

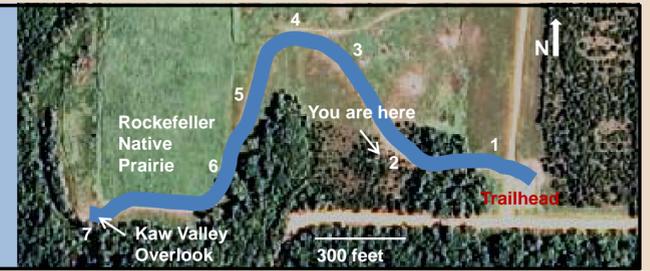


Red cedars thrive in the grazed tract of the Rockefeller Prairie experimental area. Inset: Cedars range over much of the eastern half the U.S.

Kansas Biological Survey

Biota of North America Program (BONAP)

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**This area south of the trail** was part of the original untreated tract (no management) of the 1957 prairie experiment. With no management, red cedars and other tree species have invaded. As part of an ongoing effort to protect the Rockefeller Native Prairie, most red cedars and other trees have been removed from the north side of the trail. This area to the south has been retained to preserve a portion of the original treatment and to demonstrate cedar invasion.

Eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) is not a true cedar but actually a juniper, a member of the cypress family. Homesteader activities brought its seeds to areas where it historically was not found. Red cedar is considered a pioneering invasive species over much of its native range because of its ability to spread quickly and dominate disturbed or unmanaged sites. Once established, red cedar can remain a dominant species for decades before being gradually replaced by hardwoods such as oaks and hickories. Red cedar invasion can be particularly damaging to native prairies because the tree's wide base and thick foliage quickly shade out native grasses and wildflowers. Falling needles also change soil pH, making it more alkaline. This binds soil nutrients such as phosphorus, depleting resources for other plants.

**Remember: Red cedars are valuable trees but can quickly invade and overtake native prairies.**



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Red cedars are fire intolerant because of their thin bark and volatile oils. Historically, they were kept out of prairies and grasslands by periodic wildfires. Human suppression of wildfires, along with the abundance of seed sources (mature trees in farmsteads and fields where they have become established), has allowed cedars to spread rapidly.



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The blue berries on the branches of female trees are actually small cones. More than 70 animal species, including 63 kinds of birds (such as cedar waxwing, left), are known to feed on the berries. These berries are an important food resource, especially during harsh winters. Birds help disseminate the seeds and often populate fencerows with cedar.



Kansas Forest Service

During and after the 1930s Dust Bowl, farmers were encouraged to plant red cedars as shelter belts and windbreaks throughout the Midwest. The cedar's drought and cold tolerance, along with its ability to grow on a variety of soils and create a dense windbreak in a short time, make it highly valuable for this purpose.