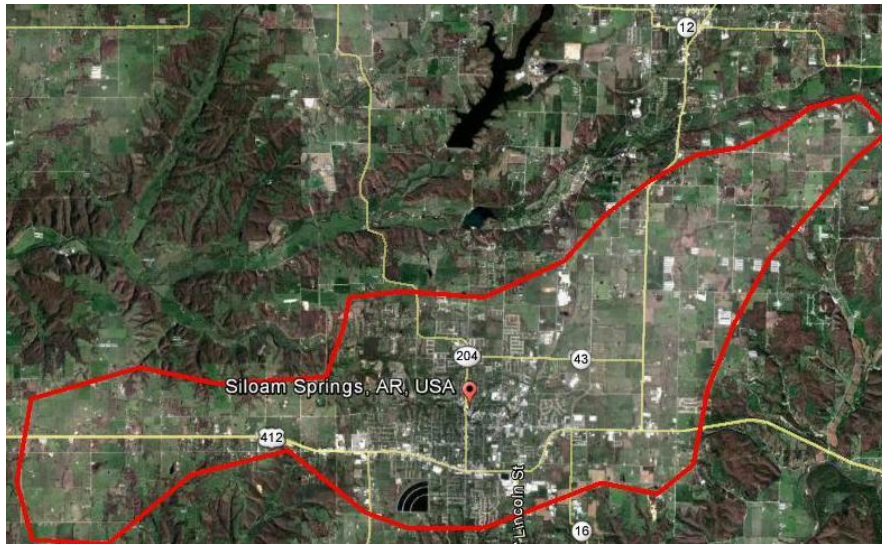


LINDSLEY'S PRAIRIE AUTO TOUR

Siloam Springs in Benton County sits midst the former Lindsley's Prairie. In many spots you see prairie mounds: low hummocks out in fields typical of Tallgrass Prairie habitats throughout the region. Lindsley's once encompassed 20-24 square miles of native Tallgrass Prairie . Evidence of this past is widespread in the Siloam area though now largely confined to scattered plants along roadsides and other neglected places. Only two expansive remnants are known to remain: Chesney Prairie Natural Area and Stump Prairie (privately owned).



The 20-24 square miles is like other original prairies in northwest Arkansas: relatively flat open uplands surrounded by forested drainages associated with major streams.

This pattern is visible in the contemporary map reproduced here (area outlined in red).

This auto tour loops

through the former Lindley's. In many places it is easy to stop and view birds, plants, and the farming landscape from the car or out of the car along public roads.

START

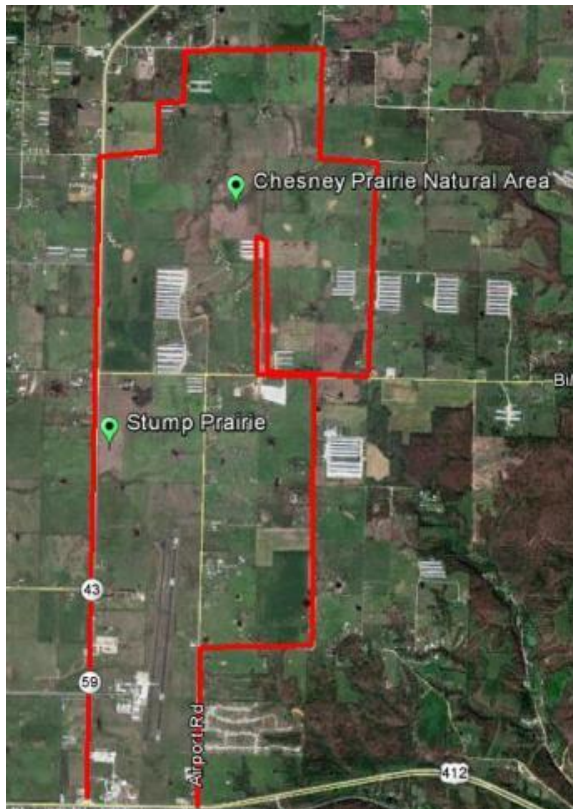
The tour starts on the southeast side of Siloam Springs, near the airport, at the intersection of Highway 412 and Airport. Set your odometer here at 0.0.

Intersection of Highway 412 and Airport Road, Siloam Springs. Turn NORTH onto Airport Road. Scan weedy spots, the airport fence, big open mowed fields. Hawks of various species are common here,

especially in winter. Northern Harriers occur in migration and winter. Note the prairie mounds along both sides of the road.

0.2 Intersection of Airport Road and Shinn Springs Road. Turn RIGHT (east) onto Shinn Springs. At 0.7, turn RIGHT (east) onto Shinn Springs Road. At 1.3 miles, turn LEFT (north) onto Russell Road.

