

DO THE *Prairie Prowl*

OPEN YOUR SENSES TO PRAIRIE RIDGE! STROLL THE FOREST OR PRAIRIE TRAILS, PERCH IN THE POND'S BIRD BLIND, OR MEANDER AMONG THE ARBORETUM'S NATIVE TREES. WHAT CREATURES WILL YOU SEE OR HEAR? TRACKS TO I.D.? WHO WILL SOAR OVERHEAD? ARE THERE FLOWERS TO SMELL? IT ALL DEPENDS ON WHAT TIME IT IS IN NATURE...

IN SPRING...

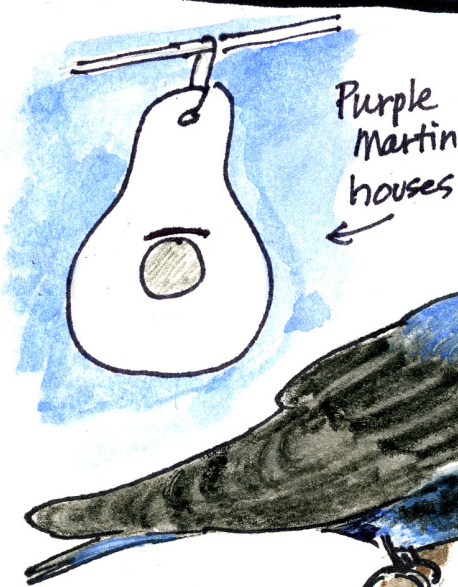
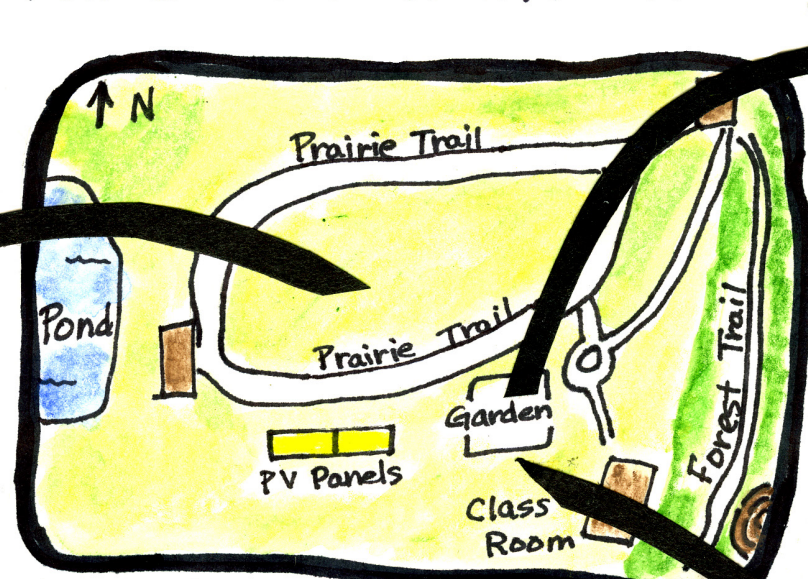


length 5½"

Listen. Can you hear the "tra-al-ly, tru-al-ly" of the **EASTERN BLUEBIRD** (*Sialia sialis*) that frequents Prairie Ridge? Do you see its undulating flight?

This winsome bird of incomparable blue:

- eats insects or fruit
- nests in boxes or tree cavities
- lives near open fields
- has made a comeback in recent years
- more? N.C. Bluebird Society



Purple Martin houses

CROSS VINE

(*Bignonia capreolata*) is a native beauty you won't want to miss, so head to the Nature Neighborhood garden. Crossvine is:

- a common, high climbing vine with unscented tubular flowers, 2" →
- named for the stem's true cross-section, showing... a cross!
- nectar source for hummingbirds



Around March 1st, you might notice the return of **PURPLE MARTINS** (*Progne subis*) from their winter homes in S. America. Purple Martins:

- nest in groups in houses over open areas
- forage higher in the air than other swallows
- are 7" long
- eat winged termites! Viva la Purple Martin!

 **prowl** - "to roam as if in search of whatever may be found" - Merriam-Webster Dictionary



2 1/2 - 4 1/2" leaves

EASTERN REDBUD

In early spring the bright pink flowers of the tree (*Cercis canadensis*) are a sure sign of warm weather to come.

