

The Efroymsen Prairie at Kankakee Sands is an 8,000-acre mosaic of prairies and wetlands, owned and managed by the Indiana Chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) since 1996.

The Efroymsen Prairie is a biologically rich, diverse and healthy ecosystem of prairies and wetlands teeming with native wildlife and plants. These restored acres serve as the connecting piece between Willow Slough Fish and Wildlife Area, Beaver Lake Nature Preserve, Conrad Savanna Nature Preserve and TNC's Conrad Station Savanna. With the Efroymsen Prairie at the center, more than 30,000 acres of contiguous natural habitat are protected in Indiana and Illinois and called Kankakee Sands.

The Efroymsen Prairie at Kankakee Sands is the one of the largest restorations east of the Mississippi and provides habitat for rare species, including the plains pocket gopher (*Geomys busarius*), western slender glass lizard (*Ophisaurus attenuatus attenautus*), northern leopard frog (*Rana pipiens*), least bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*), Henslow's sparrow (*Ammodramus henslowii*), grassland birds, and regal fritillary butterfly (*Speyeria idalia*). More than 240 bird species live in or migrate through the Efroymsen Restoration, which is a delight to conservationists and bird watchers.

Restoration

Historically, Beaver Lake would have surrounded much of Kankakee Sands (see map on reverse). Seven miles long and five miles wide, and only ten feet deep at its deepest point, the lake was ditched and drained in the late 1800s. Due to the presence of homes and roads, Beaver Lake and its backwaters simply could not be recreated. Instead, the project includes wet, mesic, and dry prairie restoration plantings as well as marsh and emergent areas. This diversity of habitat serves as an ecological safeguard for the many plants and animals which call the Indiana prairie home.

Restoration, which began here in 1997, begins with ground preparation and hydrological modification to increase the soil moisture. Then, agricultural fields, ranging in size from 300 to 500 acres, are seeded with 200 to 600 native grass and flower species. The seed mixes often weigh over two tons each year! The seeds are harvested from our on-site native plant nursery or collected with permission from private and public properties within 50 miles of our site.

Planting is only the first step. Successful restorations take decades of hard work managing invasive species, removing trees, mowing, and conducting prescribed burns. Invasive plant species and trees both threaten the open prairie ecosystem.

Prescribed fire is used to recreate the effects of natural wildfires that used to occur on the landscape. Fire benefits the prairie by releasing nutrients into the soil, spurring seeds to germinate, prompting flowers to bloom and controlling tree seedlings that encroach on the grassland.

Visiting Kankakee Sands

Kankakee Sands is free and open to the public every day of the year for non-consumptive activities such as hiking, nature observation, birding, botanizing, and photography.

This area is managed to protect our state's fragile resources, so please:

- Park in designated parking areas.
- Use the Boot Brush Stations to remove weed seeds from your shoes before and after hiking.
- Pack out your litter and leave the plants and wildflowers for others to enjoy.
- No ATVs, dirt bikes, camping or horseback riding. Pets must be leashed and under control at all times. Please remove all pet wastes.
- Be mindful of hunting seasons and notices of prescribed burning when visiting the Kankakee Sands area.
- Use caution when walking on trails and wear appropriate footwear.

Enjoy All the Trails at Kankakee Sands

Conrad Station Savanna (starting from the parking area located at the intersection of CR 725N and CR 250 W): 1.5 mile loop trail over moderate terrain that gently winds through black oak savanna, restored prairie and the former town of Conrad, with old building foundations and interpretive signs. Orange metal circular trail markers on trees mark the trail.

Grace Teninga Discovery Trail (starting from Parking Unit B on CR 600N): A 2 mile mowed trail through a short grass prairie restoration to the top of a sand dune with fine views of the Efroymsen Restoration and Beaver Lake Nature Preserve. Twelve points of interest are noted along the trail with descriptions in the Grace Teninga Discovery Trail Guide available at the trailhead.

Wet Prairie Trail in Unit K (starting from the Kankakee Sands office on US 41): A 0.6 mile mowed trail through the wet prairie featuring sedges, wildflowers, amphibians and an ephemeral pond.

The **Birding Overlook** in Unit J is a favorite of bird enthusiasts. There is an informational sign and concrete platform which overlooks one of the wettest areas of Kankakee Sands.

NEW! The Monarch and Pocket Gopher Trails at the Native Plant Nursery are easy nature walks with lots to see!



The Nature Conservancy is an international, non-profit organization working around the world. Our mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. For more information visit [nature.org/indiana](https://www.nature.org/indiana).

