

## Preserve Activities

The Nature Conservancy encourages appropriate public use on its preserves.

The preserve is open from dawn to dusk, every day of the year. The Visitor Center is staffed by volunteers most days. The center, featuring displays and gift items, is open from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm or later. To find out if it will be open on a specific date, call (918) 287-4803. There is no admittance fee to the preserve.

Enjoy driving through the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve. A scenic route on public county roads takes visitors through the heart of the preserve and through the bison unit. Starting in and returning to Pawhuska, the complete drive is approximately 35 miles, and takes about 2 hours at a leisurely pace. Five scenic turnouts are located along the route through the preserve.

Visit the preserve headquarters to see the historic 1920 ranch bunkhouse. Restored to its original condition by the Conservancy, the bunkhouse was the operation center of the Chapman-Barnard Ranch, which once covered more than 100,000 acres.

An interconnected system of nature trails are located near the preserve headquarters. Watch for the “Trail Parking” signs. Hikers can take the .5 mile, 1 mile, or 2 mile trail loops. No pets please.

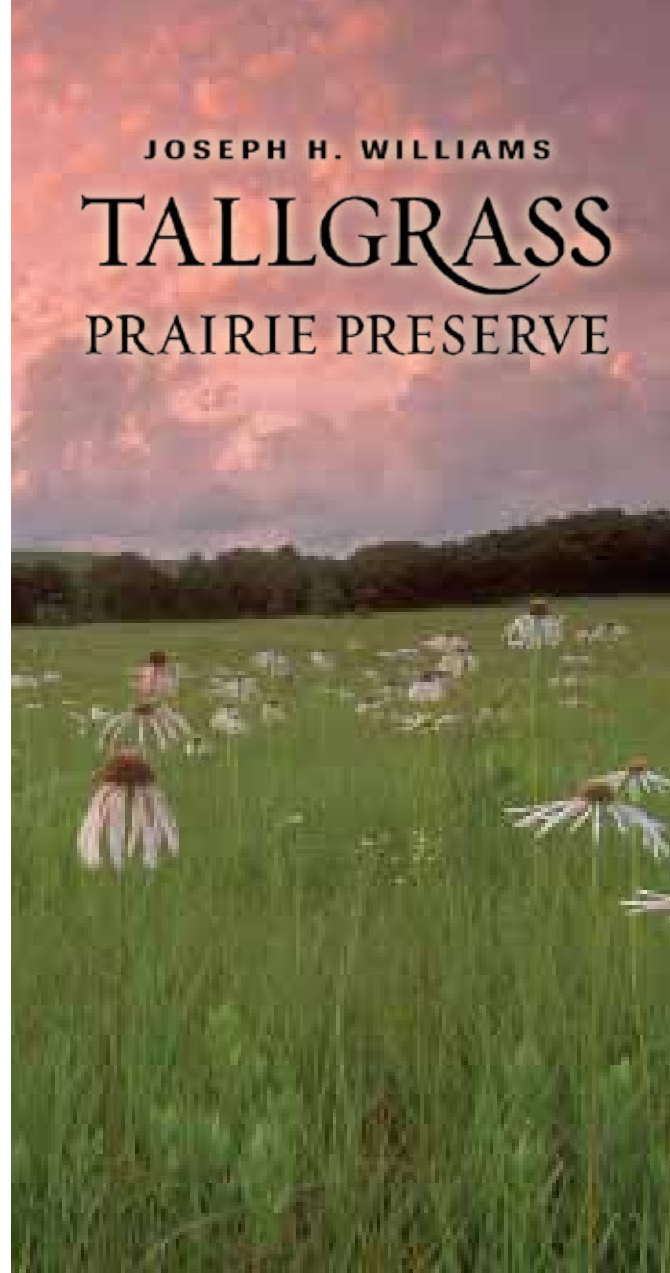
Picnicking is allowed near the preserve headquarters. Look for picnic tables just off the road along Sand Creek.

Camping, hunting and fishing are not allowed on the preserve. Information on other area attractions can be found at the preserve Visitor Center.



For additional information about the work of The Nature Conservancy of Oklahoma please visit: [nature.org/oklahoma](http://nature.org/oklahoma) or [facebook.com/nature.ok](https://facebook.com/nature.ok)

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## The Tallgrass Prairie Preserve

Originally spanning portions of 14 states and covering over 142 million acres, the tallgrass prairie was one of North America’s major ecosystems. It was a complex landscape, harboring a rich diversity of plants and animals, that was shaped by the natural forces of climate, fire, and grazing.

