



A project of...



## What is the Youth Naturalist Program?

Middle school and high school students (grades 7-11) who are looking for a great outdoor adventure this summer are invited to participate in this unique naturalist program June 19 - 23, 2017! The group will enjoy learning about the ecosystem in which they live - and how to care for, protect, and restore it. These students will actively explore natural areas along the Platte River in Hamilton and Merrick Counties, observing the landscape, animals and plants. This is an excellent opportunity to gain valuable knowledge about Nebraska's ecosystems and participate in outdoor recreational activities such as kayaking, hiking and camping. Students also have the opportunity to interact with professionals with careers in science, natural resources and habitat/wildlife management. These activities will open new doors for students interested in these topics and help them find exciting new ways to enjoy the outdoors.



## Who sponsors the Youth Naturalist Program?

The Youth Naturalist Program is a project of Prairie Plains Resource Institute (PPRI). PPRI is an educational land trust based in Aurora, NE since 1980. We focus on maintaining and restoring Nebraska ecosystems and create opportunities for education, research, stewardship and community development. SOAR (Summer Orientation About Rivers), our nature day camp for kids grades 3-6, is an award winning program you may be familiar with. SOAR campers explore the Platte River and other outdoor environments around Hamilton County. The Youth Naturalist Program is built as a continuation of SOAR and focuses on developing naturalist skills, introducing youth to more in-depth topics relating to nature and our environment.

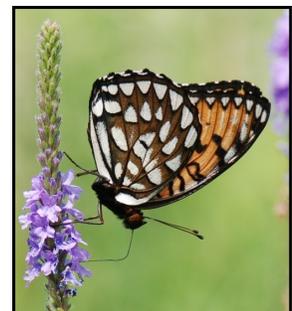
## Who can get involved in the Youth Naturalist Program?

Any student presently (2016-2017 school year) in grades 7-11 is eligible for the Youth Naturalist Program. You will need to apply to be a part of the program. We will accept up to 20 students. In the case that there are more applicants than we have space for in the program, we will select students based on their expressed interest in participating in the program and a teacher recommendation.

## When is the Youth Naturalist Program?

The Youth Naturalist Program runs June 19-23, 2017.  
The dates and times are:

- Monday June 19 - 8:00am - 4:00pm
- Tuesday June 20 - 6:30am - 1:00pm (early start for birdwatching)
- Wednesday June 21 3:30pm - Thursday June 22, 1:00pm (camp out overnight)
- Friday June 23 - 8:00am - 2:00pm



## Where is the Youth Naturalist Program?

This year we will be visiting the following amazing sites:

Monday June 19: Bader Memorial Park  
Tuesday June 20: Sherman Ranch  
Wednesday June 21: Sherman Ranch  
Thursday June 22: Gjerloff Prairie  
Friday June 23: Bader Memorial Park / Kayaking Trip

We are arranging bus transportation to the sites. Transportation will be available from specific meeting places in Aurora and Central City. In Aurora, students will be picked up in the band parking lot to the east of Aurora High School. In Central City, students will be picked up at the Merrick County Venture Center parking lot either by bus or an arranged carpool. The buses will depart from their locations promptly at the start time listed for each day of the week to travel to the various field sites. Buses will return to the same locations at the end time listed for each day. More detailed information on transportation will be announced later in the spring for those students attending the program.



## Why participate in the Youth Naturalist Program?

The Youth Naturalist Program uses an active, hands-on approach to learning and enjoying nature. We will spend time exploring and investigating the life present in the Platte River and in the prairies. You will have



the opportunity to go out on a camping trip and kayaking trip as a part of this program. You will gain many skills, such as identifying animals and plants on the prairie. You will meet people that work in the fields of conservation, natural resources and habitat/wildlife management. You will view the area where you live in a new and exciting way. Students interested in the natural sciences, agriculture, conservation or outdoor recreation are strongly encouraged to participate. Any students interested in spending more time outdoors, hiking, kayaking, camping and exploring these natural areas should participate!

## How do I participate in the Youth Naturalist Program?

To apply to the Youth Naturalist Program, visit <http://www.prairieplains.org/>. Under “Youth Naturalist Program” you will find a link to the “Student Application”. Students will need to complete the application, get a parent/guardian’s signature, and also get a recommendation from one of their current teachers at school. Completed applications and teacher recommendations need to be sent to the Prairie Plains office. **You will find more information about this on the Student Application form.** The registration fee for this week-long program is \$130.00. Financial assistance is available to students that qualify. Scholarships will help cover the registration fee of the program. We are working with the Hamilton Community Foundation and the Merrick Foundation to provide scholarship funding to students from Hamilton County and Merrick County. More information will be available soon about specific scholarships from these foundations. For students that reside in Hamilton County, scholarships are based on financial need. If you feel you may qualify for one of these scholarships, visit <http://www.prairieplains.org/> to find the “Student Scholarship Form-General” to download and complete. (Look under the Youth Naturalist Program section in the middle of the page for this link.) For any student that resides in Merrick County, you will likely be eligible to receive scholarship funding from the Merrick Foundation to attend. If you are a Merrick County resident, please contact the Prairie Plains office at the time you are applying for updated scholarship info (see contact info below).

Contact the Youth Naturalist Program coordinator, Sarah Bailey, with any questions.

**Application Deadline: May 1, 2017**

**Contact: Sarah Bailey**  
**Youth Naturalist Program Coordinator**

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**We hope to see you this summer!**

