



SPRING LAKE

NATURE CENTER



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

In this issue:

- Our Story
- April Exhibit Recap
- What's going on in July
- 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.

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April Exhibit Recap

April brought a whole new kind of energy to the Spring exhibits at Spring Lake Nature Center. If March was a whirlwind of prehistoric excitement, April was all about celebrating the arrival of spring on the North Dakota prairie with growing support, wonderful feedback, and even more excitement for the future of the Nature Center.

Throughout the month, visitors explored our “Spring on the Prairie” pop-up exhibit, learning about prairie plants, pollinators, animals emerging from their winter hiding places, and the many birds returning to Spring Lake Park. Our bird sighting board quickly became a favorite activity as guests shared the feathered friends they spotted around the park.

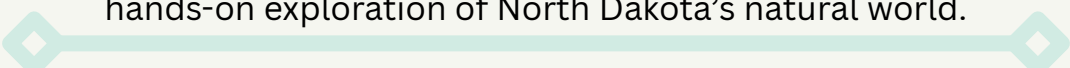
We were also thrilled to once again partner with the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center and the Williston Community Library to offer hands-on educational programs throughout the month. From bee and flower relationships to bird nests, crafts, and bookmobile activities, these programs helped bring even more curiosity, creativity, and community connection into the space.

None of this would have been possible without the incredible support of our volunteers. From setting up exhibits and welcoming visitors to sharing ideas, lending materials, and helping create a warm and inviting experience for families, our volunteers played a huge role in making both our March and April exhibits such a success. We are deeply grateful for the time, energy, and heart so many people have poured into helping the Nature Center grow, and we truly could not do this without you.

April also gave us opportunities to connect with the community beyond the walls of the Nature Center. We enjoyed meeting visitors at the Home & Garden Show, where we had the chance to share our mission, talk about future plans, and even welcome a special visit from Miss North Dakota at our booth. It was exciting to see so much interest in nature education and the future of the Nature Center.

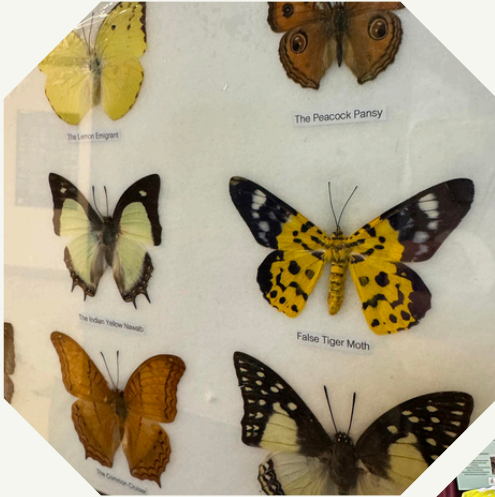
We also celebrated another exciting milestone this month as our Facebook community grew to more than 2,000 followers. The continued encouragement, shared posts, comments, photos, and conversations from our supporters help us reach new audiences and continue building momentum for the future.

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April Exhibit Recap cont.

North Dakota spring weather certainly kept us guessing with snow, wind, and a few chilly “is it really spring?” days, but our visitors still showed up with smiles, enthusiasm, and support. We are continually amazed by how much this community has embraced the Nature Center and our vision for the future.



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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.

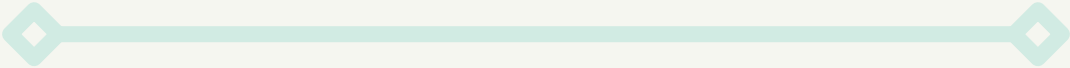
Right now, much of our focus is on making the 2nd Annual Roots & Wings Festival bigger and even more memorable than last year's incredible event. We are currently recruiting volunteers, finalizing vendors and activities, and gathering supplies to create another amazing day of nature, science, art, and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

Prairie Smoke – One of the Prairie’s Most Magical Spring Plants

One of the prairie’s most unique spring plants is beginning to make its appearance across the Northern Plains: **Prairie Smoke (Geum triflorum)**!

At first glance, Prairie Smoke may not seem as flashy as some spring flowers, but this native prairie plant has one of the most magical At first glance, Prairie Smoke may not seem as flashy as some spring flowers, but this native prairie plant has one of the most magical season, it blooms with small pinkish-red flowers that hang downward like tiny lanterns.



But after blooming, the plant changes dramatically. Its seed heads stretch into soft, wispy pink plumes that look almost like drifting smoke rising above the prairie – giving the plant its unforgettable name. Prairie Smoke is specially adapted to survive the tough conditions of prairie life. Deep roots help it withstand drought, strong winds, temperature swings, and harsh prairie weather. It also provides an important early food source for native pollinators emerging in spring.

Like many prairie plants, Prairie Smoke rewards those who slow down and take a closer look. Its beauty is subtle, delicate, and easy to miss if you rush past it – a reminder that some of nature’s most fascinating stories are hidden in the small details of the prairie landscape.

This plant can often be found growing in open prairies and grasslands throughout the region and is a wonderful example of the resilience and uniqueness of North Dakota’s native ecosystems. Next time you’re out exploring, keep an eye low to the ground you just might spot a little “smoke” drifting through the prairie grasses.

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Featured Plant cont.

Prairie Smoke – One of the Prairie’s Most Magical Spring Plants

Prairie Smoke is also an important early-season plant for native pollinators. As bees and other insects emerge in spring, early prairie flowers provide valuable food sources after a long winter. Plants like Prairie Smoke help support the delicate balance of prairie ecosystems and remind us how connected even the smallest wildflowers are to the larger world around them.

If you happen to spot Prairie Smoke or other native wildflowers while exploring this spring and summer, we would love to see your photos!

One of the best parts of prairie exploration is discovering the incredible plants quietly growing all around us.



FUN FACTS:

- Prairie Smoke belongs to the rose family.
- The flowers usually nod downward, which helps protect pollen from spring rain and wind
- It is sometimes called "Old Man's Whiskers" because of its fluffy seed heads.

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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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