Today, less than 4% of the original tallgrass prairie remains. Most of it has been converted to farmland and is known as “America’s breadbasket”. Large, unbroken tracts of tallgrass prairie only exist now in the Flint Hills of Oklahoma and Kansas.

In 1989, The Nature Conservancy purchased the 29,000 acre Barnard Ranch as the cornerstone of the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve. Over the next 5 years, the Conservancy raised \$15 million to fund land acquisition, start-up costs and an operating endowment which will cover some of the preserve’s operating costs. Donations came from individuals, corporations, and foundations. The preserve now consists of just under 40,000 acres of land owned or leased by The Nature Conservancy. In 2015 the preserve was renamed to honor Joseph H. Williams to acknowledge his key leadership and commitment in creating the preserve.

The Conservancy’s goal is to recreate a functioning tallgrass prairie ecosystem using fire and bison. Fire has been reintroduced to the landscape by using carefully controlled, or “prescribed”, burns. Burns are conducted at different times of the year to mimic the original seasonality of presettlement fires. Native plants and animals of the tallgrass prairie have adapted to the influence of fire, and are dependent upon it to maintain the ecosystem. Fire removes dead vegetation, controls encroaching woody vegetation and increases the vigor and flowering of many plant species.



Grazing, by bison, was also one of the primary natural forces that shaped and sustained the presettlement tallgrass prairie. The 300 bison reintroduced in 1993 has grown to its target size of 2,700 animals freely roaming on more than 23,000 acres of the preserve. An additional 11,000 acres is devoted to developing progressive range management techniques with domestic livestock. Grazing plays an important role in maintaining a dynamic prairie ecosystem by altering the amount and composition of vegetation, thus creating a mosaic of habitats that support a rich diversity of prairie plants and animals.

## Natural Attractions

Sweeping vistas of the open prairie landscape along with incredible sunrises and sunsets are just some of the many natural attractions at the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve.



Although wildflowers bloom throughout the growing season, there are two peak periods: one in spring (mid May to mid June) and another in late summer (August-September). Over 760 plant species have been identified on the preserve.

The namesake tallgrasses, big bluestem, Indiangrass and switchgrass, can grow as tall as 8 feet in moist, deep soil sites. Maximum height is reached in August and September.

A diversity of grassland and forest habitats provides excellent birding. Greater prairie chickens “boom” in April and May. Numerous breeding birds can be seen in the spring, as well as birds of prey (including bald eagles) in the fall and winter.

The spring bison calving season peaks in May, and the breeding season is July-August. Other common wildlife species include white-tailed deer, bobcats, armadillos, beavers, woodchucks, badgers, coyotes and numerous small mammals.

## Safety and Guidelines

**Rough Road.** The road to the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve is a loose, sometimes rough surface county gravel road that can become quite dusty in dry conditions and soft in wet conditions. Recommended maximum speed is 35 mph. Watch for sharp corners and curves.

**Distances.** 17 miles from downtown Pawhuska to the preserve headquarters and Visitor Center. 10 miles from the preserve south entrance to the headquarters.

