



A view from an overlook along the designated trails at Little Jerusalem © Mickey Shannon

Little Jerusalem Badlands State Park Opens

Kansas' newest state park remains owned by The Nature Conservancy

The wait is finally over.

In October 2019, The Nature Conservancy and Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism (KDWP) opened the much-anticipated Little Jerusalem Badlands State Park in western Kansas. TNC purchased the 250-acre area of dramatic chalk rock formations in late 2016 and spent the next three years planning and developing infrastructure that keeps people safe and protects the natural features at the same time.

Beyond the impressive scenic views, the area serves as nesting habitat for ferruginous hawks and is home to rare plants. In 2018, TNC partnered with KDWP to designate the area as a Kansas State Park. Together, the organizations developed two trails,

parking and additional infrastructure at the park. A long-term agreement allows KDWP to manage outdoor recreational activities in a manner that protects the fragile landscape, while TNC continues to own the land and manage the natural resources.



© Blaine Moats

“The Nature Conservancy’s chief purposes for Little Jerusalem are to, first, protect the pristine natural features and, second, provide opportunities for people to enjoy the natural beauty of the area,”

says TNC Kansas director Rob Manes. “Striking that balance took time, and we are confident that the partnership between TNC and KDWP provides the public with the best possible experience. We can’t wait to share Little Jerusalem with everyone now that it’s open.”

“From the start, we’ve envisioned this property as a special kind of state park, where natural resource conservation is the highest priority,” agrees Linda Lanterman, KDWP state parks director. “That means that public interaction with the landscape will necessarily be limited to only activities that have the least impact. We’ve struck a great balance with the trails that allow visitors to experience a diversity of views.”

Plan your visit at nature.org/littlejerusalem.

New Trustees Named

The Nature Conservancy is pleased to announce the appointment of two new members to the Kansas Board of Trustees.

Kelly Callen, Wichita, is co-owner of Edmiston Oil. She has extensive experience serving on nonprofit boards and brings a passion for the arts, animal welfare and conservation.

Brian Illig, Kansas City, is a partner in The Illig Family Enterprise Company, where he leads the company's land and agriculture investments. His interests center on anything in the outdoors, especially hunting, golf, travel and sports.

"We're thrilled to have Kelly and Brian bring their talent and expertise in service of The Nature Conservancy's work to conserve Kansas' wild places," says Kansas director Rob Manes.

As trustees, Callen and Illig join a diverse group of local volunteer leaders who guide TNC's conservation work in Kansas. View the complete list of trustees at nature.org/contactkansas.



Kelly Callen © Jon Callen



Photo courtesy Brian Illig



This upland sandpiper is the oldest of its species on record. © Greg Kramos

Flint Hills Bird Sets Record

Oldest upland sandpiper documented in Kansas

You might not think of the Flint Hills when someone says "shorebirds," but the tallgrass prairie of the famed hills is critically important habitat for many shorebird species during their annual migrations. A few years ago, The Nature Conservancy's Kansas avian programs manager, Robert Penner, led the effort to document shorebirds in the Flint Hills. Those records led to the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network designating the Flint Hills a Landscape of Hemispheric Importance. More than 134,800 shorebirds travel through the Flint Hills each year.

That brings us to the picture above. This upland sandpiper was banded at Eureka Lake in Riley County, Kansas, in 2006 by Brett Sandercock from Kansas State University. At that time, it was too young to fly. Last June, Greg Kramos from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife program spotted it again at the lake. He then spent 45 minutes photographing the bird to verify the numbers on its legband.

At exactly 13 years and 1 month, it is now the oldest upland sandpiper on record. While Kramos documented it near the original banding location, in the intervening thirteen years, it likely migrated the equivalent of five times around the globe. The previous longevity record for an upland sandpiper was 8 years, 11 months.

"When most people think of shorebird habitat, they picture mud flats and the water's edge," says Penner. "But some shorebird species are highly dependent on grasslands like the Flint Hills."

They rely on the grassland habitat remaining intact and healthy, and that's the focus of TNC's Flint Hills Initiative, a two-decades-old conservation effort to maintain the unfragmented nature of this landscape, and to keep the prairie healthy and free of invasive trees and weeds. Learn more at nature.org/flinthills.