

Prairie State Park's

Tallgrass Tribune

Spring 2018

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 in Orange

Rebecca Knox

When most people think of the tallgrass prairie in spring, they probably picture in their mind's eye a vast sea of dull grass that has been well-weathered by winter's harshness, giving way to fresh and tender young shoots of vibrant green. So, most people would associate the springtime prairie with the color green. But not me.

When I think of the prairie in spring, the first color I think of is orange. Orange? Yes, orange. Three images come to mind...baby bison, Indian paintbrush, and prairie chickens. All three have the color orange in common.

When bison are born, their coats are orange and they remain that way for the first three months of life. Let me tell you, there is nothing sweeter in springtime on the prairie than seeing the vast sea of fresh green grass dotted here and there with frolicking baby bison in their brand new coats of pumpkin orange!



DNR staff photo



Photo by Dana Hoisington

Indian paintbrush are my favorite among all prairie spring wildflowers. Paintbrush grows in mesic, dry, and sandy prairies and is found statewide, except in northwestern Missouri and the Southeast lowlands. The plants generally vary in size from 8 to 15 inches tall and their greenish-yellow flowers are inconspicuously hidden in the axils of brilliantly colored bracts, which can be in many shades of red, orange, and yellow. These bracts are actually what captures our attention from a distance.

Last, but not least...the Greater prairie chicken, a.k.a. the pinnated grouse. The adult male of this species has orange, comb-like feathers over their eyes, tufts of long feathers that can be raised or lowered along their necks, and yellowish-orange air sacs that can be inflated and used for "booming" as part of their mating ritual during mating season. Prairie chickens are a member of the pheasant family and are listed as endangered in Missouri.

Yes, springtime in the Midwest definitely comes with a lot of green. But, as you can see, for me orange is the color I most closely associate with springtime on southwest Missouri's tallgrass prairie; I'm guessing that it always will be.

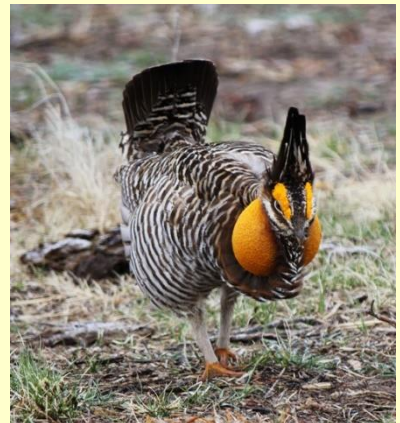


Photo by Meagan Duffee-Yates

**~Mystery plant ~
American Bittersweet**

Jerry Decker correctly identified the plant as American Bittersweet, *Celastrus scandens*. This vining plant will often be found in fencerows where birds frequently deposit the fruit after feeding on them. The fruit stays on the vines well into the winter, making them attractive to birds and wreath makers alike.

There is however another, more sinister bittersweet out there: Oriental Bittersweet, *Celastrus orbiculatus*. Like many exotic plants, this has become invasive. Strangling trees and out competing American Bittersweet. They look very similar, but while both fruits are orange, the capsule of the native bittersweet is orange and the exotic one is yellow. Also, native bittersweet has fruit at the ends of twigs, while the invasive Oriental has the fruit along the twig.

The following website has some good information on the two and how to identify each of them.

<http://www.womenowningwoodlands.net/content/beware-oriental-bittersweet-holiday-decorations>

~Mystery plant~

**One of the most impressive flowers of spring?
Who am I?**



Send your answer to prairiestatepark@dnr.mo.gov and the person with the first correct answer will be acknowledged in the next newsletter.

**Looking for more things to do in
the area?**

**The Missouri Prairie Foundation has
some great opportunities.**

➤ **Tuesday, April 24, 2018:
Evening Wildflower Walk at
Carver Prairie, 5:30 p.m.**

Evening Wildflower Walk at MPF's [Carver Prairie](#), led by MPF Director of Prairie Management Jerod Hueber. (Thursday, April 26 back-up rain date, same location, same time). Watch for more details.

