

# Guided Field Trips • Sunday, June 25



Iowa is proud to host the 26th North American Prairie Conference in the heart of the tallgrass prairie ecosystem. The conference is an excellent opportunity to learn from prairie managers and scientists, to interact with prairie enthusiasts, and to see and touch high-quality prairie remnants. To help you better achieve the third goal, we invite participants to come early or linger after the conference and enjoy the magnificent diversity of Iowa's prairies and savannas. We have organized and identified several pre- and post-conference field trips. There are two options:

- 1. Guided Field Trips** – these field trips are scheduled for Sunday, June 25 only, the day prior to the first day of the conference.
- 2. Self-guided** – these are sites that are located near I-80, I-35, I-29 and Highway 20, the principal routes travelers will take driving to Des Moines. Visit these at your convenience either before or after the conference.

---

## GUIDED FIELD TRIPS • SUNDAY, JUNE 25

### *Prairie Resource Center • 1-3 p.m.*

Brushy Creek State Recreation Area  
2820 Brushy Creek Road, Lehigh, IA 50557

**Location:** central Iowa, southeast of Fort Dodge

**Google Map:** "Prairie Resource Center"

**Local directions:** From the intersection of Highway 20 and Highway 169 southwest of Fort Dodge, take Highway 20 east 9 miles to County Road P73 (Union Avenue) (watch for sign to Brushy Creek Recreation Area on Highway 20). Turn south (right) on P70 and go 3.5 miles to 270th Street. Turn east (left) onto 270th Street and drive 0.5 mile to the official entrance of Brushy Creek Recreation Area. Continue on this curving park road nearly 2.5 miles (past the turnoffs for the campground and picnic area and across the dam forming Brushy Creek Lake) to the intersection of Brushy Creek Drive and 280th Street, which is by the park office. Drive south an additional 0.2 mile to the Prairie Resource Center.

**Field trip leader:** Bill Johnson, Iowa DNR Biologist and Laura Miner, Iowa DNR Natural Resource Technician II

**Physical challenges to expect: Easy**

Easy to moderate. Short walks off the trail.

The Iowa DNR Prairie Resource Center (PRC) is responsible for producing local-ecotype native seed for prairie reconstructions on public land in Iowa. Seed mixes produced from this operation plant 1800 acres of prairie and grassland habitat on an average annual basis. The PRC has 90 species in production utilizing a variety of methods such as greenhouse propagation, plot production, direct seedings and diverse combine harvests. Join us at the shop headquarters for a tour of the greenhouse, production plots and equipment buildings followed by a guided tour of high-quality prairie reconstructions and a local prairie remnant. Come early or stay after the tour to explore Brushy Creek State Recreation Area on your own. There are over 45 miles of multi-use trails, a 690-acre lake with fishing opportunities, campgrounds, picnic areas, and a swimming beach all located within this premier park and view the Prairie Cairn, a stone cairn built by British artist Andy Goldsworthy, made from Iowa limestone. Prairie Cairn was photographed over a period of 18 months to document the sculpture in varied conditions, including during a prairie burn in 2002. The resulting suite of panoramic images is now in the collection of the Des Moines Art Center.

## Codfish Hollow Hill Prairie • 10 a.m.-noon

Northeast Iowa, 40 miles north of I-80, near Maquoketa

**Google Map:** “Codfish Hollow Prairie”

**Location:** eastern Iowa

**Local directions:** From Highway 64 at west side of the town of Maquoketa, go north on Highway 52 for less than 1 mile, and there turn right (east) on 35th Avenue (Codfish Hollow Road). Go 4 miles on 35th Avenue/Codfish Hollow to prairie at the intersection of 288th Avenue.

**Field trip leader:** Ray Hamilton (landowner) and Tony Vorwald, Jackson County Conservation Board naturalist.

**Level of difficulty: Easy to moderate**

Short, easy to mild moderate walk on the limestone native prairie and plateaus. Mowed path firebreaks through valley tall prairie reconstructions.

Prime native prairie including a dozen limestone outcrops on a 60-acre parcel. The outcrops are buffered and interconnected with 35-year old very local ecotype and site specific reconstruction in the valleys; also mixed woodland, savanna edges, and shallow soiled plateaus off the rock. Managed as a local biological preserve for 39 years with strategies compiled in the Native Prairie Management Guide. We will see an abundance of seasonally mature spring species and evolving fall species in several dry zones. Expect the blooming of a broad collage of leadplant, compass plant, pale purple coneflower, several milkweed species, Hill’s thistle, flax, prairie rose, indigos, rare false foxglove (*Agalinis skinneriana*), prairie moonwort, purple milkweed. and more, including one of the northernmost populations of native purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*). The first discovered population of skipper *Leonardis* seen in eastern Iowa since the 1800’s. Occasional bobcats, seasonal nighthawk and woodcock nesting, a black bear traversed the property twice and took a nap also!

