

FY02 Wildlife Preservation Fund

Ending Grant Report Grant Number 02-041W "Discovering the Prairie"

This project was developed to increase awareness and understanding of a vanishing ecosystem in Illinois, the tallgrass prairie. Trails through a restored prairie already existed at the Ballard Nature Center; however to increase the visitor's experience, signs describing prairie species and ecology were needed along the trail.

Fourteen prairie signs were purchased. The signs are aluminum with line drawings and text. Signs purchased were Big Bluestem, Black-eyed Susan, Indian Grass, Little Bluestem, Side-oats Grama, Gray-headed Coneflower, Eastern Meadowlark, Eastern Cottontail, White-tailed Deer, Common Yellowthroat, Signs of Wildlife, Diversity, Red-tailed Hawk, and Edges. In order to protect the signs and prolong life, the signs were framed. The trail was surveyed for the most appropriate place for each sign to be installed. Seven fourteen-foot 4x4 treated posts were purchased and cut in half. They were installed with the use of a post-hole driller. The signs were mounted to the posts with screws. Two volunteers helped throughout the installation process, taking approximately 24 hours. The total cost of project materials was \$978.80.

This has been a successful project that will add enjoyment and educational opportunities to all ages of visitors at the nature center. These signs allow the prairie trail to be self-interpretive so that all visitors have the opportunity to learn about this ecosystem. The signs will also be used with school groups and youth and adult organizations on guided tours. Visitors to the Ballard Nature Center have already commented on the signs, saying that they enjoyed them and found them informative.

Enclosed are photos of this project. The photos are numbered to correspond with the following descriptions.

- Photo #1: Ernest Ballard displays some of the signs to be installed
- Photo #2: Volunteer mounting one of the signs to a post.
- Photo #3: The prairie trail with an installed sign on the left.
- Photo #4: Visitors reading one of the installed signs.

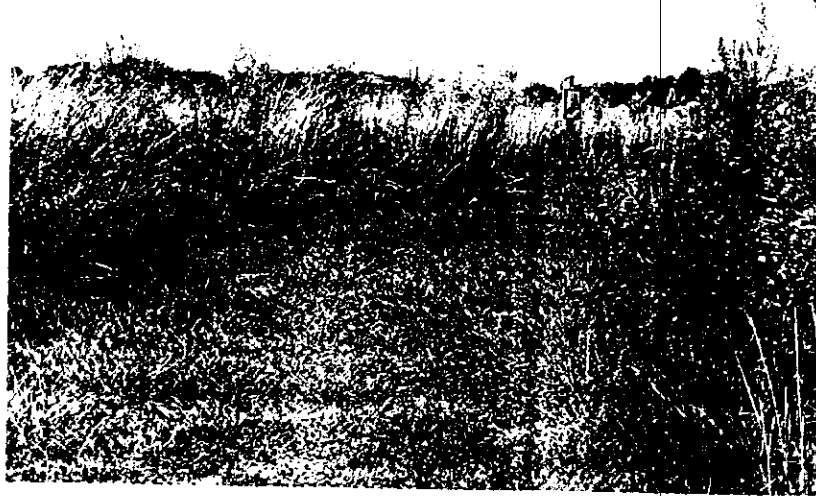
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2



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4



Discovering The Prairie

Expenditures

Trail Signs	\$ 460.00
Sign Frames	\$ 420.00
Treated Posts	\$ 90.16
Screws	<u>\$ 8.64</u>
Total	\$ 978.80



MATHIAS

Black-eyed Susan
This flower is a member of the Asteraceae family. It is a hardy perennial that grows in a variety of habitats, including meadows, fields, and along roadsides. The flower is bright yellow with a dark brown center. It is a popular choice for gardens and landscaping.

Eastern Cottontail
This species is a member of the Leporidae family. It is a common species found in a variety of habitats, including meadows, fields, and along roadsides. The rabbit is brown with white underparts and a white patch on its neck. It is a popular choice for hunting and as a pet.

Eastern Towhee
This species is a member of the Caprimulgidae family. It is a common species found in a variety of habitats, including meadows, fields, and along roadsides. The bird is brown with white underparts and a white patch on its neck. It is a popular choice for hunting and as a pet.





