

Ripple Effect #87

Have You Visited Your Prairie Lately?

Looking for new places to explore? Want to do it closer to home? Consider a visit to your local prairie! Efforts of organizations such as the Nature Conservancy that rescue and restore prairie make it possible to visit remnants of the “ocean of grass” that early explorers found stretching from present-day Winnipeg all the way south to Texas and that Meriwether Lewis described in his journal as “one of the most beautifll and picteresk seens that I ever beheld.” [sic]

If you live in or near Winnipeg, you can find 29 tall grass prairie restoration sites right within the city itself! One of the more recently restored areas, Henteleff Park, now hosts tall grass prairie on a 40-acre site along the Red River. The tall grasses not only add visual and educational opportunities for visitors, but they are helping to stabilize the banks of Normand Creek.

Further south in Manitoba near Gardenton, the Agassiz Interpretive Trail allows you to experience some of the richness of the prairie habitat in a setting that has been identified as a prairie remnant of significant size. The area may host the last remaining stand in Canada of the endangered Western Prairie Fringed Orchid.

Go further south and east into Minnesota, and you will find several prairie stops that have 2008 summer tours scheduled to help you learn about the variety of prairie terrain and species:

- July 12, Pembina Trail Preserve (near Crookston): Orchids and Prairie Plant Tour. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Limited numbers – register at 218.498.2679.
- August 2, Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge (near Rochert): Bird watching for Trumpeter Swans and Refuge Tour, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. Limited numbers -- register at 218.498.2679
- August 16, Lake Alexander (near Grand Rapids and Deer River): Open House for bird-watching and exploring the 1,800 acre preserve. Information at 218.575.3032 or kmontgomery@tnc.org.

Travel yet farther south and west into North Dakota, and you can find original prairie and wetlands at Brown Ranch and Pigeon Point Preserve, both located on the Sheyenne River Delta.

Whether you choose Brown Ranch’s large area of intact native tall grass prairie or Pigeon Point Preserve’s wetland habitat, you will find numerous species of prairie plants. Although services are not available on site, both preserves give you access to canoeing on the Sheyenne River and hiking, biking or horseback riding on the North

Country National Scenic Trail. Check www.ndnature.org/activities for directions and more information.

Enjoy the beautiful scenery that's right here in our backyard!

Until the next Ripple Effect,

The Red River Basin Commission (RRBC)

The RRBC is a grassroots organization that is a chartered not-for-profit corporation under the provisions of Manitoba, North Dakota, Minnesota, and South Dakota law. Our offices in Moorhead, MN and Winnipeg, MB can be reached at 218-291-0422 and 204-982-7254, or you can check out our website at www.redriverbasincommission.org.