Be sure and scan the fields, ponds, areas around chicken houses, and blocks of mature post oaks. In pioneer times these were called oak barrens. Red-tailed Hawks and Great Horned Owls are just two of many species found in such woodlots associated with former prairies. Eastern Meadowlarks are a common breeding species here, but in winter there are also Western Meadowlarks.



At mile 2.3 you'll pass the big commercial egg operation of Benton County Foods on the east side of the road. Former prairie fields in this area grow soybeans in summer and wheat in winter. These are good places to look for Horned Larks all year, Lapland Longspurs, American Pipits, and Savannah Sparrows in migration and winter. These are privately owned, so best observed from the public road.

Mile 2.7, intersection of Russell Road and Bill Young Road. Turn LEFT (west) onto Bill Young Road.

Even when winter ice and snow covers adjoining fields, Bill Young is kept open by poultry feed trucks, and spilled chicken feed lures many species to the road: meadowlarks, pipits, longspurs, and Horned Larks, plus Savannah, White-crowned, and Harris's Sparrows.

Mile 2.8 turn RIGHT (north) onto Railway Alley, a graded private road that leads to **Chesney Prairie**

Natural Area (mile 3.4, end of road where there is a sign for CPNA). Watch out for poultry trucks and birds like Loggerhead Shrikes along the road. You can park at the entrance and explore Chesney Prairie on foot. Park as close as possible to the fence and sign. (For more information, check the guide to birding Chesney on the Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society web site.)

Bald Eagles occur throughout this area in winter. Check leafless trees, snags, and watch for birds flying and soaring overhead.

Now backtrack south on Railway Alley, to Bill Young Road. Turn LEFT (east) onto Bill Young. On Bill Young, at about mile 4.4, there is a private bean/wheat field on the north side of the road where there is just enough of a pull off on the shoulder to get you out of the truck traffic. From this spot you can safely scan the field.

Then back onto Bill Young Road, continuing EAST, to mile 4.6, intersection of Bill Young and Russell Road. Turn LEFT (north) onto Russell Road.

This stretch provides good views of fields, farms, and roadside thickets. Be sure and check snags and powerpoles for raptors. Prairie Falcons have been seen in this area at mid-winter (especially December-January). Feedlots may harbor interesting blackbirds.

Mile 5.6, intersection of Russell Road and O'Neal Road. Turn LEFT (west) onto O'Neal. O'Neal is a graded road that intersects with pavement that used to be Highway 59. Take some time here to scan fields, thickets and farm ponds.

Continue west to mile 6.4, intersection of O'Neal and Shady Grove Road. Turn LEFT (south) onto Shady Grove then at 7.0 turn LEFT (south) off the pavement and continue on Shady Grove.

At this intersection there is a fine example of a pioneer-era oak barren with big prairie mounds under mature trees. Weedy fields along Shady Grove are good for many birds, including big mixed sparrow flocks in winter.

Mile 7.9, intersection of Shady Grove and Highway 59. Turn LEFT (south) onto 59. **BE VERY CAREFUL! WIDE ROAD, LOTS OF BUSY TRAFFIC!** Hawks and other interesting birds perch in fields and trees along the highway. The road has wide shoulders and even additional non-paved areas extending the shoulder's width. If you want to stop and see something, **get well off the road.**

(For a snack or other break, including sandwiches, gas, clean bathroom, etc., you can turn right at the intersection and head north on 59 toward Decatur. Sleepy Hollow store is 1.7 miles north on 59. Healthy and junk foods in one place! Modern chain fast food places and other services are available just beyond in Decatur).

Now on Highway 59, headed SOUTH: at mile 9.2. **Stump Prairie** is on the LEFT (east) side of the highway. There is a small, easily-missed paved parking spot for Stump on the EAST side of highway 59. You can also just park along 59, but if you do so, note the cautions: **BE VERY CAREFUL! WIDE ROAD, LOTS OF BUSY TRAFFIC!**

Stump is an outstanding example of Lindsley's Prairie a century or more ago. The land is private property, but owners allow Joe Woolbright, Chesney Land Steward, to manage the place to best conservation standards. It is an outstanding spot to see wild flowers during warm seasons, and while small in acreage, expansive in providing critical habitat for prairie birds.

Visitors are welcome to explore Stump, but removal of flora and fauna is prohibited here, as it is at Chesney.

Mile 10.4, entrance to Smith Field, Siloam Springs Airport, is on your left (east side of highway). In the heart of the old Lindsley's, Smith Field illustrates the open, expansive nature of the former prairie. Many open country bird species use the airport. Birders are generally welcome to walk the grassy areas away from the runways, but be sure and request permission at the office BEFORE you go birding.

Mile 10.9, intersection of Highway 59 and 412. **THE END.**



This photo was taken near the entrance to Chesney Prairie Natural Area. This Prairie Falcon was present in December 2012 (at the time of writing this guide). It is at least the third such mid-winter record since 1993.

--Prepared by Joe Neal January 2013