



SPRING LAKE

NATURE CENTER



To inspire curiosity, stewardship, and connection through hands-on exploration of North Dakota's natural world.

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Our Story

Founded by Lee Lusht as her long-held dream, Spring Lake Nature Center in Williston, ND, is a 501-c3 non-profit organization and the only nature-based science center serving northwest North Dakota. Early planning began in 2023, and the organization has since grown with the guidance of a committed board and broad community support.

Since its soft opening in early 2026, the center has offered monthly rotating exhibits, hands-on programs, and seasonal activities exploring local ecosystems, fossils, pollinators, and more, all designed to inspire curiosity and stewardship.



Spring Lake Nature Center has grown through the support, encouragement, and generosity of the community. Financial and in-kind contributions have played an important role in helping bring the vision to life. The Williston STAR Fund awarded a community grant to support development efforts, Williston CVB has provided ongoing support, and Western Cooperative Credit Union pledged \$100,000 over three years to help advance the center's mission and programming. Volunteers, local organizations, and community partners have also contributed countless hours, materials, and resources to help create engaging exhibits, programs, and experiences for visitors of all ages.

As the Nature Center continues to grow, the primary long-term goal remains establishing a permanent home in Spring Lake Park — a welcoming community space where people of all ages can gather to learn about, explore, and connect with the natural world. Looking further ahead, future outreach initiatives such as the Prairie Rover could help expand nature-based learning opportunities to schools and rural communities across the region.

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May News Recap

May was a month of exciting growth, planning, and momentum for Spring Lake Nature Center as we continued building connections, expanding outreach, and preparing for the future of environmental education in western North Dakota.

One of the biggest highlights this month was being awarded multiple grants that will help support our mission and future programming efforts. We are incredibly grateful to have received funding support through the North Dakota Natural Resources Trust and the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, organizations that continue to invest in conservation, education, and stewardship opportunities across our state. The North Dakota Natural Resources Trust supports projects focused on conservation, education, and protecting North Dakota's natural resources, while North Dakota Game and Fish continues to play a vital role in outdoor education and habitat conservation efforts throughout the region.

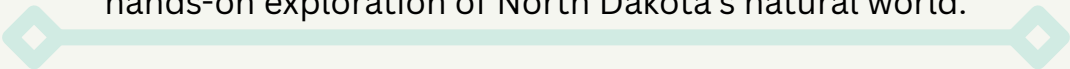
In addition to state-level support, we were also honored to receive a \$20,000 grant through the Williston STAR Fund, helping us continue developing educational opportunities, exhibits, and community programming for families and visitors throughout the region.

Behind the scenes, preparations are already underway for our upcoming Roots & Wings Festival this July. Volunteers, community partners, educational activities, and event details are all beginning to come together as we prepare for another exciting celebration of nature, conservation, and community connection.

This month also brought continued growth in our online presence and community outreach efforts. Through our website, newsletter, and social media platforms, we have continued connecting with supporters across the region while sharing educational content, updates, and opportunities to get involved. Every share, follow, comment, and conversation helps us continue growing awareness for the importance of environmental education and stewardship in western North Dakota.

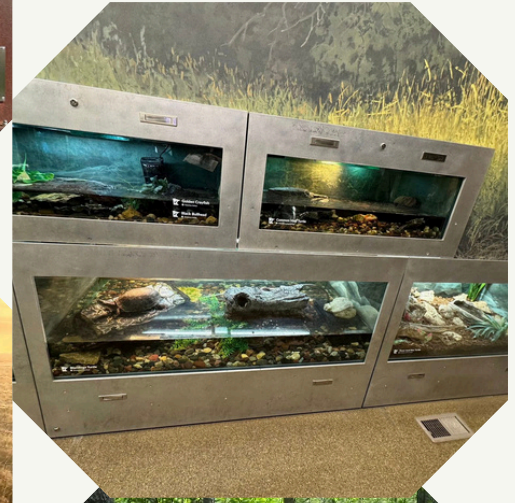
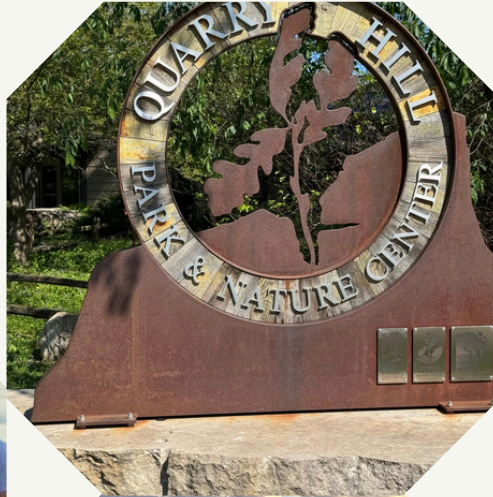
As part of our long-term vision for the future, Executive Director Lee Lusht also began visiting nature centers and educational facilities across the United States to gather ideas, inspiration, and insight that can help shape future exhibits and programs here at Spring Lake Nature Center. We look forward to sharing more from those travels and experiences in the coming months.

