

# Neal Smith

*National Wildlife Refuge*



## Special Events

### Prairie Plants in Winter Walk and Seed Cleaning Saturday, December 23, 1:00 p.m.



Join a ranger for a brisk walk on the 1/2 mile Overlook Trail to discover the beauty of the tallgrass prairie in winter. Learn how to identify prairie plants in their winter state. After the walk, enjoy a cup of hot chocolate and cookies and, if interested, clean some prairie seeds to help with prairie reconstruction.

### Audubon Christmas Bird Count

**Saturday, December 30**

**8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

Help scientists collect important data about our Iowa birds! Audubon's Christmas Bird Count is a great time to lend a hand and learn more about our feathered friends. Our findings will allow scientists to study the health of birds populations. A FREE lunch will be provided by the Friends of NSNWR.

**Pre-registration is required by Wednesday, December 27, by calling 515/994-3400 or emailing [Karen\\_Vistesparkman@fws.gov](mailto:Karen_Vistesparkman@fws.gov).**



### Junior Duck Stamp Day

**Saturday, January 27, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

The Refuge is partnering with the Iowa Young Birders for a Junior Duck Stamp Day. Young birders will learn about habitat conservation, receive tips about drawing waterfowl for the Junior Duck Stamp contest from a past winner and have the chance to explore the Prairie Learning Center! This event is open to students ages 8-18 and accompanying adults.

**Registration is required! Register on the Iowa Young Birders website: <https://iowayoungbirders.wildapricot.org/ent-2692469>**



All programs are free and open to the public!

# Children and Youth Programs

## Saturday Nature Tots

Children ages 3-5 are invited to bring their favorite adult and join us as we read stories, explore outside, make nature crafts, and much more! **Registration required.**

Email [Doreen\\_vanryswyk@fws.gov](mailto:Doreen_vanryswyk@fws.gov) or call 515/994-400.

Date	Time	Age	Topic
December 2	10:30 am—11:30 am	3Y to 5Y	Winter Wildlife Survival
January 6	10:30 am—11:30 am	3Y to 5Y	Winter Birds
February 3	10:30 am—11:30 am	3Y to 5Y	Whose Tracks?



## Junior Ranger Naturalist Programs

Children ages 6-11, accompanied by their favorite adult, will participate in reading, a craft and a short walk, weather permitting. To register or for more information, contact

[Doreen\\_vanryswyk@fws.gov](mailto:Doreen_vanryswyk@fws.gov) or call 515/994-3400.

Date	Time	Age	Topic
January 20	1:00 p.m.	6-11	Discovering Bison and Elk
February 24	1:00 p.m.	6-11	Winter Wildlife Explorer



Photo: Scott Fairbairn

# Volunteer Opportunity

## Second Saturday Stewardship

Interested in giving back to the environment and your community? Stewardship volunteer programs occur on the second Saturday of each month at the Refuge.

To register, call the Refuge at 515/994-3400 or email [Nancy\\_corona@fws.gov](mailto:Nancy_corona@fws.gov).

Date	Time	Age
December 9	9:00 am—12:00 pm	All
January 13	9:00 am—12:00 pm	All
February 10	9:00 am—12:00 pm	All





## Visiting the Refuge in Winter and Winter Hours

The Refuge has many different things to see and do in any season and winter is no exception! Bring your family and friends and do some snowshoe hiking. Snowshoes are available for visitors to use at no cost. Hike the trails and see if you can spot birds that make the refuge their winter home.

**Winter Visitor Center Hours (December 1-February 28):**  
**Monday to Saturday, 9am-4pm; CLOSED Sundays**

## Impromptu Snowshoe Hikes

A ranger leads visitors of all ages on snowshoe hikes. **When heavy snow falls, check our Facebook page to know if there is a hike.** Join the email list by contacting Nancy\_corona@fws.gov or call 515/994-3400. Snowshoe rental is free!  
**Registration encouraged.**



Date	Time	Age
Held on Saturdays; dependent upon snowfall	2:00 pm - 3:00 pm	All ages welcome! Child & Adult Sizes Available

In addition, if there is at least four inches of snow, snowshoes are available to use any time the Prairie Learning Center is open. Call if you have questions about snow depth.

## Winter Photo Hikes

Photographers of all skill levels using a variety of camera types are invited to join a ranger-led walk. Discover the prairie flowers and wildlife using your lens. Meet at the Learning Center. Be prepared for the weather and walking off the trails. **Please pre-register by calling 515-994-3400 or emailing Doreen\_Vanryswyk@fws.gov.**

Saturday, February 17	7:00 am - 9:00 am
Sunday, March 18	6:00 am - 8:00 am



Photo: Carl Kurtz



## Self-Guided

### Return to Wildness Movie

15 minutes

Film presentation about Neal Smith NWR is shown every hour on the half hour, or upon request. No group is too small.

The Prairie

### COME VISIT!

Learning Center and Visitor Center is open Monday through Saturday during winter months (Dec. 1-Feb. 28). The Visitor Center is **closed on federal holidays**. Hours are 9am-4pm, Monday—Saturday. Trails and Auto Tour are open daily from dawn to dusk.

### Outdoor Scavenger Hunts

How many birds do you see? Can you identify their tracks? Borrow a copy of a seasonal scavenger hunt and ID sheets at the front desk of the Visitor Center to use while you hike.



### Hiking Trails

Take a hike through the beautiful tallgrass prairie or oak savanna. Hiking trails are not maintained during the winter, but they are open. **Snowshoes are available to use for free on the trails, with a minimum 4 inches of snow.** Cross-country skiing is also permitted along fire-break trails. Brochures and maps are available at the Visitor Center.

Trail	Length	Surface	Habitat
Overlook Trail	1/2 mile	Paved– Accessible	Tallgrass Prairie
Tallgrass Trail	2 miles	Paved	Tallgrass Prairie
Oak Savanna Trail	1/2 mile	Gravel	Oak Savanna
Basswood Trail	1/2 mile	Grass	Woodland

### Prairie Learning Center Exhibits

Come explore the interactive exhibits at the Prairie Learning Center. Exhibits include an underground maze, videos, drawing table, scavenger hunts, puppet theatre, and exploratory bison room.



### LET'S CRUISE

Enjoy the Refuge from the comfort of your vehicle on the four mile Auto Tour. This is the best way to see bison or elk. Check out a narrated interpretive CD of the route for FREE at the Visitor Center.



“Like” Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge on Facebook for updates.