Issue 8 November 2026

SPRING LAKE NATURE CENTER



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

In this issue:

- Our Story
- Keepers of the Prairie
- Future Endeavors
- Featured Plant
- How to Get Involved
- Donation Information
- Thank you Sponsors

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.

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

Keepers of the Prairie

The cooler weather may seem like it's bringing a silence over the prairie, but things are still moving, and life continues on! Starting in mid-to-late October, we begin to see the arrival of snow buntings. These birds are well adapted to colder weather and help keep our prairie full of life throughout the winter. We also see winter raptors returning, with hawks making their way south from the Arctic. Some years, snowy owls make an appearance, too, though they're a little less predictable. Keep an eye out and see if you can be among the first to spot one!

The Leonid Meteor Shower is active November 6–30, with its peak expected overnight November 16–17. This year's display is expected to be a quieter one, but it's still a fun reason to bundle up, spend some time outside, and enjoy the night sky.

One important bit of news closer to home involves zebra mussels discovered in Lake Sakakawea. On October 27, North Dakota Game and Fish reported finding them on the eastern end of the lake. As an invasive species, zebra mussels can spread quickly, attach to infrastructure, and disrupt aquatic ecosystems. North Dakota Game and Fish and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are conducting surveys to learn more about the discovery and determine the next steps for managing them. Falling water temperatures may help slow their immediate activity, but continued monitoring will be important. It's a reminder that caring for our local waterways takes all of us. When enjoying the lake, remember to clean, drain, and dry boats and equipment before moving between waterways.

There are also some fun local events to explore this month! On November 19, the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center will host Littlest Confluence Explorers: Adventures with Lewis and Clark! Designed for children ages 7 and under, this program features storytelling and hands-on activities. Then, on November 28, visitors can enjoy Geology at the Confluence, from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM, and explore how glaciers and rivers shaped our landscape through family-friendly activities and exhibits. Both are great opportunities to learn something new!

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

Keepers of the Prairie cont.

And starting November 28, Spring Lake Park Holiday Lights will return! This is always a fun way to kick off the holiday season while supporting the many nonprofit organizations involved. Check out the CVB website for a full listing of events and participating organizations.

We have some exciting news to share! Thanks to grants from the North Dakota Natural Resources Trust, ND Game and Fish, and the Williston Elks Lodge #1214, Spring Lake Nature Center is getting a Stream and River Table. If you've never seen one in action, you're in for a treat!

Living here along the Missouri River, with the Little Muddy River and numerous creeks and tributaries nearby, we have plenty of reasons to be interested in how rivers work. They've been shaping our landscape for thousands of years, and they're still changing it today.

So, what exactly is a stream table? It's a miniature river system that lets us watch erosion happen, see rivers change course, and discover how moving water shapes the land. We can't wait to bring this hands-on learning experience to our community!

Another grant, this time from the Williston CVB, will help bring Winter Comes Alive to the Winter Market! As you make your way to the holiday marketplace during Spring Lake Park Holiday Lights, take a short stroll through a softly lit North Dakota winter woodland, complete with snow-covered trees, a peaceful pond, and a few hidden surprises along the way.

Winter may seem quiet, but there's more happening than you might imagine! See how many animals you can discover and learn who's still out and about during our cold North Dakota winters. This free walk-through experience will be open during marketplace hours, and we hope you'll take a little time to explore!

Keepers of the Prairie cont.

The Winter Market will take place inside the Keelboat on December 1, 3, 8, 10, 15, and 17, from 5:30–8:30 PM. Visitors can explore festive booths filled with handcrafted gifts, baked goods, and other ready-to-gift items from area makers. It's a wonderful opportunity to shop local, support area creators, and spread a little holiday cheer!

Even as the prairie settles into winter, there's still plenty happening around us. Keep looking, keep exploring, and stay curious!







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

Future Endveaors

As we continue working on fundraising ideas and opportunities, we're also beginning to look ahead at some exciting ways to bring Spring Lake Nature Center back into the community this winter and into the coming year.

One of the projects we're especially excited about is a collaboration with the Williston Community Builders and Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) for the upcoming Spring Lake Winter Lights and winter market event.

Inside the Keelboat building, we'll be creating a walking Winter Wonderland experience designed to bring the beauty and wonder of North Dakota's winter wildlife to life. Visitors will be able to step inside, explore, and experience a little bit of the winter prairie in a whole new way.

We don't want to give too much away just yet, but we can say this: Spring Lake Nature Center will be back at the Keelboat with something special this winter! We're excited to create an experience that brings families together and gives everyone another opportunity to connect with the natural world—even when the temperatures outside are less than inviting.

Winter also gives us a chance to start planning for next summer's 3rd Annual Roots & Wings Festival!

We'll be looking at forming committees and getting planning underway for another day of nature, science, learning, and fun at Spring Lake Park. Roots & Wings is one of our favorite events of the year, and we're already looking forward to bringing it back.

We hope to bring back many of the fan favorites from the past two years while also welcoming new and exciting vendors and organizations inspired by nature, science, conservation, and the prairie.

