

## 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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## Discovering The Prairie

### Expenditures

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



MATHIAS

**Black-eyed Susan**  
This hardy perennial is a member of the Asteraceae family. It is a native plant that has become a popular garden flower. The plant is known for its bright yellow petals and dark brown centers. It is a good choice for a sunny garden bed or as a cut flower.

**Eastern Cottontail**  
This species of rabbit is found throughout the eastern United States. It is a member of the Leporidae family. The Eastern Cottontail is known for its long ears and white underparts. It is a herbivore and feeds on a variety of plants and shrubs.

**Eastern Crane**  
This large wading bird is found in wetlands and marshes throughout the eastern United States. It is a member of the Gruidae family. The Eastern Crane is known for its long neck and legs. It is a herbivore and feeds on a variety of plants and insects.





