

Prairie State Park's

Tallgrass Tribune

Winter 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.

Winter's warmth?

Dana Hoisington

Winter may seem like an odd time to talk about warmth. In winter it can seem like there isn't any warmth to be had. From a different perspective, though, it is surprising how one can warm up, even on a cold Missouri winter's day. First, warmth can be more than just physical. Sitting inside and looking out on a cold snowy day while drinking in the prairie's palette of colors can warm the soul. The sun reflecting off newly fallen snow sparkles and shimmers, more akin to being out on a lake in summer watching the waves roll in, or listening to water gurgle down a favorite stream. All of these bring warmth as well.

Relaxing at a campsite enjoying the calls of a whip-poor-will, coyote, meadowlark, or the upland sandpiper can also have an emotional impact. Taking a winter hike and seeing the breath of bison as they go about their daily life can fill one with warmth as the magnificent animal shares its time with us. The sun glinting off of a dew-covered spider web, shines like a CD strung on a prairie stalwart like big bluestem. A similar web covered in ice makes a dramatic entrance and our heart consumes it, taking it in, becoming part of us. A treasure that fulfills us, making us better for sharing the chance encounter with nature's master architect - the spider.

Oh sure, we do need to keep our bodies warm. The bison's fur does a wonderful job of keeping the heat inside, not letting that precious winter commodity go without a fight. Cupcakes - that's what we call them when they are coated in snow. REALLY large chocolate cupcakes with vanilla frosting.



Due to their fur, the snow stays on their backs until the sun comes out or the air temperature climbs high enough to melt it. They are not worried about warmth, mother nature

has seen to that. We are not so lucky, though. Our "fur coat" isn't suitable to keep us warm. Moms have been saying for centuries to "put a hat on when you go outside in winter!" As usual, mom was right. Our body heat escapes from our head with its inadequate fur covering.

I challenge you to soak up the warmth of nature this winter. Absolutely take a hike, go winter camping, sit and watch the birds at a feeder, take in a First Day hike, or go to an eagle watch. Missouri's state parks have a lot of opportunities to soak up nature. There is a great deal from which to choose. Check out the events page and something will intrigue you <https://mostateparks.com/events>.

This winter, do *something* to get in touch with nature and warm yourself up from the inside! Warm the heart and soul, and the rest will take care of itself.



~Mystery items ~ Antlion larvae

Cassandra York correctly identified this as an Antlion larvae. These creatures are the immature form of an Ant lion. The adult resembles a damsel fly, so they make quite the transformation!

The larvae feed on small insects that fall into the pit that they dig. Once dug, the antlion larvae sits and waits for a careless insect to tumble down into the pit. As it tries to escape, it flings sand at the hapless critter using its flat head and jaws. This makes the smooth walls collapse underneath it, losing its footing and sliding down to those waiting jaws where it is pulled under and the juices sucked out. Once the meal is finished, the lifeless body is discarded with a flick of its head!

They pupate in the pit and emerge as a winged adult.

Learn more about these fascinating insects by following the links.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VilbHEOreUg>

<https://nature.mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/field-guide/antlions-doodlebugs>

~Mystery plant~

This plant is commonly used in wreaths. What is it?



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

~ Prairie State Park 2017 ~ The year in review

- Another new staff member joined us in 2017. Cory Harrison has joined the Prairie State Park family as a maintenance worker, replacing Matheson Miller. Please welcome Cory to the park.
- Bison hike attendance was up 18 percent in 2017. A total of 405 people attended our guided bison hikes last year.
- First Day Hikes continue to be popular. This year, 64 people came out to see bison and get in touch with nature and enjoy some exercise on Jan. 1.
- Our National Bison Day celebration had over 300 people celebrate our new national mammal! This included 111 for the bison hike! They enjoyed a bison hike, bison-oriented crafts, games and sampled bison chili.
- Prescribed burns were conducted on Hunkah, Regal, and the elk unit.
- Our survey of the state endangered Mead's milkweed, which began in late May, continues. If you would like to be a part of this annual survey, contact the park. We can always use extra eyes to help locate these rare plants.

