



Marie Ratzlaff Prairie Preserve

Mission: Maintaining and restoring Nebraska Ecosystems - creating opportunities for education, research, stewardship and community development.



Prairie Plains Resource Institute was founded in Aurora, Nebraska, in 1980 with the intent of preserving small eastern Nebraska tallgrass prairie remnants for use as educational sites for science, history and land management.

A non-profit membership organization, Prairie Plains has seven properties that are actively managed to provide access to the Great Plains landscape to people of all ages.

Learn more and become a member at
www.prairieplains.org

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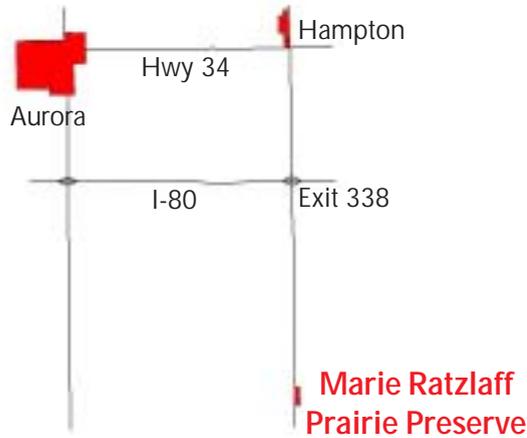


Located 5.5 miles south of Interstate 80 Exit 338
in Hamilton County, Nebraska

One of seven Nebraska Prairies made available by:



Welcome to the Marie Ratzlaff Prairie Preserve! This 40-acre preserve owned by Prairie Plains Resource Institute offers visitors access to the beautiful prairie landscape of the Big Blue River Valley. It contains a diverse native plant community and a variety of wildlife.



History

Prairie Plains received the Marie Ratzlaff Prairie Preserve in 1989 as a gift from Neal and Izen Ratzlaff. Neal grew up in the nearby community of Henderson. Purchased by the Ratzlaffs at an auction in 1988, the land was previously owned by Marie Ratzlaff. Coincidentally Neal's mother shares the same name! The prairie is named in honor of both women.

As a high quality Hamilton County tallgrass prairie remnant, the Marie Ratzlaff Prairie Preserve has been the site of many stewardship and restoration activities including tree cutting, sumac attack, prairie planting and burning and seed harvesting. It has served as an outdoor classroom for local schools and is a frequent destination for Summer Orientation About Rivers (SOAR) a nature day camp for elementary students.

Unique Features

Ratzlaff Prairie is a rare natural and historic landmark because it has never been broken for cropland production and exists on one of the best cropland soils in the world. It contains many typical tallgrass prairie species, including big bluestem, Indiangrass, switchgrass, leadplant, prairie clover and wild rose to name but a few of nearly 100 species. Wildlife observed at Ratzlaff includes grasshopper sparrows, meadowlarks, dickcissels, badgers, coyotes, foxes, and many smaller mammals.

Stewardship

Burning, grazing, prairie restoration planting and woodland cutting have always been a part of the long-term management plan for this preserve. Beginning in 1997 tree and sumac cutting in the draw was combined with burning to slow woodland expansion into the prairie. In 2001 10.9 acres of cropland at the north end of the preserve was hand seeded with a high diversity prairie seed mix. With completion of a perimeter fence and stock well in 2004 occasional grazing will also take place. Grazing will help sustain the native plant diversity and discourage unwanted plants such as smooth brome grass and bluegrass.

Rules

- * Access is free and open to the public.
- * Grazing is a part of the management plan for this property. Visitors are expected to keep a safe distance from livestock and keep gates closed at all times.
- * Hunting is allowed only with permission from Prairie Plains (contact information on back cover).
- * No fires are allowed on the site.
- * No artifacts may be removed from the preserve.
- * Users should have plans for emergency communication.