

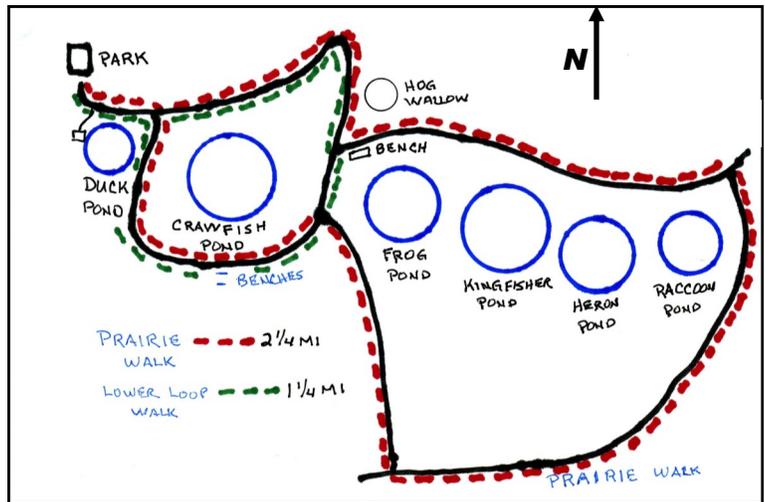
HARRIS CREEK TRAIL

By Doug Raasch

The Harris Creek Trail sits right on the south entrance to the refuge, literally in the front yard of the visitor center. An informational kiosk and wood rail fence defines the small parking area.

The Harris Creek hike has two parts, the lower being the wetland area, called Crawfish Pond Loop (marked with blue paint, see map on reverse side) and the upper consisting of a drier, more open Prairie Loop (marked with yellow paint). The lower loop is approximately 1¼ miles and the upper loop is 2¼ miles. The trail can take on a new personality after a heavy rain. When the lower area floods, the hike becomes a kayak adventure.

As you begin the walk, look up into the large trees along the creek. A variety of birds are normally evident, busy with their daily search for food. Never underestimate nature's capacity for surprise. Walking Harris Creek twenty years ago with wife and two young children, we spotted a gathering of about twenty barn owls contentedly perched in these same trees. Communal roosting is rare for barn owls, but I have never again walked Harris Creek without hope that those owls with the haunting face have returned.



Bring your camera because after about 100 yards there is an observation blind that allows a view of "Duck Pond," the first of six ponds along the walk. Wading birds are usually available for photo ops. If you missed the shot from the blind, there is another chance at an overlook 200 feet ahead.

You will soon notice that the trail is outlined by large, sturdy bluebird houses. This lengthy bluebird trail has been very successful in increasing the number of bluebirds on the refuge. During warm weather months, wildflowers, butterflies and dragonflies are abundant.

You will soon reach a decision point. Take a right turn to the trail that leads between Duck Pond and Crawfish Pond. At less than a mile, you will find several benches allowing you to rest and observe.

After leaving the benches, your walk will take you to a three way intersection where you decide if you return to the parking lot or hike the "Prairie Walk." Of course you will do the upland "Prairie Walk" and sample a different animal habitat. As you move up the small grade, look right and see the wooded east/west ridgeline, the western end being Crow Hill. Turkey and deer are common in this area. As you walk east, you will notice the abundance of dove. Stirred by your presence, they produce a soft, staccato whistle as they leap into the air. Your walk rejoins the refuge pond system and you will follow the ponds until reaching another bench. Rest a bit, then head for the trail head. Enjoy!

Harris Creek Trail

Hiking Hagerman Series

by Doug Raasch



Enlarged trail guide including color marked Crawfish Pond Loop and Prairie Loop.

Harris Creek Trails