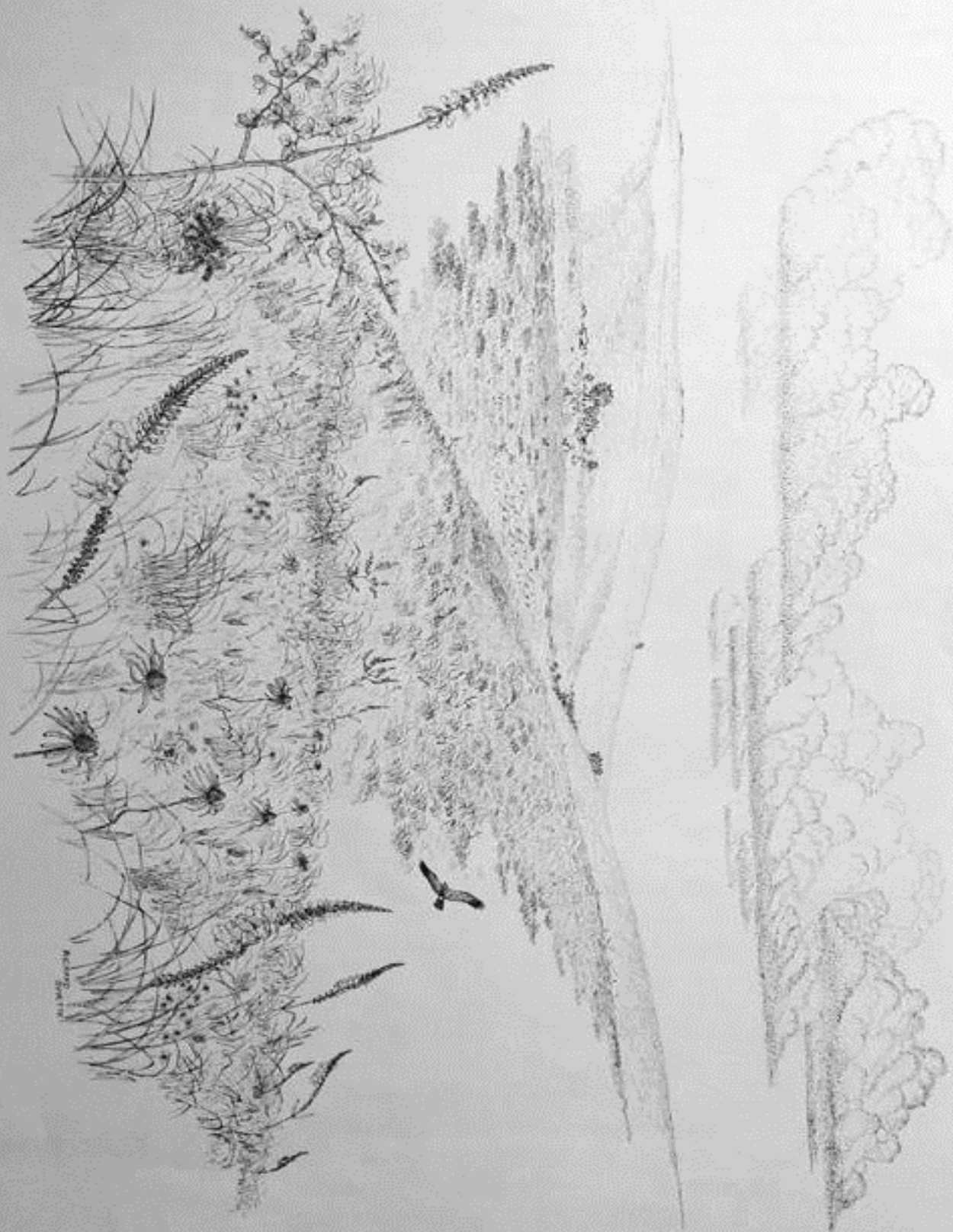


Hey Kids!

Get creative with this summer scene and turn it into a winter wonderland.



Imperial Creek Valley
Pinnacles State Park
Marine Department of Natural Resources



2018 Calendar of Events

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

January 1, 1 p.m.

***First Day Bison Hike**

Did you make a New Year's resolution to be more active? What better way to kick off the New Year in a healthy way than with a hike to see bison! Join us at 1 p.m. on a possibly two-mile hike to see one of the grandest animals in North America! We will have complimentary hot beverages available after the hike. 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.**

January 13, 1 p.m.

***The Skin you're in: Animal coverings**

This program will focus on what covers an animal and how it helps animals survive. Bright colors, camouflage, shells and scales for protection, skin they can breathe through and more will be covered. **Please call 417-843-6711 to register.**

February 3, 1 p.m.

***Bison Hike**

Winter's grip still has us, but the beauty of the prairie knows no seasons. Enjoy a guided hike to see the bison. 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.**

March 3, 10 a.m.

***Bison Hike**

Spring isn't far off and the prairie is beginning to show signs of life. 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.**

March 9, 9:30 a.m. - Noon

***Wild Dogs of the Prairie HS**

Coyote vs. fox – Learn about some of the differences between these wild dogs of the prairie. **Preregistration by March 1 is required. Call 417-843-6711 to register.**

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 1st 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.**

Nature Bingo will be at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on the fourth Saturday of the month:

- January 27
- February 24
- March 24
- April 28
- May 26

***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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