

# Prairie State Park's

# Tallgrass Tribune

Summer 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.

## New Natural Resource Steward at Prairie State Park

Prairie State Park is pleased to announce that **Katy Holmer** is the new Natural Resource Steward at the park. Before coming to Prairie, Katy was a park specialist at Montauk State Park for three years. She has been with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources since 2007, first as an environmental specialist with the Air Pollution Control Program, then as a unit chief in the Soil and Water Conservation Program. Katy, a Springfield native, received her BS in Wildlife Conservation and Management from Missouri State University and her MA in Landscape Architecture, specializing in cultural resource preservation, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

After receiving her BS, she worked as a biological technician for the National Park Service with the Prairie Cluster Long-Term Ecological Monitoring Program at Wilson's Creek National Battlefield. Katy is excited to have the opportunity to work with prairie ecosystems again, and is looking forward to new challenges. Her first day at Prairie State Park was May 26. Stop in and welcome Katy to the area and back to prairies!

## The Beauty of Burns

There are many beautiful sights on the prairie -- acres of wildflowers, butterflies flitting around, and indigo buntings' brilliant blue color catching your eye as they forage for seeds and insects.

After a burn, many flowers go into overdrive and really put on a show. This past year, staff burned Hunkah Prairie.

Take a walk on Path of the Earth People Trail that goes through Hunkah and you should be rewarded with a fantastic floral display this year.



Gayfeathers blooming along Gayfeather Trail after a burn in July 2012. There were thousands of flowering stems.

Photo by Dana Hoisington

~Mystery item ~  
Rose verbena

Val Frankoski correctly identified the mystery plant as rose verbena, *Glandularia canadensis*. This early bloomer is a pollinator magnet and makes a great ground cover in sunny, dry and rocky areas. It will bloom from March to November. The five petals each have a notch at the ends. This easily distinguishes them from phlox. Rarely growing more than a foot tall, it trails along the ground and can root where stems touch the ground.



This photo was taken on Coyote Trail in May 2014. The area was burned the previous fall. You can see that rose verbena responded very well to the new open landscape and flourished. Periodic burns invigorate the prairie and allow more sunlight to reach the soil, which seeds need to germinate. Without the prescribed burns, seeds would struggle to get the necessary sunlight for survival.

**Summer is almost here, but this will be with us over the winter. What is it?**



Photo by Dana Hoisington

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~

**June 20, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.**

### Hug a Herp Day!

Come to the park to see various reptiles and amphibians like snakes, turtles, frogs, toads and salamanders. This event will help to dispel myths and rumors about reptiles and amphibians. It will give people a chance to see and touch some up close. Make an amphibian or reptile craft to take home with you!

**July 11, 10 a.m.**

### Bison Hike

Bison and their calves are roaming the prairie. With the calves being a little older now, they tend to roam around a bit more. Be prepared for two-mile hike. Insect repellent, water, snacks, sunscreen and closed-toed shoes are recommended. Don't forget your camera!

**July 18, 10 a.m.**

### Wildflower Walk

Summer is in full swing with wildflowers galore! Join us as we explore the beautiful sights that nature has provided with wonderful wildflowers to see. Be prepared for a 1.5-mile hike. Insect repellent, water, snacks, sunscreen and closed-toed shoes are recommended. Don't forget your camera!

**August 1, 10 a.m.**

### Bison Hike

It is getting to be the rut, or mating season now. Bison bulls may be starting to battle each other. Be prepared for a two-mile hike. Insect repellent, water, snacks, sunscreen and closed-toed shoes are recommended. Don't forget your camera!

**August 15, 6 p.m.**

### Informational Meeting and Program

Find out what Prairie State Park has been doing and what is planned for the future. This is your chance to provide us input on what you want. An evening stroll on Drover's Trail will follow the meeting as you see the prairie in the evening.

**September 5, 10 a.m.**

### Bison Hike

Fall is approaching and hopefully cooler weather, too. Take a hike with us to see the bison. Be prepared for a two-mile hike. Insect repellent, water, snacks, sunscreen and closed-toed shoes are recommended.

Don't forget your camera!

# Hey Kids!

The regal fritillary butterfly is one of the species of concern here at the park. They are only found in tallgrass prairies. Males emerge in early June, followed shortly thereafter by females. Mating takes place but the eggs are not laid until early fall. These butterflies need prairie violets for the caterpillars to eat. The caterpillar spends the winter on the prairie in its chrysalis or cocoon.

Regal Fritillary Butterfly  
on Pale-Purple Coneflower





## Fabulous Flora!

The months of June and July provide the prettiest floral displays of the year -- pale purple coneflower's petals swaying in the breeze; common milkweed with its large globe-shaped flower heads attracting bees, flies and butterflies, and serving as the sole food source for monarch butterflies; gayfeather's tall spikes of pink flowers; the bright yellow of rosinweed melding in with the greens, reds and blues on the prairie landscape; and white and purple prairie clover standing upright with skinny flower clusters.

Rattlesnake master has intimidating looking leaves, but a quick touch reveals a soft spine along its edge instead of a prickly one. Sensitive briar's thorny stem and fireworklike flower belies its secret; the leaves close up with the slightest touch. Ragged fringed orchids are a treat to find. They blend in so well that they don't stand out and nothing about the plant draws attention to it. Once detected, this dainty cream-colored flower is a true treasure.



Pale purple coneflowers along Drover's Trail Photo by Tom Hoisington

Sensitive briar  
Photo by Dana Hoisington



Ragged fringed orchid  
Photo by Dana Hoisington

One flower of the ragged fringed orchid  
Photo by Dana Hoisington

