



Rockefeller Native Prairie

The Rockefeller Native Prairie is a rare 10-acre remnant of eastern tallgrass prairie at the KU Field Station, which is managed by the Kansas Biological Survey. Located on a high bluff nearly 250 feet above the Kansas River valley, its deep sod has never been plowed or broken, which has allowed the original native plant community and ecosystem to flourish. This special prairie boasts more than 200 plant species and, remarkably, is one of only four sites in the world that contain both the western prairie fringed orchid and Mead's milkweed, two federally threatened species. The adjoining Suzanne Ecke McColl Nature Reserve buffers the Rockefeller Prairie, helping to ensure its long-term preservation and enhancement through efforts aimed at restoring portions of this vanishing ecosystem.



Clockwise from above: Fall diversity at the prairie; Kaw River valley panorama, south end of prairie, with Mount Oread on the horizon; western prairie fringed orchid (*Platanthera praeclara*); Mead's milkweed (*Asclepias meadii*); fall tour along the ADA-compliant Rockefeller Prairie Trail.



Less than 2 percent of the world's tallgrass prairie remains, and loss of original prairie in northeast Kansas is even more staggering. In 2005 Kansas Biological Survey scientists completed a natural areas inventory for five area counties showing that about 94 percent (300,000 acres) of Douglas County, for example, was covered by tallgrass prairie in the 1850s, whereas today less than 0.5 percent (1,400 acres) remains. Johnson County has only 0.006 percent remaining, and Wyandotte County has none at all.

For more information about the Rockefeller Native Prairie, or to provide financial support through the Friends of the KU Field Station, visit our website or contact Scott Campbell, Kansas Biological Survey Associate Director for Outreach and Public Service, swcamp@ku.edu, or 785-864-1502.



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