

HERON VIEW PARK

A working partnership between Sustain Jefferson and the City of Watertown

History of Heron View Park

The prairie at Heron View Park began as a project between Sustain Jefferson and the City of Watertown. The project was proposed by Sustain Jefferson in 2016 and it was seeded in 2017. For the first three years after planting, the prairie was mowed to promote root growth. 2021 was the first year it was allowed to grow tall. There is a lot of work to do to maintain the health of this prairie, keep weeds out, and have a balanced array of plants. If you are interested in volunteering to help with the prairie, please contact Sustain Jefferson at sustainjeffersoninc@gmail.com

Why Prairies are Important

At the time of settlement by European immigrants in the mid-1800s, significant portions of western Wisconsin were covered by expanses of open grassland. The land was called "prairie" by early French settlers who could think of no other way to describe it than the word they used for "meadow". Prairies are one of the rarest and most biodiverse ecosystems in the world.

Prairies once covered 2.1 million acres of Wisconsin. Prairie plants are natural builders of nutrient-rich soil. Because of this, Europeans plowed much of the prairie landscape for agricultural production. Conversion of land for agriculture, urbanization, and loss of historical fire, grazing, and management by Native Americans have all contributed to an extensive loss of our prairie landscape. According to the Wisconsin DNR, less than 0.1% of native prairie remains in the state today.

Some of our most iconic wildlife species are supported by prairies. Butterflies, such as the monarch butterfly, thrive on flowers found in prairies, many of which you can find here. Look for wild bergamot, blazing star, and goldenrod. Bumblebees and many other bees need our native flowers for survival also. Many of our agricultural crops wouldn't exist without these important pollinators. Lots of other insects live in our prairies too and they are important because insects, especially caterpillars, are the most important source of food for baby birds—songbird populations depend on native plants to thrive.

The prairie at Heron View Park is small, but serves as a tribute to our iconic historical landscape, as well as providing food and habitat for our wonderful Wisconsin wildlife.



can you find these seven native plants in the park?



1-Great Blue Lobelia | 2-Purple Coneflower | 2.1-Monarch Butterfly | 3-Wild Bergamot | 3.1-Bumblebee | 4-Grey-Headed Coneflower | 5-Hoary Vervain | 6-Cardinal Flower | 7-Cup Plant



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At the time of settlement by European immigrants in the mid-1800s, significant portions of western Wisconsin were covered by expanses of open grassland. These grasslands were called "prairie" by the early French settlers who could think of no other way to describe them, other than to use their word for "meadow".

Prairies are one of the rarest and most biodiverse ecosystems in the world and prairie plants are natural builders of nutrient-rich soil. Because of this, the Europeans plowed much of the prairie landscape for agricultural production. The conversion of land for agriculture, urbanization, and the loss of historical fire, grazing, and management by Indigenous peoples have all contributed to an extensive loss of our prairie landscape. Prairies once covered 2.1 million acres of Wisconsin; now, according to the Wisconsin DNR, less than 0.1% of native prairie remains in the state today.

Some of our most iconic wildlife species are supported by prairies, especially important pollinators like butterflies and bees. Butterflies, like the monarch butterfly, depend on native flowers for pollen sources, but also as host plants to grow their populations. Bumblebees and other native bee species also need our native flowers for survival. Prairies support countless other species of insects that play an important role in the ecosystem, especially caterpillars, which are the most important source of food for baby birds—songbird populations depend on native plants to thrive.

The prairie at Heron View Park might be small, but it serves as a tribute to our state's iconic historical landscape and provides local food and habitat for our wonderful Wisconsin wildlife.



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