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May News Recap cont.

As summer approaches, we are excited about the momentum continuing to build. Every grant, volunteer, partnership, and supporter helps move us one step closer to creating a lasting space for environmental education, conservation, and community connection in western North Dakota.



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What's Going On In July?

Spring Lake Nature Center may be out of the Keelboat building during Kids Summer Camp and other summer activities, but we are far from slowing down! Behind the scenes, we are hard at work preparing for this year's Roots & Wings Festival, writing grant applications, building partnerships, and exploring exciting possibilities for the future of the Nature Center.

Right now, much of our focus is on making the 2nd Annual Roots & Wings Festival bigger and even more memorable than last year's incredible event. We are currently recruiting volunteers, finalizing vendors and activities, and gathering supplies to create another amazing day of nature, science, art, and community fun at Spring Lake Park.

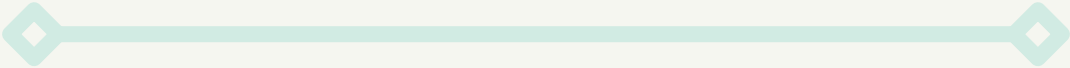
We are especially excited to welcome back many of our friends and partners from last year while also introducing new faces and organizations to the festival. With partners including the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center, Susie Q's Ice Cream, and many more, it is shaping up to be a fantastic day for the whole community.

Be sure to mark your calendars for July 11, 2026, and join us for a full day of exploration, creativity, and celebration in the park! And if you would like to help make this growing Nature Center possible, we are always excited to welcome new volunteers and supporters into the Spring Lake Nature Center family.

Upcoming Events

July 11th, 2026- Roots & Wings Festival

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Looking Ahead

While our public exhibit schedule will be lighter during parts of the summer, exciting work is continuing behind the scenes at Spring Lake Nature Center.

Along with preparing for the Roots & Wings Festival in July, we are also spending time meeting with local teachers, homeschool families, and community partners to help shape future educational programming and field trip opportunities.

As we continue to grow, our goal is to create experiences that better support classrooms, homeschool learners, families, and curious minds of all ages. We are currently exploring ideas for future exhibits, flexible learning spaces, hands-on programming, and new ways to keep nature and science accessible to our community year-round.

This fall may look a little different as we experiment, learn, and continue building toward the future vision of the Nature Center — and we are excited to have the community growing alongside us every step of the way.

Be sure to follow along on social media and our website for updates, volunteer opportunities, pop-up events, nature walks, bird watching activities, and future exhibit announcements!



As always, stay up-to-date via our website, Facebook, and Instagram pages!

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Featured Plant

Wild Bergamot

Wild Bergamot, sometimes called Bee Balm, is one of the prairie's most important summer wildflowers and a favorite among pollinators across North Dakota grasslands. With its soft lavender blooms and fragrant leaves, Wild Bergamot brings both beauty and biodiversity to native prairie ecosystems throughout the summer months.

As its nickname suggests, Wild Bergamot is especially valuable for pollinators. Bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, and many other beneficial insects are drawn to its nectar-rich flowers, making it an important food source during the peak growing season.

Native plants like Wild Bergamot help support healthy pollinator populations, which in turn help maintain healthy prairie ecosystems.



