prescribed burns is a passion of mine.

I also gained valuable insight into running a park with live animals. With the re-introduction of bison and elk, Prairie State Park is the only state park in Missouri that has live animals that have been brought back into the state. Prairie State Park is the only one of its kind within this state that can offer visitors a glimpse of what prairies would have looked like before the western movement. Taking care of bison and elk involves many details. Once a year, staff must have a veterinarian take blood samples from the herds to make sure each animal is healthy and free of any disease. Do you know how stubborn a 2,000-pound mature bull bison can be? Have you seen the rage in a mother bison's eyes if she is separated from her calf? And who knew that elk could clear an 8-foot fence in a single leap?

My time at Prairie State Park let me gain valuable experience working in the field. For three summers, I was able to take part in our annual plant survey. Did I mention that this is usually done in the hottest portion of the summer? My ability to identify plants has grown immensely, and understanding the process of a weeklong plant survey and its importance has taught me a lot.

I have grown as a person as well as a naturalist because of my time working with Prairie State Park. My love for the state of Missouri has grown deeper and my passion and love for the tallgrass prairie is one of the strongest in any person that I know. I have been blessed to be able to see endangered species such as the regal fritillary butterfly dance across the wind-swept grass, have heard the haunting sound of the greater prairie chicken in the early dawn hours, and witnessed the intricate dance of the males upon their leks. Henslow's sparrows and many other neo-tropical birds have graced my presence, allowing me just a brief glimpse into their world.

I am now a full-time staff member at the Missouri State Museum but my heart will always lie among those tall standing stems of the waving grass and flowers. I am fully at home on the prairie with the bison and elk in the backdrop. If you are wanting to get involved with the state park system or if you are going to college but not sure what you want to do, I encourage you to apply to become a seasonal at your local state park. If given the opportunity, come to Prairie State Park. You will never regret your decision!

~Mystery item ~

**White crownbeard**

Unfortunately, there were no submissions for the mystery plant, even though the answer was revealed in the article about frost flowers! *Verbesina virginica*, also known as white crownbeard, frostweed or wingstem forms these magical beauties here on the prairie. Often attaining a height of 7 feet, it is right at home on the tallgrass prairie. It prefers moister areas but will also do well in upland areas.



Photo by Dale Clark, [www.Dallasbutterflies.com](http://www.Dallasbutterflies.com)

Late migrating butterflies value it as a great source of nectar. Monarch butterflies are especially attracted to it. Monarch populations have sharply declined in the last several years. Milkweed populations are declining and it is the sole food for their caterpillars. Planting native plants like wingstem will help the monarchs and give you a fleeting look at something delicate on frosty, fall and winter mornings.

**Spring isn't far off. What is this flower?**



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

## Calendar of Events

~All activities will meet at the nature center~

**March 7, 10 a.m.**

**Bison Hike**

Take a hike and learn how well bison are adapted to this seemingly unforgiving landscape. Be prepared for a two-mile hike by bringing snacks, water and binoculars.

**March 13, 9:30 a.m. - noon - HS**

**A Hiking We Will Go!**

You can take a hike! Learn trail safety, the health benefits of hiking and details about the 100 Missouri Miles where you can log your miles. Be prepared for a one-mile hike.

**March 17-20, 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.**

**Spring Break Program Bonanza!**

Spring break programs will be offered Tuesday-Saturday! Come out and see what we have for you. It could be snakes, bison, elk, prairie chickens or more.

**April 4, 10 a.m.**

**Bison Hike**

Bison will be calving soon so maybe you will see some! Come out and take a walk on the prairie. Be prepared for a two-mile hike by bringing snacks, water and binoculars.

**April 17, 9:30 a.m. – noon - HS**

**Prairie Wildflowers**

Wildflowers are more than just pretty to see. They serve a purpose. Learn about the biology of flowers, plant pollination and how to identify flowers in bloom.

**May 2, 10 a.m.**

**Bison Hike**

There should be several bison babies by now. You should be able to get some good looks at them. Be prepared for a two-mile hike by bringing snacks, water and binoculars.

**May 9, 10 a.m.**

**Wildflower walk**

We will be taking a walk looking for wildflowers and delving into the world of the tallgrass prairie wildflowers. Bring your camera so you can capture their beauty!

