



CROSS RANCH PRESERVE

A historic and endangered landscape worth protecting

Conservation Profile

Located in the Missouri River breaks, Cross Ranch Preserve provides critical habitat for an array of plants and animals increasingly threatened in North Dakota.

To help preserve the health of the grassland and water resources, The Nature Conservancy applies strategies such as prescribed fire, rotational grazing with bison and cattle, invasive species control and prairie and wetland restoration.

To achieve its conservation goals, the Conservancy works with several partners including local farmers and ranchers, private landowners and North Dakota Parks and Recreation.

Community solutions that preserve economic livelihoods and native natural resources are key to our success.

The preserve is open to the public and includes a nature trail for hiking and birding.



Hills and the Missouri River, Cross Ranch © Bill Westerdahl

Spanning 5,593 acres, Cross Ranch Preserve was established in 1982 and was The Nature Conservancy's first project in North Dakota. Today, it serves as the hub of the Conservancy's stewardship program in the central part of the state.

Our conservation efforts in this landscape focus on the preservation of temperate grassland, one of the most threatened habitat types in the world. A significant portion of North America's remaining temperate

grassland exists in North Dakota. It is here efforts are concentrated to preserve native prairie, by sharing management tools with local landowners such as prescribed fire, rotational grazing with bison and cattle and invasive species control.

What to See: Plants and Animals

Situated along a scenic free-flowing stretch of the Missouri River, Cross Ranch Preserve protects the largest tract of forest along the river in North Dakota. The forest features a shady



canopy of cottonwood, green ash, boxelder, elm and bur oak towering over a lush understory of grasses, sedges and wildflowers.

Wheatgrasses, grammas and needlegrasses blanket surrounding hillsides, and tall grass and trees thrive in moist ravines. Throughout the summer months, the adjoining upland prairie is ablaze with bright hues of more than 100 species of wildflowers.

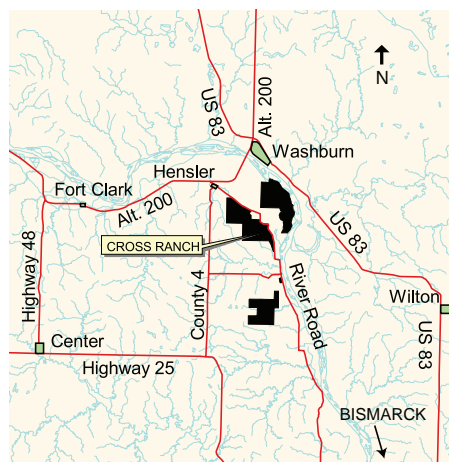
Wildlife abounds throughout the preserve, and is best spotted in early morning or dusk. White-tailed and mule deer, badger, raccoon and coyote still roam the area. Bison were reintroduced in 1986. Once numbering in the millions, they were returned to the preserve to restore natural grazing influences.

More than 90 species of birds have been recorded nesting and migrating throughout the preserve. Among them are two rare prairie birds—the Baird's sparrow and Sprague's pipit. Bald eagles can also be found perching in cottonwoods along the river in the winter.

Historic Interest

Cross Ranch Preserve contains numerous archeological sites, including outstanding examples of

Mandan-Hidatsa culture and Archaic period findings (6,000 B.C. to 1 A.D.). In addition, foundation markings from the remains of an original homestead



and a cemetery of a resident pioneer family are visible from the hiking trail. Both the preserve and state park are listed on the National Register of Historic Places as an archeological district. The property was named after the Teddy Roosevelt Maltese cross brand and has been a local landmark since the early 1900s.

Public Access and Preparing for Your Visit

The nature trail at Cross Ranch Preserve is free and open to the public from dawn to dusk daily for hiking, birding and research studies. Bison roam the grassland, so adherence to

marked trails is recommended. A good pair of hiking shoes, binoculars and drinking water will enhance your experience of this open space. While there are no facilities at the preserve, restrooms, drinking water and picnic areas are found across the road at Cross Ranch State Park. Be aware that mosquitoes and ticks are abundant at certain times of the year. Additional hiking and cross-country ski trails begin in the state park and meander through the park and preserve forest land.

Support The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy is a non-profit organization supported by donations from individuals, corporations and foundations. Our mission is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.

Cross Ranch Preserve is a local example of conservation success in North Dakota that not only supports the needs of nature, but the human needs of the surrounding community. Your tax-deductible contribution today will ensure the richness of Cross Ranch is available for future generations to enjoy.

Individual and group volunteer opportunities occur throughout the year. For more information, please contact our office.

Contact

The Nature Conservancy
 Cross Ranch Preserve
 1401 River Road
 Center, ND 58530
 Phone: (701) 794-8741
 Eric Rosenquist, Preserve Manager

nature.org/northdakota