## Pleasant Creek Farm • 1-4 p.m.

3083 143rd St, Barnes City, IA 50027

**Location:** southeastern Iowa northeast of Oskaloosa

**Field trip leader:** Steve Laughlin (landowner), Kelley Donham (landowner), and Tylar Samuels, Conservation Easement Specialist, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation

**Level of difficulty: Easy to moderate**

Minimal hiking required, short walking required on gently sloping, mostly dry conditions, not rocky. Please bring plenty of water for drinking, limited shade so sun protection recommended, possible exposure to ticks so some sort of insect repellent is recommended.

Come enjoy a mosaic of restored native prairies, reconstructed prairies, and oak-hickory savannas along Pleasant Creek. Plant surveys have included over 225 species of native prairie plants. The guided field trip will observe examples of ecological restoration succession throughout various habitats. Acquired in 1998, the 440-acre farm encompasses 300 acres of remnant and reconstructed tallgrass prairie, 100 acres of scattered woodlands, 15 acres of oak/hickory savanna, ponds and wetland. Landowners Steve Laughlin and Kelley Donham have worked work to promote ecological diversity to their farm by restoring many acres of non-native cool season grasslands back to native tallgrass prairie and performing stewardship. Native prairie restoration work has included annual prescribed burning, clearing of brush and timber encroachment, and removing invasive woody and herbaceous species. Prairie reconstructions done annually have started with fall seed harvest followed by site mowing and spraying followed by spring seeding and rolling followed by prescribed mowing the first few summers followed by prescribed burning in later years. Approximately 120 acres to date. Prairie reconstruction areas range in age from 1 to 20 years showing the typical succession of development as weeds are eliminated and prairie species dominate.

## Lake Red Rock Savanna Restoration • 2-4 p.m.

Wallashuck Recreation Area, Lake Red Rock Project

**Location:** southeastern Iowa, southwest of Pella

**Google Map:** (Lat-long coordinates): 41.40437, -93.01051

**Local directions:** near the Lake Red Rock Marina, park road off of County Highway G28. Signs will be posted off of Highway G28.

**Field trip leader:** Perry Thostenson (Park Ranger) and Dr. Pete Eyheralde (William Penn University)

**Level of difficulty:** Most of the trip will be off trail on gentle landscape, yet hiking boots are recommended.

The Corps of Engineers at Lake Red Rock have been using delicate to aggressive land management tactics to remove invasive plants and restore the landscape to a more pristine state. The site has no cropping history. Visitors can expect to see a variety of prairie species in an area that had been heavily infested with autumn love and honeysuckle.

## Williams State Prairie Preserve • 8-10 a.m.

2298 Black Hawk Avenue NW, Oxford, IA 52322

**Location:** eastern Iowa northwest of Iowa City

**Google Map:** “Williams Prairie State Preserve”

**Local directions:** Located 2.5 miles north of the town of Oxford and 15 miles northwest of Iowa City in western Johnson County. From the intersection of I-80 and I-380 on the northwest side of Iowa City, take I-80 west for 9 miles to County Road W-38 (Black Hawk Avenue) (exit 230 – Oxford). Turn north onto Black Hawk Avenue and drive 2.5 miles into the town of Oxford. On the south edge of Oxford, turn right onto Hawkeye Drive/295th Street and follow it 0.5 mile to Augusta Avenue. Turn north and follow Augusta Avenue (which later becomes Highway 109) through town for 1.25 miles to Highway 6. Cross Highway 6 and continue north on W38/Cemetery Road NW 1.5 miles to Grabin Road NW. Turn west on Grabin Road NW and go 1 mile to Black Hawk Avenue NW. Turn to the north and go 0.25 mile to the preserve on the east side of the road. Access to the site at the south west corner of the preserve by the Williams Prairie Preserve sign.

**Field trip leader:** Dave Wehde, Johnson County Conservation Board Natural Resource Manager and Larry Gullett, Johnson County Conservation Board Executive Director

**Level of difficulty: Moderate**

Williams Prairie is a wet sedge meadow with an upland sand prairie on its southern edge. Many parts of the site contain hummocks that can make walking difficult. Other parts of the prairie remain wet and may require knee boots or waterproof boots. Trails are not mowed and are blazed by previous visitors or wildlife. Hiking through thick prairie vegetation may be required in some locations.