**May 15, 9:30 a.m. – noon - HS**

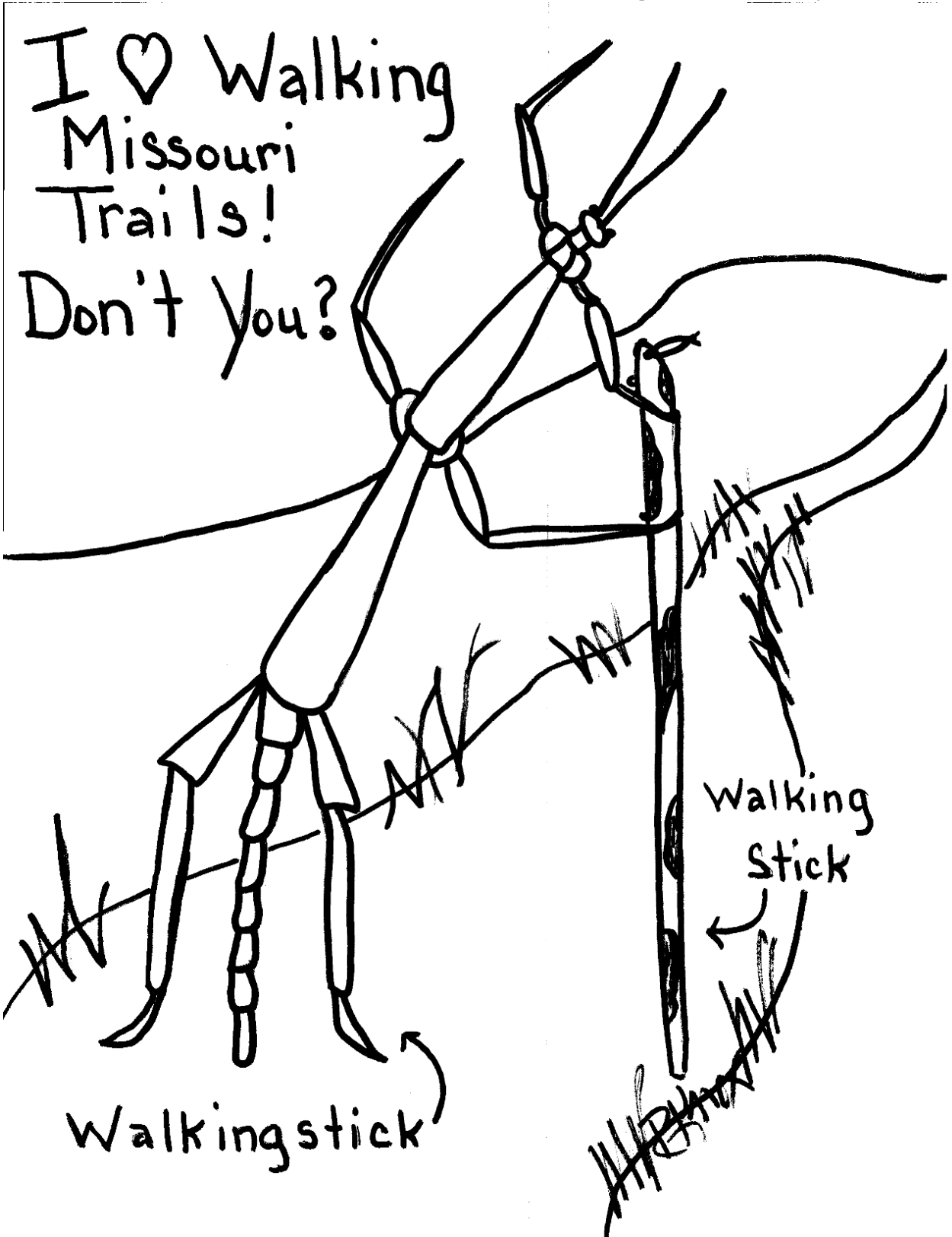
**Nature Journaling**

Are you interested in starting a nature journal to keep track of your journeys in the field? Rebecca Knox will teach us how she does it. Everyone will get a nature journal of their own to take home.

**HS denotes a homeschool program**

# Hey Kids!

Our walkingstick is using a walking stick!  
You can too! Color this page and check out <http://100missourimiles.com/> to learn about Missouri hiking areas near you!



## Stewardship

What is stewardship? According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, it is the activity or job of protecting and being responsible for something. At Prairie State Park, staff are responsible for taking care of the prairie for you. We are the appointed stewards. We do this is by learning about the landscape and doing research projects to assess the health of the prairie. We have an ongoing vegetation plant monitoring study and we conduct bird surveys, frog and toad surveys, Christmas bird counts, migratory bird counts, deer spotlight counts and butterfly counts.

A lot of field work goes into managing this prairie. The information gathered is used to make informed decisions on how best to proceed to keep this prairie intact and flourishing. Staff make decisions based on the data collected, which is analyzed to come up with the plan to meet our goals.

It is a team effort. We get a lot of support from other parks and staff from Missouri State Parks' Resource Management and Interpretation Program. Interpretation is the tool that we use to transfer what we learn to you, the general public. Come out this year and join us on a bison hike or wildflower walk so we can help you understand what happens here and why we do what we do.

## Spring Homeschool Programs 2015

### A Hiking We Will Go!

**March 13; 9:30 a.m. – Noon**

You can take a hike! Learn trail safety, health benefits of hiking and details about the 100 Missouri Miles where you can log your miles. Be prepared for a one -mile hike.

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### PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!

Complete the form for **each program** (copy as needed). Please register **every person** that will attend.

**Each family must pre-register for each program with a \$4 deposit (per family).** The money will be

returned upon your participation in the program. Unclaimed funds will become a donation to the park.

You may mail in your registration anytime after you receive this notice.

You must **pay by cash or check for each session separately** (i.e., three

checks for three programs). Checks will be held until the date of the program. **Make checks payable to**

**State of Missouri/DNR.** No

telephone or email registrations will be taken.

**PROGRAM REGISTRATION deadline is March 6, 2015!**

After that date, call to see if there are openings for the programs.

You are enrolled **unless your deposit is returned to you. If you cannot attend a program, please notify the park;** supplies are

purchased for nearly every program.

In case of inclement weather, call 417-843-6711 to check status of the programs. In most cases, we cannot reschedule the program. Your fee for that program will become a donation.

PROGRAM (Circle correct one) Hiking Wildflowers Nature Journaling

CHECK \_\_\_\_\_ CASH \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL NUMBER ATTENDING \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT'S NAMES \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

CHILDREN'S NAMES and AGES \_\_\_\_\_

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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. 150<sup>th</sup> Lane  
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417-843-6711