

St. Olaf Natural Lands Afternoon Adventure: East Prairie Loop Segment

● **Access Points:** Access East Prairie Loop Segment through coming up [Campus Drive](#) from Tostrud, parking at the [North Avenue lot](#), or starting from the [Western part of Knoll Loop](#) from the soccer field.

Length: 0.3 miles

Time: 12-15 minutes

Accessibility: The East Prairie Loop segment is a 10-ft-wide mowed dirt trail. It does dip and rise, though the incline/decline isn't steep. There is a bench in the middle.

Trail Description: Prairie Loop mostly meanders through our prairie restorations. Gently winding, the East Prairie Loop segment is flat with some small, abrupt inclines. Moving towards Campus Drive, you're privy to an expansive view of the entire Natural Lands.

Points of Ecological Interest: At this time of year, you'll notice a proliferation of yellow across the prairie. On both sides of the trail lie fluffy bunches of [Canada Goldenrod](#), towering, gold-blue [Big Bluestem](#), and lemon-colored [Compass Plant](#). Note also the large-leaved [Common Milkweed](#) with buds about to burst, the sentry-like, indigo [Hoary Vervain](#), the spiky, fern-like [Lead Plant](#), and the toothy ropes of [Riverbank Grape](#). In early September, many of these perennials are flinging out their seeds in a last effort to propagate before they go

dormant for the winter.

And they aren't without help: this is also one of our most popular areas for [sightings](#) of Monarchs, Red Admirals, Viceroy's, fabulously fat bumblebees, and a panoply of dragonflies. In fact, there's something for everyone. Birders, you'll likely see an [American Gold Finch](#), hear the thoughtful whine of the [Eastern Wood Pewee](#), or even spy the swoop of a [Red-Tailed Hawk](#) near the North Avenue shed!



More information at stolaf.edu/naturallands

Top Picture: Compass Plant (*Silphium laciniatum*)