Wild Bergamot is part of the mint family and is well adapted to the changing conditions of the northern prairie. Its deep root systems help it survive dry conditions while also supporting soil health and biodiversity across the grassland habitats. Plants like these are an important reminder that prairie ecosystems are made up of interconnected relationships between plants, insects, birds, wildlife, and people.

Beyond its ecological importance, Wild Bergamot has also been appreciated for generations for its aromatic leaves and traditional uses. Indigenous communities and early settlers used the plant in teas and herbal preparations, and its leaves are still known for their pleasant fragrance today.

As summer begins to bloom across western North Dakota, Wild Bergamot is a wonderful reminder of the beauty and importance of our native prairie landscapes. Keep an eye out for these vibrant flowers and the many pollinators they attract while exploring the trails and natural spaces around Spring Lake Park this season.

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Featured Plant cont.

Wild Bergamot

Did You Know?

- Wild Bergamot is part of the mint family, which is why its leaves are so fragrant when crushed.
- Wild Bergamot is also commonly called “Bee Balm” because pollinators absolutely love it.
- Hummingbirds, butterflies, native bees, and even some moths visit Wild Bergamot flowers for nectar.
- The shaggy-looking blooms are actually made up of many tiny individual flowers clustered together.
- Wild Bergamot is native to North Dakota prairies and can thrive in dry prairie conditions thanks to its deep root system.
- The plant’s leaves have been used historically in teas and herbal preparations for generations.
- Wild Bergamot blooms during the height of prairie summer, adding splashes of lavender and pink across grasslands.
- Native prairie plants like Wild Bergamot help support biodiversity by providing food and habitat for wildlife and pollinators.
- Some people say the scent of Wild Bergamot resembles oregano or thyme because they are all related plants in the mint family.
- Prairie pollinators depend on native flowers like Wild Bergamot much more than ornamental garden plants.
- Wild Bergamot can help attract beneficial insects that support healthy ecosystems and gardens.
- Even after blooming, Wild Bergamot seed heads can continue providing food and habitat value for wildlife.



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How to get involved:



July Roots & Wings Festival

Join us for the 2nd Annual Roots & Wings Festival on July 11, 2026, and be part of the fun! Opportunities include vendor assistance, greeting guests, setup and cleanup crews, and more. It's a great way to be involved in a large, family-friendly community event while helping bring nature education to life.

Future Opportunities

As Spring Lake Nature Center continues to grow, so do the opportunities to become involved! Beyond the Roots & Wings Festival, we are beginning to explore future community programs and activities such as bird watching groups, nature walks, hands-on learning experiences, family activities, seasonal exhibits, and more.

Right now, we are still in the exciting stage of building and discovering what our community is most passionate about – and volunteers will play a huge role in helping shape that future. Some opportunities may be short-term event help, while others may grow into recurring groups or programs led by community members who simply love sharing their interests with others.

You do not need to be a scientist or expert to volunteer with Spring Lake Nature Center. Whether you enjoy greeting visitors, helping with activities, leading a hobby group, sharing knowledge, assisting behind the scenes, or simply supporting nature education in our area, there is a place for you here.

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How to get involved cont.



As we look toward fall programming and future expansion, we are especially interested in connecting with people who are passionate about:

- Bird watching
- Prairie plants and gardening
- Nature photography
- Hiking and outdoor exploration
- Science and hands-on learning
- Family-friendly community activities
- Environmental education
- Local wildlife and conservation

Many of our future programs will only be possible through community involvement and volunteer support. If you have ideas, interests, or would like to help us grow, we would love to hear from you!

To get involved, visit our website at www.springlakenaturecenter.org or sign up through PointsApp at pointsapp.org/orgs/9094 to join our volunteer team.

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How to Donate:

Donations are a vital part of how the Nature Center continues to grow. Every contribution, big or small, helps bring new exhibits, events, and festivals to the community and supports exciting future projects like the Prairie Rover.

Another meaningful way to give is through in-kind donations – this can include goods, services, or volunteer time to help us make our programs and events possible. Every gift makes a difference!

<https://givebutter.com/BZh6be>

Thank You!!!!

A big heartfelt thank you to our sponsors, trailblazers like you that make this possible



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