

BLACK WILLOW

Willows, a water-loving tree, are easily grown by sticking a live branch into moist soil where rooting soon takes place. Fragile stream banks can be preserved by anchoring mats of willow branches against the eroding area. When rooted, the willows grow and prevent the water from washing away the soil. This erosion control technique is being used on Wichita Point and Heimerman Point at Cheney State Park.

SCREECH OWL BOX

Screech Owls occur frequently in cities, parks, and cemeteries but are more often heard than seen. Their characteristic call is a series of descending whistled, trilling notes (or a whinny), uttered most often just after dark from late fall to early spring.

EVIDENCE OF BEAVER

Beavers leave many signs behind when they enter an area. Some evidence is large and easily identified such as gnawed trees, dams, and lodges. While other less noticeable signs are scat and tracks. Often however, the tail obliterates the footprints and the sawdust-like scat quickly dissolves in the water.

Both the gnawed trees and the bark-stripped twigs show characteristic teeth marks that resemble whittled wood.

GREEN ASH

The Green Ash is the most common Ash in Kansas. In the fall, it is easily recognized by its brilliant yellow foliage.

CATALPA

A fast growing tree, Catalpa's wood is coarse but durable. These qualities make it valuable for fences, posts, poles, and similar uses.

POISON IVY

Animals can eat the leaves of this plant and birds can eat the berries, but some people develop an irritating rash if they come in contact with it.

BOX ELDER

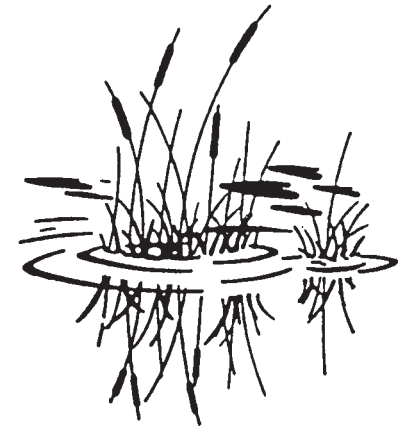
A member of the Maple family, this tree may reach a height of 50 feet and reach maturity in 20 years or less. In the spring, only three of its several leaflets are visible making it look similar to poison ivy.

This project developed by the
Kansas Outdoor Americorps Action Team (KOAAT)
at Cheney State Park (May 2000)



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CHENEY State Park



Spring Creek Wildlife Observation Area and Interpretive Trail

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This trail guide will introduce you to the surrounding area through signs along the trail. If you look closely, you will see signs of plant community succession, evidence of wildlife, and a thriving wetland community.

WARNING!

Poison Ivy can be a small plant, a climbing vine, or a large bush. All will have three leaves, reddish stems, and white berries. If you come in contact with it, wash with cold water and soap.

MIXED PRAIRIE

It is no accident that early visitors from forested Europe and eastern North America referred to the prairie in the American Midwest as a “sea of grass.”

The mixed prairie is made up of both tallgrass plant species and shortgrass species. Tallgrass prairie, the wettest prairie, is dominated by Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Indiangrass, and Switchgrass, while the drier shortgrass prairie supports mainly Buffalo grass and Blue Grama.

FALSE INDIGO

This shrub is a member of the bean family and is often used by red-winged black birds as a nesting site.

WOODPECKER HOLE

Woodpeckers make holes in dead trees for two purposes: nesting sites and food. For food, they probe for insects and larvae living in the dead wood.

FIRE DAMAGE

Over the past century, ideas on wildfires have changed. In the early history of our country, most wildfires were considered a threat to the ecosystem, people, and economics. However, as dead material piled up in forests, wildfires became more intense and harder to control. The most famous of these fires occurred in the late 1980’s at Yellowstone National Park.

From experiences like this wildland managers have begun to perform small, prescribed burns, eliminating a portion of the dead material in grasslands and forests.

TREE RINGS

Not all trees show growth rings like this one. Light and dark rings reflect the growing season and the dormant season respectively. A palm tree for instance, has no dormant season and therefore has no growth rings. Rings also reflect times of stress—the rings will be small during harsh years but large when resources are plentiful.

EASTERN COTTONWOOD

According to legend, a Native American discovered the design for his tepee by twisting a cottonwood leaf between his fingers, thereby producing a conical pattern. Play tepees are still fashioned in this way by Native American children.

WOOD DUCK BOX

Wood ducks usually nest in holes in trees near the water. By placing nesting boxes like the ones found on this trail, people have helped the wood duck population grow. These ducks prefer a box with an oval opening that is placed at a height of at least ten feet.

FUNGUS

Different fungi will appear on these trees depending on the time of the year. Fungus, ants, and other insects will slowly decompose the dead trees, releasing the stored nutrients back into the environment.