➤ **Sunday, May 20,
2018: Breeding Bird
Investigation with MPF
Technical Advisor and
naturalist Jeff Cantrell, 9:30
a.m. to noon**

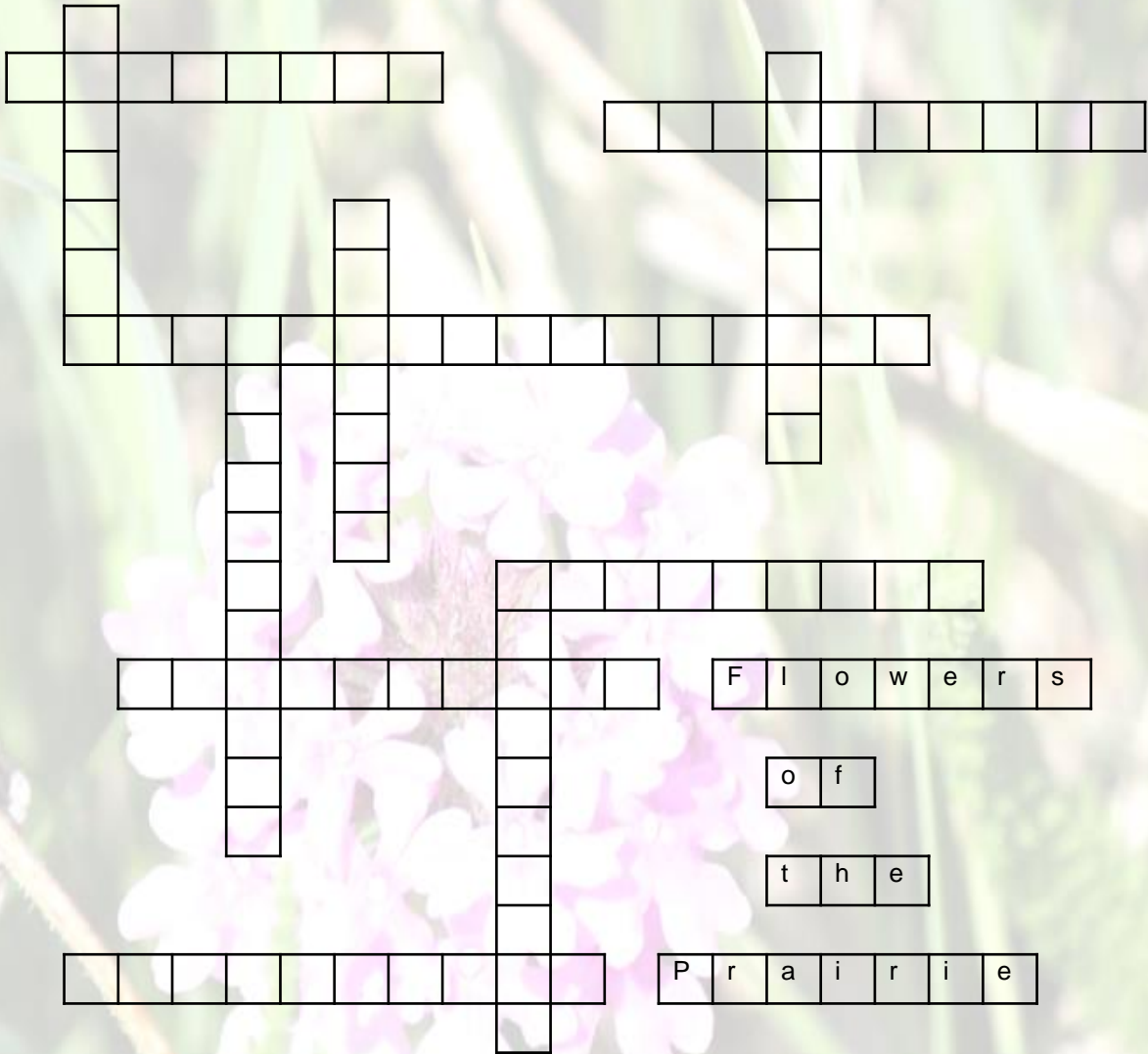
Chute Ridge Glade, Mark Twain National Forest, just east of Roaring River State Park, near Eagle Rock, Missouri. Register by e-mailing Jeff at jeff.cantrell@mdc.mo.gov or calling the Joplin Missouri Department of Conservation Office at 417-629-3423. The hike is for adults, and the climb is uneven and rocky, but the view and wildflowers will be stunning. A camera is a must for all naturalist types! Meet at the Roaring River Conservation Area (MDC) parking lot.