Efroymsen Prairie

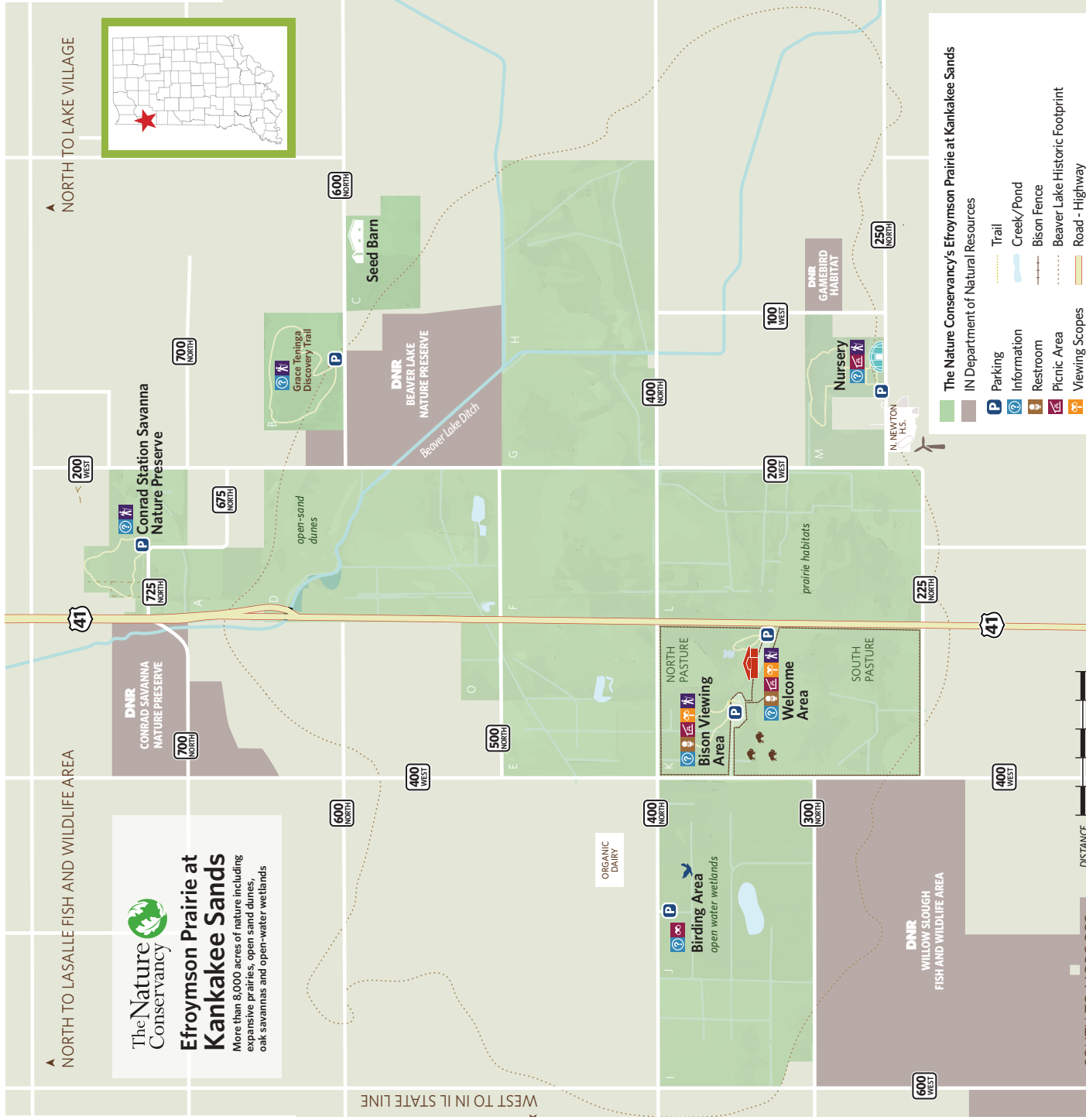
Kankakee Sands



The Nature Conservancy

Protecting nature. Preserving life.

Welcome to the Efroymson Prairie at Kankakee Sands



Kankakee Sands is free and open to the public every day of the year from sunrise to sunset for activities such as hiking, nature observation, birding and photography.



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Enjoy your visit to the Efroymson Prairie! Be a part of the future of Kankakee Sands by volunteering and/or making a donation.

Learn more at nature.org/kankakeesands. The Nature Conservancy depends on the support of people like you who enjoy Indiana's natural places.