

The Anderson County Prairie Preserve lies within a large functional landscape of 125,000 acres in the Unglaciated Tallgrass Prairie. It is of critical importance as the easternmost protected, large block of unbroken prairie east of the Flint Hills in Kansas.

A critical conservation site: Less than 4 percent of the original 140 million acres of North American tallgrass prairie remains. Two-thirds of the extant prairie is in Kansas, mostly in the Flint Hills, where the soil is generally too rocky to plow. However, the Preserve is situated east of the Flint Hills with deeper soils, greater rainfall, and higher plant diversity. Native prairies in eastern Kansas and throughout the American Midwest were decimated as land was converted to agricultural uses.

An imperiled ecosystem with high biodiversity: The goal for the Anderson County Prairie Preserve is to maintain and enhance native biodiversity within an imperiled tallgrass prairie ecosystem, protect rare plants and animals, and accommodate research, education and outreach.

The landscape surrounding the 1,450-acre Preserve contains native rangeland as well as land in mixed agricultural use. High-quality prairie sites that remain result from the work of conservation-minded owners, ranchers and farmers. However, threats to the biodiversity in the vicinity result from changes in land use, conversion of native rangeland and meadows, habitat fragmentation, invasive species, and management that degrades native systems. The long-term viability of the Preserve is tied to the health of the surrounding landscape.



Prairie Beardtongue (Penstemon tubaeformis) at the Preserve.

Join us: The Anderson Country Prairie Preserve is owned by The Nature Conservancy and managed by the Kansas Biological Survey as part of the University of Kansas Field Station. It is open to all researchers whose interests are consistent with its mission. Likewise, teachers and resource professionals are welcome to use the Preserve for classes, workshops, demonstrations or informal visits. Use must be approved in advance through the Kansas Biological Survey.

For more information, or to learn more about how to support ecological research, environmental education, and ecosystem conservation efforts, contact the Kansas Biological Survey.

Location: The Preserve is in southern Anderson County about 5 miles south of Garnett or about 1 mile north of Welda. The larger part of the Preserve is bisected by U.S. Highway 169, with U.S. Highway 59 bordering it on the east. General coordinates for the Preserve, where U.S. Highway 169 intersects its northern boundary, are approximately 38°11'00"N, 95°15'39"W.



**Takeru Higuchi Hall, 2101 Constant Ave.,
Lawrence KS 66047**

785-864-1500 biosurvey@ku.edu

biosurvey.ku.edu/field-station

Anderson County Prairie Preserve

Conservation, Research, Education



UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS
FIELD STATION



Above: Flags mark Mead's Milkweed plants at a monitoring site at the Preserve. Right: Researchers conduct a plant inventory as part of a prairie restoration and planning project.

Research

The Preserve hosts diverse research and is open to all researchers whose interests are consistent with its mission.

Education and outreach

The Preserve functions as an outdoor classroom, providing opportunities to learn about the native prairie ecosystem.

Conservation targets

The Preserve is managed for native biodiversity, although certain rare plants, animals and natural communities are of particular interest.



Mead's Milkweed (*Asclepias meadii*) is a globally rare plant abundant on the Preserve. The world's largest known populations occur in Anderson County. It is often found in meadows with a history of mowing for hay. Mixed management—mowing, resting and fire—is used to promote this species.



Native pollinators such as butterflies and bees depend on native plants and habitats. Some are generalists, but many have specific requirements for survival.



Grassland nesting birds, including Greater Prairie-chicken, Lesser Prairie-chicken, Dickcissel and Henslow's Sparrow, require open expanses of prairie.

Management

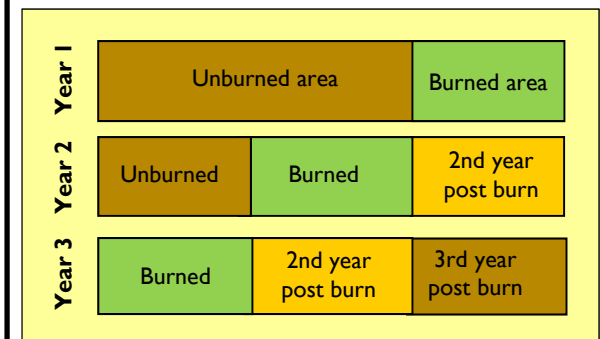
Fire, grazing and haying: Within the limitations imposed by climate, the tallgrass prairie ecosystem evolved with the principal disturbance factors of fire and grazing. These historic forces, along with haying, are used to maintain the prairie landscape and enhance native biodiversity at the Preserve.

Invasive species: These species pose a threat to biodiversity by out-competing native plants and animals, and disrupting ecosystem function. Invasives may include native species such as trees and shrubs, or exotic species such as sericea lespedeza and fescue, that did not historically occur in the region. Active monitoring and control of invasive species is required at the Preserve.



Patch-burn grazing: This is a modern method of combining fire and grazing in working landscapes. The goal is to create habitat heterogeneity and thereby increase biodiversity of native grasslands. It is well-known that both bison (a native grazer) and cattle (introduced by ranchers) are attracted to recently-burned areas. By working with this preference, burns can be used within a single grazing unit to dictate where cattle concentrate.

By rotating the burning across a single pasture over a period of years, differences in habitat structure and grazing pressure are created within a single unit; this promotes overall biological diversity. Patch-burn grazing management is being introduced at the Preserve.



This simplified diagram shows patch-burn grazing implemented in a single pasture on a three-year rotation.