

BAKER PRAIRIE NATURAL AREA



LOCATION: Baker Prairie Natural Area is located on the northwest side of Harrison in Boone County.

DIRECTIONS: The main highway through Harrison is 65. On the northwest side of Harrison, find the big intersection and traffic light at highway 65 and Industrial Park Road. Turn west onto Industrial Park Road and travel about 0.9 miles to the intersection with Goblin Drive. Turn south onto Goblin and travel about 0.6 miles to public school buildings and parking lots. The first

parking lot you come to is the one closest to Baker Prairie NA.

Baker Prairie once encompassed about 5,000 acres in the Harrison area. What is left now is about 59 high-quality acres of unique tallgrass prairie. It is quite different than other protected prairie remnants in northwest Arkansas because it occurs on a substrata of limestone and chert. Floral displays in late May can be the best anywhere in Arkansas, with huge areas of pale purple coneflowers and prairie larkspur, to name just two showy flowers of more than 150 native plant species.

Baker Prairie NA is bisected by Goblin Drive with mowed loop trails on each side. The Dayle McCune trail starts just north of the school parking lot. It provides a good look at both the upper and lower portions of the prairie. On the opposite side of Goblin, note the large brown Baker Prairie sign providing information from the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission. The other loop trail starts here.

Many bird species associated with open



grasslands can be found here in summer. In recent years, for example, Baker has been the only place in Arkansas where Willow Flycatchers continue to nest. Bell's Vireo has disappeared from many of its former habitats in the Ozarks, but several pairs still nest at Baker. More common and widespread birds like Eastern Meadowlark, Dickcissel, and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher are common here in summer. Painted Buntings occur in oldfields along the edges.

Overall, and throughout the year, Baker Prairie is a fine place to find grassland birds.

–Joe Neal June 2011