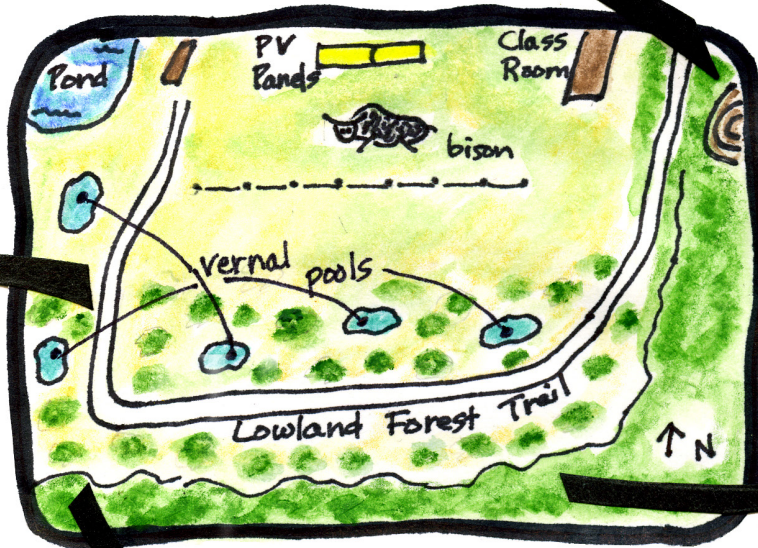
The Eastern Redbud:

- flowers 1st, then leafs out
- flowers along the twigs and branches
- produces seed pods in fall
- has ♥ shaped leaves that turn yellow in fall

Wander below the prairie and you'll notice some **VERNAL POOLS**. These are temporary, seasonal spring pools that dry up by late summer, but winter rains replenish them in time to create a paradise for frogs and salamanders, which require fish-free water in which to raise their young.

Many frogs & salamanders even return to the same vernal pools to lay their eggs.

The next time you hear a frog, thank a vernal pool!



EASTERN TENT CATERpillARS

(*Malacosoma americanum*)

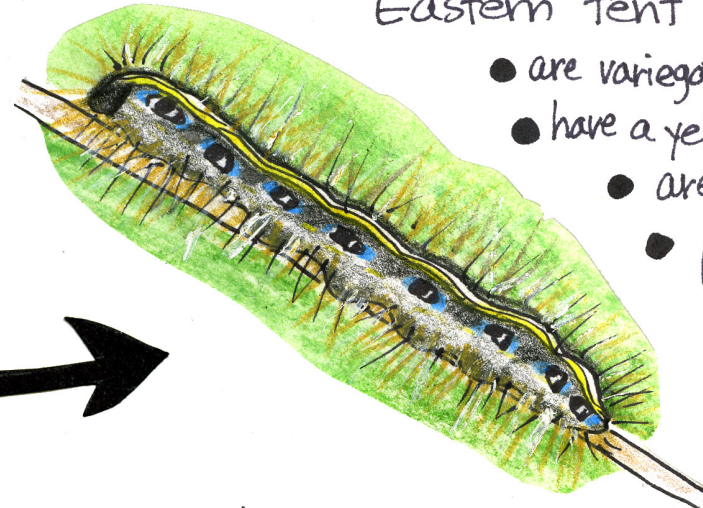
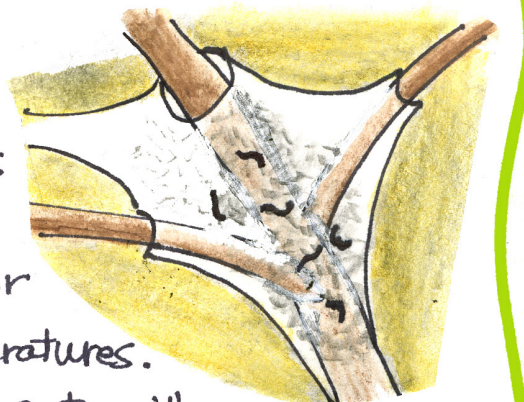
They're not just common, they're *fascinating*! require a closer look.

The caterpillars hatch from an egg sac to build a communal nest—a "tent"—in the crotches of fruit trees. These amazing structures

shelter the larvae from natural enemies and serve as a "greenhouse" on cooler days, providing a refuge for caterpillars to raise body temperatures.

Eastern tent caterpillars:

- are variegated blue/black/orange/white
- have a yellow & white mid-dorsal stripe
- are 2 1/4" long, hairy
- pupate, and become moths



Speaking of frogs you'll probably hear the **COPE'S GRAY TREE FROG** (*Hyla chrysoscelis*) before you'll see this camouflaged Cope's Gray Tree Frog: croaker. Its call is a short, vibrant trill: "Wh-r-r-r-r-r"

- is 1 1/4 - 2 1/2" long
- has an identical twin—Common Gray Tree Frog
- has bright yellow-orange under its thighs
- lives high in trees, descends at night to chorus & breed



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—by Allen Hanson