Williams Prairie State Preserve is a 21-acre area featuring a wet prairie. In the early 1900s, John Williams bought the area and used it as a hayfield. Botanists from the University of Iowa discovered the area about 1960 and have used it as an outdoor classroom since that time. It was deeded to The Nature Conservancy in 1973 and was dedicated as a biological state preserve in 1976. Johnson County Conservation (JCC) managed the site in partnership with The Nature Conservancy for many years, before the property was deeded to the Johnson County Conservation Board in 2013.

## Hayden Prairie State Preserve • 1-3 p.m.

**Location:** northeast Iowa west of the small town of Lime Springs

**Google Map:** “Hayden Prairie State Wildlife Management Area”

**Local directions:** From the intersection of Highway 9 and County Road V58 (3rd Street) in the town of Cresco, drive west on Highway 9 for 13 miles to Jade Avenue (County Highway V26). Turn north (right) and go 5 miles to 50th Street. Turn west (left) and go 0.25 mile to the preserve parking area on the south side of the road.

**Field trip leaders:** Mark Leoschke, botanist, Wildlife Bureau, Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Larry Reis, naturalist, Winneshiek County Conservation Board.

**Level of difficulty: Moderate**

There are no mowed trails on Hayden Prairie and the terrain can be uneven due to pocket gopher mounds. In addition, the ground can be very soggy if there have been recent rains. Hiking boots are recommended; waterproof boots if the ground is wet.

Participants can expect to see a prime tallgrass prairie remnant owned and managed by the Wildlife Bureau of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. The 240 acres of tallgrass prairie here makes it the largest prairie in Iowa east of the Loess Hills. Smooth oxeye, tall meadow rue, northern bedstraw, Canada anemone, prairie phlox, smooth rose, white wild indigo and thimbleweed should be blooming then.

## Kothenbeutel Heritage Prairie • 1-3 p.m.

1964 240th Street  
Sheffield, IA 50475

**Location:** north-central Iowa southeast of Sheffield

**Google Map (Lat-Long coordinates):** 42.88197, -93.13881

**Local directions:** From town of Sheffield, drive south from the intersection of HWY 65 and E Gilman St. for ¼ mile, then turn east on 250th St. Continue east for 1.5 miles then turn south on Raven Avenue/S53. Continue 1 mile south then turn east on 240th Street. Continue heading east for 1.5 mile and the prairie will be on the north side of 240th Street. Please park along the road.

**Field trip leader:** Ryan Schmidt, Central Iowa Land Stewardship Director, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation

**Level of difficulty: Moderate**

Participants will hike through natural and unmowed prairie and savanna over uneven terrain.

Kothenbeutel Prairie is a 40-acre remnant prairie and oak savanna located near Sheffield in northern Franklin County owned and stewarded by Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF). The property exhibits an array of plant communities including dry to wet-mesic prairie, sedge meadow, oak savanna and rocky outcroppings, creating an incredible diversity of over 200 native plant species. The trip leader will provide insight into the history of the property, as well as past, current and planned restoration projects. You'll see and discuss examples of stewardship practices such as prescribed fire, invasive plant management, savanna restoration and native seed collection. You may have the opportunity to see blooming white camass (*Zigadenus elegans*), butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), wood lily (*Lilium philadelphicum*) and toothed evening primrose (*Calylophus serrulatus*).

## *Twinkle Hill Prairie • 1-5 p.m.*

**Location:** northeast of Marshalltown in rural Marshall County

**Google Map:** “Twinkle Hill Praire”

**Local directions:** Address, 2937 Twinkle Hill Road. Google maps will be best for this to avoid backtracking. From the village of Green Mountain, take Garwin Road west to Vance Avenue, then south for 1.8 miles to Twinkle Hill Road. Turn right and continue for  $\frac{3}{4}$  of mile. From Marshalltown, head East on East Main Street, across the Iowa River, and turn left on Vance Avenue, 1.0 mile to Twinkle Hill Road, and turn left. Please use the farm lane at 2939 Twinkle Hill Road for parking.

**Field trip leaders:** Scott Sauer (landowner). Scott will be on site during the time period listed to act as your guide. Contact Scott at 608-772-3539 if interested.

**Level of difficulty: Moderate**

Very Easy. Flat and on mowed paths. Part of the route includes a short walk on a gravel road. .

Begun in 1989 on a poor ag field, this locally-sourced prairie reconstruction harbors over 65 native plants. Active seeding took place for 10 years, and the site has been burned in part for over 30 years. It represents a local seed bank and a rare piece of living habitat in a landscape dominated by industrial agriculture. More than anything, the prairie is a labor of love.

