

DYCK ARBORETUM OF THE PLAINS PRAIRIE WINDOW

cultivating transformative relationships between people and the land

Summer 2026 Vol. 36 No. 2

Birding Exhibit Coming to Roost in Hesston

A traveling exhibit titled, "A Day With the Birds: Community Science & the Audubon Christmas Bird Count" will come to the Arboretum in August and September 2026. The exhibit, which celebrates the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, the longest-running community science project in the world, will be located in the Prairie Discovery Lab near the greenhouses. It will open to the public between August 3 and September 22, weekdays from 1 to 4 p.m.

"Ever since we opened the Prairie Discovery Lab in 2018, we have envisioned hosting engaging exhibits in this space, and late summer is a great time to invite our visitors in out of the heat," said Public Engagement Coordinator Janelle Flory Schrock.

"This exhibit is a perfect fit for the Arboretum. Along with educational programming designed for a variety of age groups, 'A Day with the Birds' will show visitors how everyone can be a citizen scientist, right here in Harvey County."

Created by the exhibits team at Kauffman Museum in North Newton, this exhibit invites visitors of all ages to explore the past, present and future of the National Audubon Christmas Bird Count, which was started in 1900 by Frank Chapman. The exhibit explores the history of community science and conservation in the United States through national and local stories.



As organizations like the National Audubon Society took a key role in advocating for birds on a national level, small groups of concerned citizens like the Ruth Sisters in Halstead, Kansas, took it upon themselves to spend a day counting birds and reporting what they saw. The exhibit also explores bird population trends and what it takes to become a birder.

"The history and the future of the Audubon Christmas Bird Count are entirely dependent on the community scientists that take it upon themselves to take a stand for birds," said Lorna Harder, lead curator for "A Day With the Birds." "This exhibit gives us an opportunity to learn about the history of the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, the current state of community science, and to provide inspiration to the next generation of birders."

The exhibit will be on display in its entirety from August 3 to 30, after which a portion of it will be taken down to make room for our fall plant sale operations.

In addition, educational programs about birds and birding will take place throughout the exhibition. The first events will be a "Meet the Beak" activity for children ages 7 to 12 years old on Thursday, August 6 at 10 am.

This will be followed by "Birdsong in the Morning" on Saturday, August 8 from 7:30 to 9:30 am. The event will include a bird walk and presentation on bird calls with Lorna Harder.

Admission to the exhibit is included in the regular Arboretum admission fee, which is \$2 per non-member students/adults, \$1 per non-member child (ages 3-12 years old). As always, children 12 years and younger must be accompanied by an adult at the Arboretum.

Current Arboretum members can present their digital or physical membership card for free admission.

Please visit our website dyckarboretum.org or call our office at 620-327-8127 for more details about the full event line-up.

Reflecting on 30 Years at the Dyck Arboretum

by Scott Vogt, Executive Director and Horticulturist



As they say, “Time flies when you’re having fun.” It’s hard to believe nearly three decades have passed since I first started at Dyck Arboretum. On July 8, 1996, I stepped onto the grounds as the horticulturist—entering a landscape of open lawns and few flower beds. With no buildings yet, it was a blank slate. I knew very little about native plants, making those early years learning alongside Larry Vickerman deeply formative. Truthfully, I am still learning today.

Founders Harold and Evie Dyck envisioned a space reflecting the resilient beauty of the Kansas prairie. Looking back over my 30-year journey—evolving from a novice horticulturist to Executive Director—my connection here runs deep. I grew up here; my family grew up here. Shaping Harold and Evie’s vision into this prairie garden has been meaningful and fulfilling. I hope they would be proud of all it has become for Hesston and surrounding communities.

Early on, my focus was learning which plants could withstand the Kansas climate. Working directly with the soil taught me that sustainable gardens require patience, site understanding, and working with nature rather than against it. Battling heavy clay, erratic weather, and intense summer heat revealed how to build landscapes that reflect the prairie. Those years solidified my belief that native plants are critical components of a resilient ecosystem—a space with a powerful sense of place.

Over time, my role shifted from tending the grounds to guiding our broader mission. Leadership allowed me to advocate for biodiversity by teaching people the importance of prairie plants in their own yards. I watched our annual plant sales grow, helping turn homes, schools, and businesses into thriving habitats. Seeing thousands of visitors discover

the beauty of a coneflower or little bluestem bridged the gap between traditional landscaping and true stewardship.