**Private Roads.** Stay on the main county road. Do not venture down private roads or ranch driveways.

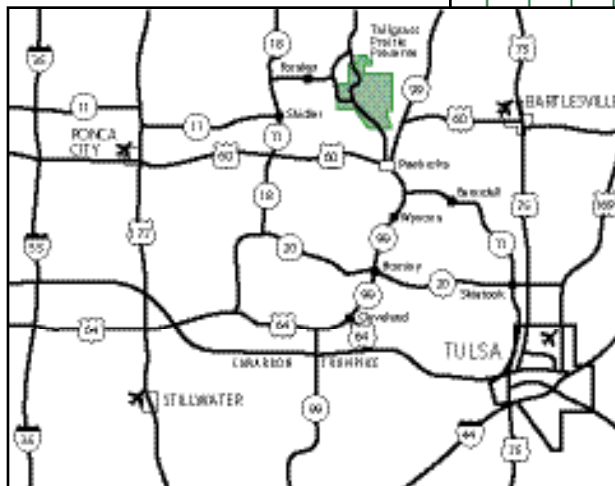
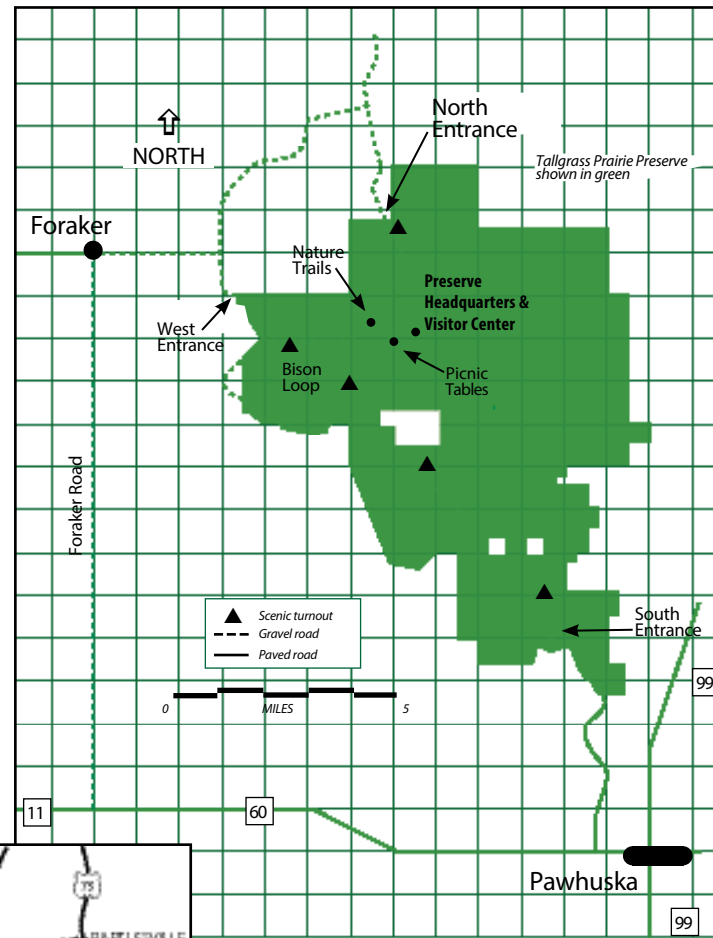
**Gas & Refreshments.** Fill up with gas before leaving town. There are no gas stations on or near the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve. A pop machine and potable water are located at preserve headquarters.

**Restroom.** The only restrooms are located at preserve headquarters. They are handicap-accessible.

**Open Range.** This is open range, so drive carefully. Bison and cattle may be standing or wallowing in the road. Avoid honking - it may have unpredictable results. Watch for narrow and rough cattle guards, as well as ranch and oil field vehicles.

**Hazards.** The tall grasses often conceal hidden hazards such as snakes, biting or stinging insects, ticks, rocks and holes. For that reason, please confine your hiking to the established nature trails where these hazards will be more obvious. If you venture off such trails, be especially alert.

**Parking.** When traveling the public road to the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve, park only at sites marked with "Scenic Turnout" signs. Watch for traffic when pulling back onto the road.



**WARNING:** Bison and cattle are dangerous and unpredictable. Bison can run fast and jump great distances. For your personal safety, do not approach these animals. View them from afar.

**Smoking.** No smoking outside vehicles due to the danger of wildfires. Please do not throw cigarettes or other burning materials out the car window.

**Smoke.** Prescribed burning is a commonly used land management tool in the area. Do not drive through smoke.

**Respect The Land.** Do not remove any natural features or artifacts, including plants, animals, rocks, fossils, arrowheads, or other artifacts. Do not feed or disturb any wildlife.

**Please Don't Litter.** Pack out all trash.

**Private Lands.** There are private inholdings within the boundaries of the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve. Do not climb over fences - you may be trespassing. If you are unsure about which lands are private, please check with staff at preserve headquarters. Thank you for respecting the rights of others.

**Become a part of the tallgrass team!**

The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. The Conservancy is a private, nonprofit, conservation organization with approximately 1,000,000 members. You can support its work by becoming a member. Donations are tax deductible. Contributions of cash, materials and volunteer labor are welcomed.

**TO ACCESS THE PRESERVE** from Pawhuska, drive north on Kihkah from where it intersects Highway 60 in downtown Pawhuska (at the corner with the triangle-shaped building). Tallgrass Prairie Preserve signs will direct you from this point to the Headquarters.

### Tallgrass Prairie Preserve

P.O. Box 458 • Pawhuska, OK 74056 • (918) 287-4803  
Headquarters: 15316 Co Rd 4201, Pawhuska, OK 74056  
Coordinates: 36° 50' 46.6004" N. 96° 25' 22.4320" W

### Oklahoma Headquarters Office

10425 S. 82 E. Ave., Suite 104 • Tulsa, OK 74133  
(918) 585-1117

The Nature Conservancy   
Protecting nature. Preserving life.