Most importantly, we want Roots & Wings to continue being a place where kids of all ages can explore, discover, get their hands dirty, ask questions, and have fun learning about the world around them.

Future Endveaors

As we plan for these events, we're also continuing to look for fundraising opportunities between now and next summer. Every event and fundraiser brings us one step closer to our goal of getting the Prairie Rover on the road. The Prairie Rover is a big part of our vision for the future—a mobile nature center that can bring hands-on science and nature experiences directly to schools, homeschool groups, community events, and communities throughout our region.

There is still plenty of work to do, but there is also plenty to look forward to. Winter Wonderland, Roots & Wings, new programs, new partnerships, and eventually a Prairie Rover on the road—we're excited to keep building, and we hope you'll be part of the journey!

Where curiosity takes root and imagination takes flight.

The below picture is a visualization of the Prairie Rover as an idea and inspiration. Artwork may differ on actual bus.



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

Featured Plant

Wild Prairie Rose

Designated North Dakota's official state flower in 1907, this native plant of the Great Plains is well suited to our region. Belonging to the Rosaceae (Rose) family, the Wild Prairie Rose (Rosa arkansana) typically grows under 18 inches tall. You might recognize it by its pink flowers scattered across the prairie during June and July. It is a hardy perennial shrub that handles our harsh winters and periods of drought with grace. But the Wild Prairie Rose is much more than a pretty flower. It plays an important role in the prairie ecosystem. Its flowers attract pollinators such as bees, providing both nectar and pollen.



After pollination, the plant develops a fruit called a rose hip. Rose hips are the small, berry-like fruits that remain after the flowers have faded, sometimes lasting well into winter. They contain seeds and are also a source of vitamin C. Historically, rose hips have been gathered for food and other preparations, particularly when fresh fruit was less available. They can be used in teas and infusions, jams and jellies, syrups, and fruit sauces.

But there's one thing to know before sampling them! The tiny hairs surrounding the seeds inside rose hips can irritate the mouth and digestive tract, so they need to be carefully removed during preparation. People aren't the only ones who appreciate them, either! Rose hips also provide an important food source for the wildlife that calls the prairie home.

The Wild Prairie Rose offers more than food for our furry and feathered friends. Its flowers support pollinators, its rose hips feed wildlife, and its prickly stems provide valuable cover and protection for small animals. Even after the growing season ends, it remains a beautiful addition to the landscape, adding a little color to our otherwise white winter scenery.

Featured Plant cont.

Wild Prairie Rose

One thing to remember: North Dakota has several native wild rose species, but it is the Wild Prairie Rose (Rosa arkansana) that holds the title of our state flower.
Not every rose smells as sweet, but every prairie rose has a story worth discovering!











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

How to get involved:

Want to volunteer?



We would love to have you involved! While we don't have immediate openings right now, we are always looking ahead and would love to connect with folks who want to help us grow. Here is what is on the horizon where we could use a hand:

- Pop-Up Events: Helping out when we host our park activities, birthday events, and exhibits.
- Getting the Word Out: Spreading the news about what is happening at the Nature Center and helping us connect with the community.
- Committees: We are also getting ready to form a few committees, like a dedicated fundraising group! While these are still in the planning stages, we'd love to hear if you would be interested in helping

If you are interested in helping with events, spreading the word, or jumping onto a committee, drop us a line and let us know what you're passionate about!

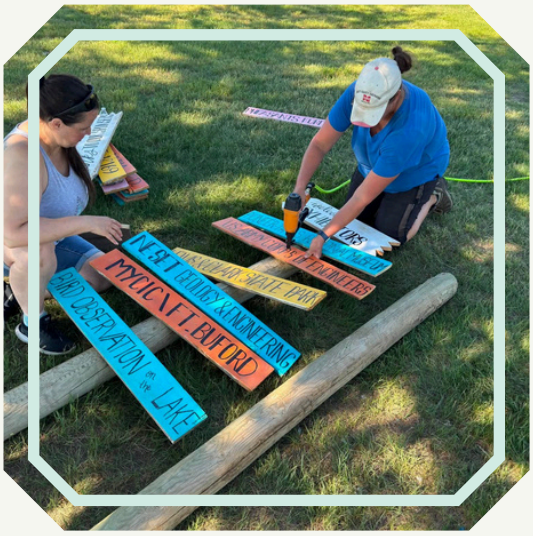
Future Opportunities

As Spring Lake Nature Center continues to grow, so do the opportunities to become involved! We are building 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.

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.

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

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

Western Cooperative Credit Union

Williston Parks & Recreation District

City of Williston Star Fund

Graham & Sons
First International Bank and Trust
Williston Convention and Visitor's Bureau
North Dakota State Elks Association
ND Game and Fish
Williston Moose Lodge #239
Ruach Resources
C&D Water Services

MPLX
VFW Post 12169
Community Builders
ONEOK
API
Williston Board of Realtors
Nova Oilfield Services
Williston Rural Fire Department

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