➤ **Saturday & Sunday, June 2 &
3, 2018: MPF's 9th Annual
Prairie BioBlitz**

Enjoy a weekend of camping and prairie exploration with biologists at MPF's beautiful [Pleasant Run Creek Prairie](#). Begins at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and ends about noon on June 3. Watch for more details and field group sign up.

Hey Kids!

Flowers will be blooming soon! Here is a crossword to get you ready for a colorful year on the prairie.



- Violets
- Wood-sorrels
- Gooseberry
- Strawberry
- Blackberry
- Elderberry
- Goldenrod
- Wild Plum
- Persimmons
- Hawthorn
- Showy Tick trefoil
- Cattail

2018 Calendar of Events

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

April 7, 10 a.m.

***Bison Hike**

Spring is here and the bison are busy munching fresh grass and having babies! Meet at the Regal Tallgrass Prairie Nature Center. Don't forget your cameras! Be prepared for a two-mile hike over uneven terrain. We recommend bringing water, snacks, a hat and sunscreen, and wearing sturdy shoes. Dress for the weather; the prairie winds can be rather nasty. **Please call 417-843-6711 to register for the hike.**

April 13, 9:30 a.m. - Noon

***Birds of a Feather HS**

Birds of a Feather – Come explore the woodland birds that call the campground area home. **Preregistration by April 1 is required. Call 417-843-6711 to register.**

May 5, 10 a.m.

***Bison Hike**

Wildflowers are abundant, bison babies are curious and birds are everywhere. Meet at the Regal Tallgrass Prairie Nature Center. Don't forget your cameras! Be prepared for a two-mile hike over uneven terrain. We recommend bringing water, snacks, a hat and sunscreen, and wearing sturdy shoes. Dress for the weather, but shorts are not recommended. **Please call 417-843-6711 to register for the hike.**

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

***Poetic Prairie HS**

Explore the world of the tallgrass prairie through poetry and art. **Preregistration by May 1 is required. Call 417-843-6711 to register.**

May 19, 10 a.m.

***Wildflower walk**

Spring is winding to a close, but the wildflowers are raring to go! Join a park naturalist on May 19 at 10 a.m. for a walk among green grasses and colorful flowers to learn more about the amazing prairie ecosystem. Dress for the weather and hiking across the prairie; long pants, water, and sturdy shoes are recommended as well as insect repellent. The hike will last about two hours covering 1.5 - 2 miles. Don't forget to bring your camera! **Please call 417-843-6711 to register**

May 26, 2 p.m.

***Nature weaving**

Come explore the textures and patterns found in nature as we combine creativity and the great outdoors! Students will use items found in nature to make and create their own, unique framed and woven piece of art. **Please call 417-843-6711 to register.**

June 2, 10 a.m.

***Bison Hike**

Wildflowers are abundant, bison babies are curious and birds are everywhere. Meet at the Regal Tallgrass Prairie Nature Center. Don't forget your cameras! Be prepared for a two-mile hike over uneven terrain. We recommend bringing water, snacks, a hat and sunscreen, and wearing sturdy shoes. Dress for the weather, but shorts are not recommended. **Please call 417-843-6711 to register for the hike.**

June 16, 10 a.m.

***Wildflower walk**

As summer gets started, the prairie is ablaze with color. Join a park naturalist on June 16 at 10 a.m. at Prairie State Park's Regal Tallgrass Prairie Nature Center for a walk among green grasses and colorful flowers to learn more about the amazing prairie ecosystem. Dress for the weather and hiking across the prairie; long pants, water, and sturdy shoes are recommended as well as insect repellent. The hike will last about two hours covering 1.5 - 2 miles. Don't forget to bring your camera! **Please call 417-843-6711 to register.**

Nature Bingo

10 a.m. on the fourth Saturday of the month:

- March 24
- April 28
- May 26
- June 23

***Denotes preregistration required.**

HS denotes Homeschool program.



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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417-843-6711