

Enjoying Your Visit to Pioneers Park Nature Center

Some Suggestions of Things to Do

Anytime:

- Stroll the Animal Trail to see our non-releasable raptors.
- Visit both buildings.
- Walk across the elk bridge near the Prairie Building to see the elk, deer and pond critters.
- Dig in at the Natural Play Area.



Spring:

- Visit the wetland across the swinging bridge and listen for chorus frogs (March-April).
- Walk in Fleming Woods and enjoy the blooming woodland flowers (April-May).
- Walk our woodlands noticing the buds and flowers of trees and shrubs.
- Listen and look for birds, courting behaviors and nesting activity. Harrington Trail and Nature Center ponds are good places to start. Pick up our bird list and borrow binoculars and a field guide if you do not have your own.

Specific things to look and listen for:

Early blooming woodland flowers:

fawn lilies, Dutchman's breeches, wild columbine, wood phlox, violets

prairie flowers:

ground-plum, prairie violets, plains wild indigo, prairie ragwort

and trees

maples, redbuds, cottonwoods, plums, dogwoods

Migrating birds

ducks and geese (March), shorebirds (April)
warblers (May)

Returning summer residents

robins, bluebirds, blackbirds, orioles, kingbirds, etc.

Goslings and other animal babies

Bison losing their winter coat in chunks

Male elk and deer antlers beginning to grow



Summer:

- Visit the prairie gardens near the Prairie Building and the Louise Evans Doole Herb Garden near the Chet Ager Building.
- Relax on the adirondack chairs near the herb garden or on one of the benches scattered throughout the Nature Center.
- Visit the pond just west of the Prairie Building or the one at the end of the Martin Prairie Trail. Watch for birds and insects.
- Go down to the stream - there is a marked trail in Fleming Woods.
- Pay attention to the many insects around you, from the beauty of butterflies and dragonflies to the many critters that scurry on the ground. Listen to their buzz and hum.



Specific things to look and listen for:

Prairie grasses and forbs

June: purple & white prairie clover, New Jersey tea, purple poppy mallow, spiderwort, Junegrass

July: milkweeds, leadplant, coneflowers, wild bergamot, grama grasses

August: liatrus, goldenrods, blue sage, big bluestem, Indiangrass

Ripening gooseberries, mulberries, chokecherries and elderberries



Deep call of the bullfrog

Fledging birds

Check yourself for ticks!



Fall:

- Hike through the tall grasses near the Prairie Building and on the Martin Prairie Trail and enjoy the beauty of the fall prairie.
- Walk through our woodlands and observe the changing colors.
- Notice all the different kinds of grasshoppers you find.
- Wander to the end of Harrington Trail and relax under the large cottonwoods there.
- Look out for spider webs of various kinds. They can be magical early in the morning with dew or frost.
- Walk the Verley Trail and enjoy the Haines Branch Creek as it twists through the landscape.

Specific things to look and listen for:

Prairie grasses in their full splendor

Late prairie wildflowers:

New England aster, goldenrod, blue sage
prairie gentian

Changing leaf color:

Reds of smooth sumac, Virginia creeper, dogwood
and poison ivy
Yellows of cottonwood and ash

Ripened seeds of all kinds

Woolly bear caterpillars crawling across trails looking for a
safe place to spend the winter

Noisy flocks of blackbirds gathering for fall migration

The return of our wintering birds:

juncos
red-breasted nuthatches
tree sparrows
pine siskins
Harris sparrows

Pesky yellow jackets eager for their final meals



Winter

- Especially after a snow, look for animal tracks. Pick up our hand-out to help you identify what you find.
- Notice the shapes of the trees now that the leaves have fallen.
- Relax in front of the windows at the Chet Ager Building and watch the visitors to the bird garden.
- Look for abandoned bird nests, hidden during the summer.
- Watch for galls, funny lumps and bumps that serve as homes for insects.
- Go up the road west of the Prairie Building and observe the bison herd.



Specific things to look and listen for:

Messy leaf nests of squirrels

The bark and twigs of a few favorite trees

The hoot of great horned owls as they begin nesting in late January

The shape of each unique snowflake

Winter resident birds including:
sharp-shinned hawks
red-breasted nuthatches
brown creepers
American tree sparrows
Harris' sparrows
dark-eyed juncos
pine siskins

The quiet of this season