

Trail Stop 5: Now that you are entering the prairie area of the trail you will see different things depending on the time of year. The Prairie has the most abundant amount of flowers, insects, and animals in the summer as the flowers and other plants are fully grown. Instead of walking around the prairie, continue straight on the trail and it will lead you through the coniferous forest section of the trail containing Red and White Pines.



Red-Spotted Purple Butterfly

Trail Stop 6: The big difference between things seen in the prairie and what is among the coniferous trees, is the forest floor that is covered in pine needles, called duff, making it a very quiet walk through this section. The key differences between the coniferous trees in this section and many of the deciduous trees seen elsewhere on the trail, is that these trees will have the needles through all seasons including winter. The deciduous trees seen on other parts of the trail, like the Aspens, Oaks, and Hickory trees will all lose leaves during the fall and winter months.

Trail Stop 7: After emerging from the conifer forest, you can go left as the path will bring you back to the prairie. During the spring and summer months, various plants and flowers will grow here. This prairie is very important for many reasons. One reason is that pollinators like hummingbirds, bees, butterflies, and moths are attracted to this area. The plants rely on the pollinators as they help them reproduce. Habitat loss of these plants doesn't only hurt the plants, but the pollinators' population as well.



Ruby Throated Hummingbird



Monarch Butterfly

Trail Stop 8: By the small group of Aspens, you can overlook the prairie. During the winter it may be covered in snow and turn brown as the plants are all dead, but soon enough the color of the prairie will be back in the spring and summer. Raspberry bushes line the edge of the prairie. Try and spot other flowers or plants that have been identified previously. Bedstraw, prairie grasses, wild geranium, wild violets, garlic mustard, and more may be in the prairie or just on the other side of the trail on the forest floor. This prairie isn't just home to pollinators, but also bluebirds, cottontail rabbits, field mice, toads, snakes, lizards, and more. During dusk and after nightfall bats may start to appear. These types of bats are not out to suck your blood like the myth says. Some are out at night to eat the fruit produced from plants while others are out to eat bugs, like moths and mosquitoes, around the prairie and pond. A bat can eat up to 1,000 mosquitoes-sized bugs in an hour.



Eastern Bluebird



Little Brown Bat



Walworth County
Department of Public Works



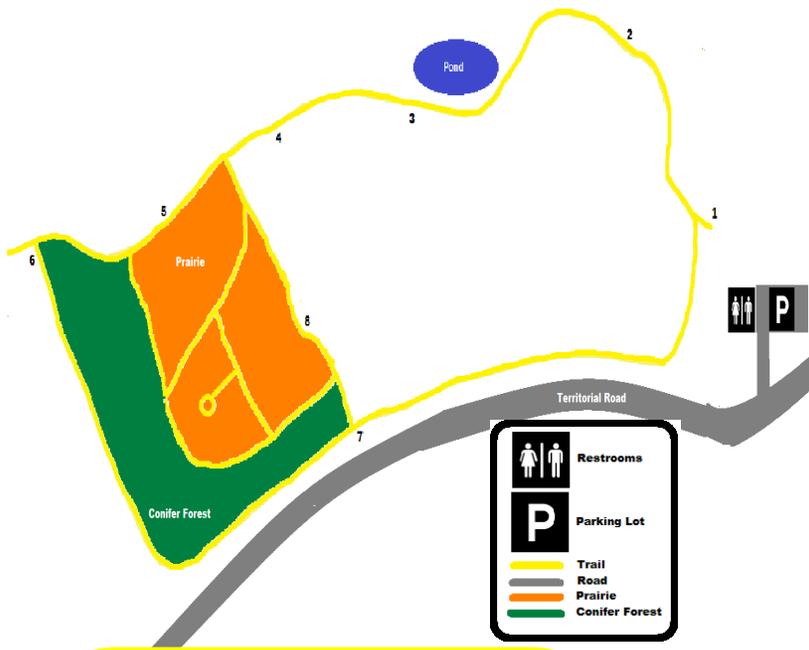
W4097 County Road NN
 Elkhorn, WI 53121
 262-741-3114, Option 2
www.co.walworth.wi.us



Natureland Park Prairie Storybook Trail Map



W8338 Territorial Road
 Whitewater, WI 53190



You may also identify the two evergreens further into the trail. One is a Black Spruce and the other is a White Cedar. You can tell the difference because the needles on the White Cedar are lighter green and appear to be flattened compared to the Black Spruce.



White Cedar



Black Spruce

The Prairie Trail is a fairly flat trail, perfect for cross country skiing and snowshoeing during the winter. It also makes for an easy hike when there is no snow on the ground. Look for the variety of tree and animal species throughout the trail.

Trail Stop 1: Trail Stop 1 marks the beginning of the Prairie Trail as it will take you past a pond, a prairie, and through a coniferous forest. During certain parts of the year, you may spot Wild Violets and the invasive plant, Honeysuckle. It is so invasive because it grows leaves early in the spring and keeps them until late fall, giving them survival advantages over native shrub layer plants. They also have fruit that birds feed on that allow for an easy way to spread seeds. You will see Honeysuckle throughout this trail as well as the other trails at Natureland Park.



Bush Honeysuckle

Trail Stop 2: Earlier in the year the ground between Trail Stop 1 and 2 is usually wet, but as you make your way up the trail the elevation changes making the trail much dryer. Try to notice the variety of tree species throughout this trail. At Trail Stop 2 there are two large White Oaks as well as Shagbark Hickory and Black Cherry Trees. Another invasive plant that can be seen in certain parts of the year is Garlic Mustard which can be identified by the white flowers. Honeysuckle will be seen here again along with wild Raspberry bushes.



Garlic Mustard

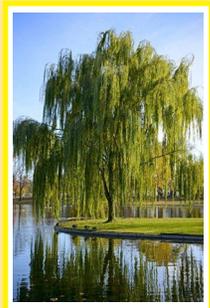


Black Cherry

Trail Stop 3: Here you can notice the difference in trees along the pond edge. Willow trees surround the area as they are a tree that survives well in wet conditions such as alongside ponds and wetlands. In the pond there may be various types of frogs, snapping turtles, and small fish. Insects like dragonflies and mosquitoes will be present in the spring and summer months. Raspberry bushes and Honeysuckle appear along the pond, making a good place to spot birds and other animals that feed on the fruits produced by the plants. On the other side of the trail White Cedar and evergreen trees will be easily spotted in different locations throughout the trail.



Common Snapping Turtle



Weeping Willow

Trail Stop 4: The light colored bark of the Aspen tree can be seen at Trail Stop 4. These trees have been identified as the largest plant in the world as they reproduce through seeds, and more commonly through root sprouting. The root sprouting results in genetically identical trees that are referred to as "clones." Because they are genetically identical and they share the same root structure it is assumed that aspens in a group like these at Trail Stop 4 are all the same tree. The oldest known Aspen clone patch has been aged at over 80,000 years old. It is more common for the clones to be around 5-10,000 years old.



Quaking Aspen