

St. Olaf Natural Lands Afternoon Adventure: Big Pond Loop

● **Access Points:** Access Big Pond Loop from the [trailhead](#) adjacent to Tostrud

Length: 0.8 miles

Time: 14-17 min

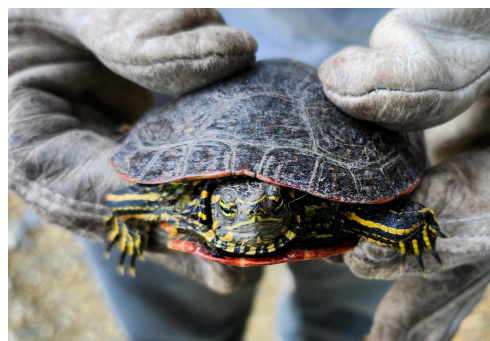
Accessibility: Big Pond Loop consists of a 15-ft-wide mowed grass trail and some gravel road (Campus Drive). There are no elevation changes except a small rise onto Campus Drive at the northeast end. There are two benches, one at the trailhead and one at the east end of Big Pond.

Trail Description: Big Pond Loop provides a pleasant, open walk with a full view of most of our prairie restorations, Big Pond, and Big Ole. Mostly free of trees, except the shaded portion moving along the south end of Big Pond, it's perfect if you're in the mood for sun.

Points of Ecological Interest: At this time of year, the prairie bordering the trail takes on hues of gold, burnt orange, and red. You'll see some late bloomers, such as [Woodland Sunflower](#), creamy white [Heath Aster](#), and [Sky Blue Aster](#), plants that are just now going to seed, such as the fluffy, upright [Little Bluestem](#) and the drooping, tawny [Side-oats Grama](#), and plants that have been seeding for a while, notably the shriveled, dark brown heads of [Gray-Headed Coneflower](#) and [Wild Bergamot](#). Tucked

here and there lie the low-growing, bright red hips of [Prairie Rose](#).

Though summer is fading, you'll still hear the forthright trill of crickets and catch butterflies and moths crossing your path.



Keep a keen eye, and you might even spy an ambling [Painted Turtle](#)!



More information at stolaf.edu/naturallands

Pictures: Woodland Sunflower (*Helianthus strumosus*) and Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta*)

