



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.



Financial and in-kind support from the community has played a key role in launching the center. The Williston STAR Fund awarded a community grant to support its development, and Western Cooperative Credit Union pledged \$100,000 over three years to help advance the center's mission and programming. Local volunteers and organizations have also contributed time, materials, and resources to bring exhibits and activities to life on an ongoing basis.

Looking ahead, Spring Lake Nature Center is expanding outreach with the Prairie Rover, a planned mobile classroom to bring nature-based learning directly to schools and rural communities. It is also working toward a permanent facility in Spring Lake Park — a community hub where people of all ages can learn about and engage with the natural world.

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March Exhibit Recap

We kicked off March with a whirlwind of excitement as we celebrated the soft opening of Spring Lake Nature Center! Our pop-up exhibits explored the theme of Prehistoric North Dakota, accompanied by hands-on events that brought the topic to life. Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center partnered with us to facilitate activities, and the Williston Public Library helped host additional free community programs.

We also hosted Citizen Science classes, where participants examined microfossils and recorded their observations. Even cooler, all of these observations are sent back to Bowman County to be analyzed by scientists and added to ongoing research on the area's prehistoric fossils – a truly unique way for the community to contribute to dinosaur and prehistoric research!



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What's Going On In April?

April brings warmer weather, more time outdoors, wildlife, and the spirit of spring on the prairie! As the landscape comes to life, Spring Lake Nature Center is celebrating the season with new exhibits and hands-on experiences focused on pollinators, prairie ecosystems, and soil science. Join us for free, family-friendly programs like Bee & Flower Relationships (April 2) and Flights of Fancy: Build-a-Nest Workshop (April 23), where participants can learn and create through interactive activities. Throughout the month, enjoy special visits from the library featuring programs and the Bookmobile, and connect with us at the Home & Garden Show.

🕒 Hours for visiting the center outside of events:

Thursday – Saturday | 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Sunday | 1:00 PM-4:00 PM

It's the perfect time to get outside, discover something new, and experience the wonder of spring in North Dakota.

Upcoming Events

April 2nd-Bee & Flower Relationships | 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

April 3rd-Library Program & Bookmobile | 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

April 10th - Home & Garden Show | 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

April 10th-Library Program & Bookmobile | 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

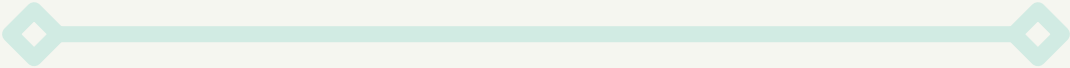
April 11th- Home & Garden Show | 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

April 17th- Library Program & Bookmobile | 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

April 23rd-Flights of Fancy: Build-a-Nest Workshop | 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

April 24th-Library Program & Bookmobile | 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

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Save the Date:

We're thrilled to announce that the Roots & Wings Festival is back on Saturday, July 11, 2026, at Spring Lake Park!

Bring the whole family for a day full of hands-on activities, wildlife encounters, and fun ways to explore nature. From interactive exhibits to crafts and outdoor games, there's something for everyone – and it's a great way to connect with your community while enjoying the outdoors.

Mark your calendars and stay tuned for more details coming soon!

Although our exhibits at the keelboat will be closed May, June, and July, we won't be slowing down! Behind the scenes, we're busy preparing for the 2nd Annual Roots & Wings Festival, writing grants, expanding our volunteer team, and planning new exhibits and programs for the summer and fall.

Even while the keelboat building is closed, there are still plenty of ways to stay connected: follow us on social media for behind-the-scenes

updates, sign up for our newsletter to be the first to know about upcoming events, or join our volunteer team and help bring nature education to the community. We can't wait to welcome you back this summer with fresh programs, exciting exhibits, and the return of your favorite hands-on activities!



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Featured Plant

Prairie Crocus

The Prairie Crocus, also known as *Anemone patens* or *Pasque flower*, is celebrated as North Dakota's first wildflower of the spring season. Many locals jokingly say that "it's not spring until the crocus bloom," and for good reason—these bright purple flowers often push through the last patches of snow in late March or early April.



Prairie Crocuses are hardy and resilient. While they can self-pollinate, they're also early friends to pollinators such as bumblebees, mining bees, and other early-flying insects that emerge as the weather warms. Their early bloom gives these pollinators a crucial source of nectar and pollen before most other flowers appear.

With their delicate beauty and early appearance, prairie crocuses are a true symbol of the resilience and renewal of the northern prairie. They remind us that even after a long winter, life—and color—returns in the most delightful ways.

Fun Facts & Regional Insights:

- The name "Pasque flower" comes from "Paschal," meaning Easter, because they often bloom around the holiday.
- Their fuzzy stems and leaves help protect the plant from cold spring winds and frost.
- Prairie Crocuses were traditionally used by Native American tribes for medicinal purposes, including remedies for skin ailments and as a mild sedative.
- The flowers close at night or during cloudy weather to protect their pollen, reopening when the sun shines.
- While they're iconic on the North Dakota prairies, they're also found across the northern Great Plains and Canadian prairies, thriving in well-drained, sunny locations.
- Occasionally, tiny ants or small beetles can be spotted visiting the blooms for pollen, making the prairie crocus a mini hub of early spring activity.

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How to get involved:

Volunteer opportunities:

April Exhibit Hours

Get hands-on experience with our seasonal exhibits and connect with the community! Volunteers 18 and older can serve as docents, answering questions, watching over exhibits, and creating a welcoming environment by greeting and thanking visitors. No prior experience is required – just bring your curiosity and enthusiasm! 1 and 2 hour shift available!

Hours of operation:

Thursday-Saturday | 10:00 AM-4:00 PM

Sunday | 1:00 PM-4:00 PM



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.

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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