

What to look for on the Prairie Trail

<p>Entire Trail</p>	<p>Welcome to the Black River - Mima Prairie Glacial Heritage preserve. Known as Glacial Heritage it is a excellent example of the Puget Prairies ecosystem. Only 2.6% of this type of ecosystem still exists. Thurston County Parks was fortunate to acquire this unique property. Side trails to points of interest have blue flags.</p>
	<p>For an opportunity to check out some of the prairie plants please see the INaturalist activity at prairieappreciatinday.org and help to document what you see on this trail.</p>
	<p>Look for Lone Douglas firs or Snags - these provide shelter for butterflies and habitat for numerous prairie species.</p>
	<p>Look for signs with years on them and notice the field around and how that compares to other fields with different dates. The dates indicate when a field was burned. Burning is a valuable tool for Scot's Broom control but not as a perfect solution. Many of the native prairie plants re-sprout after a cool burn and burning encourages seeds to sprout.</p> <p>It takes repeated burns to deplete the broom seed bank, they spraying and hand pulling to remove the most persistent plants. See the burn map for this year on PAD website.</p> <p>Restoration techniques rejuvenates the prairie while deterring invasive plants. This is similar to the practices of the Coast Salish who managed this land for thousands of years.</p>
	<p>When you see color flags that is for a research project. Please leave them in place. The multiple flags you see close together are marking a new and concerning annual weed: <i>Trifolium subterraneum</i>. This clover species is native to the British Isles and nearby continental Europe and has been introduced around the world as a livestock forage crop. It is a weed of concern for us as it is well adapted to our poor prairie soils, and is fire resistant, thrives in our cool climate. Once patches of these plants are established they can cover surrounding plants with their ropey branches during the short growing season. Flags mark individual plants that we are attempting to eradicate before they set seed. One of the characteristics that makes this plant a weed of concern is that it blooms early and hides its seeds under its foliage or buries the seed into the ground, reducing predation and ensuring survival of the future generations.</p>
<p>Westside of Trail</p>	<p>Look for Blue Birds and Swallows which use the bird boxes on posts. Purple Martins use multi compartment nest boxes high on posts. these birds typically use natural cavities for nesting but since cavities are in short supply boxes have been put up to encourage the birds return to this area. Listen for purple Martins they sound like R2D2.</p>

What to look for on the Prairie Trail

	<p>Mounds - No one knows for sure how the mounds on these prairies were made but take a close look as you pass where the road slices through the mound and see what they are made of.</p>
	<p>The old homestead was near this road look for the Russian Olive. https://www.nature-and-garden.com/gardening/russian-olive-invasive-control.html</p>
NW corner	<p>University of Washington researchers have projects down below. Please respect their work and just look and not go down to field, continue on road to the east.</p>
Northside of Trail	<p>Do you see any snags that are lying down. A windstorm in 2020 took them down now to become habitat for other creatures.</p>
	<p>Look for a large bolder. It is called an erratic rock because it was carried a great distance by the glacier that carved out the Puget Sound area, then “dropped” rocks as the glacier melted. Other erratic rocks are scattered throughout the South Sound prairies.</p>
	<p>Osprey Platforms are high atop the pole is an osprey nest. Puget Sound Energy worked with The Nature Conservancy and Thurston County to construct these poles and platforms in 2010.</p> <p>Platforms are spread out with the appropriate territorial spacing for nesting osprey pairs. Once selected, a pair of osprey may return to the same pole and add on to their nest each year.</p>
T’ intersection	<p>Head South on this road on the left will be a high point where you can go up the flagged path to get a broad view of the prairie</p>
Eastside of Trail	<p>Along this side or on the west bound road you will find volunteers out working on restorations. Stop and give them a hand with plulling some broom.</p>
	<p>Looking east from the old farm fence you will see a row of tall oaks they are along the Black river side of Glacial Heritage.</p>
5 corners	<p>On your right you can go down the diagonal road which cuts through the prairie back to the westside or take the next right to the picnic area and beyond that you will see young oaks coming up along this road.</p>
Southside of Trail	<p>Continue west back to your parking area. Continue looking for prairie plants. Document what you see with pictures and upload to INaturalist when you get home. https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/prairie-appreciation-days</p>