Beyond the plants, my greatest joy has been the relationships forged here. Whether leading tours, collaborating with dedicated staff and volunteers, or sharing our vision with donors, working for the Arboretum has always been about connecting people to the land. It has been a privilege to serve a sanctuary where people of all ages can walk the paths, watch wildlife, and deepen their bond with nature.

Looking out now over the Arboretum landscape, I am filled with profound gratitude. I am thankful for the countless friendships (without naming names—just know I appreciate you all!), the generous support, and the privilege of growing alongside this institution.

As I look toward the future, I remain dedicated to the vision of this place and to our mission.

With gratitude,



Scott (right) works with his nephew to install the gravel path to the island in 1996, his first year as grounds manager at Dyck Arboretum.

FALL FLORAKANSAS NATIVE PLANT DAYS

Member Day: Thursday, Sept. 10, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Public Sale: Friday, Sept. 11, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Saturday, Sept. 12, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sunday, Sept. 13, 1 to 5 p.m.

**PRE-
ORDERING
for members:
July 31 to
Aug 31**

What's New on the Grounds?

by Kaitlin Schmidt, Horticulturist and Grounds Manager

WOODLAND WALK

In the heat of summer, we are all looking for a bit of shade. If you haven't found our woodland trail yet, this is the perfect time to try it out! This trail follows the Arboretum's western and southern borders, allowing visitors a secluded woodland walk as well as open vistas of the Prairie Window Project.

Originally started in 2022 as a way to access and maintain our historic hedgerows, it was finally completed last year and has become a well-loved walking path for our regulars in the know.

The full trail runs from the Teresa Mullet Memorial Garden all the way to the large cottonwood tree at the south end of the prairie reconstruction, reconnecting with the paved sidewalk (.25 miles, or 6-10 minutes).

A slightly shorter route is available if you turn north after crossing the creek, ending your walk at our new gazebo. Owls, deer, possums, and many other forms of wildlife are visible along the trail if you time it right, and

remember to keep dogs leashed to avoid disturbing the animals in their forest home!

We are always looking for extra volunteer help maintaining and improving this path, including trimming, removing fallen trees and invasive species, mulching, and string trimming. If you want to help keep this useable for years to come, email kaitlin.schmidt@hesston.edu for information about volunteering.

**The path is not safe for folks who are unsteady on foot – low clearances, narrow paths, uneven ground, and a water crossing all await you in the woods. We mulch the trail as supplies allow, but there are muddy spots in spring and winter. Venture at your own risk.*

PRODUCTION GREENHOUSE

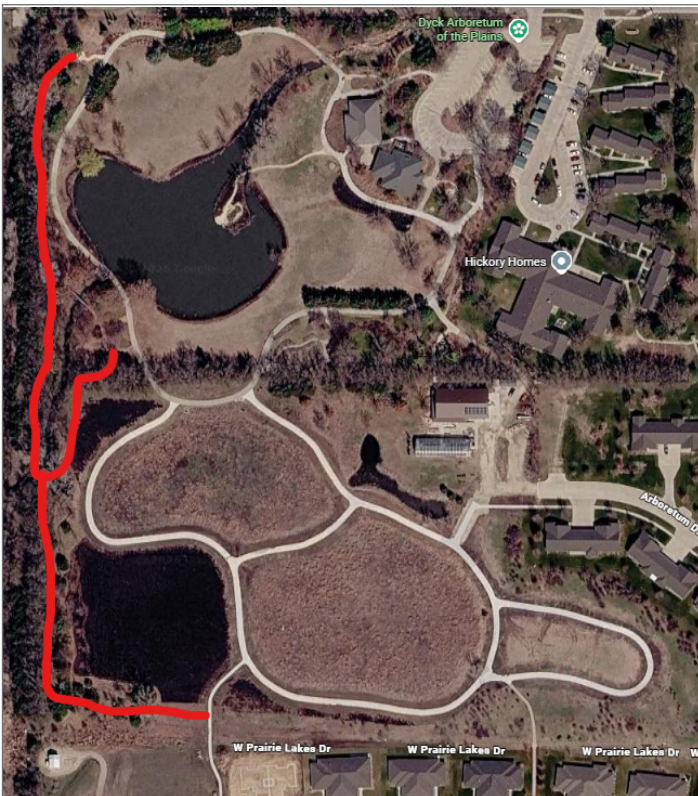
Construction of our new propagation greenhouse was completed in May of this year. And even though there are finishing touches yet to add (plumbing!) we have already started using it for young plants and seedlings.

So far this year, we have grown over 1,000 plants in that space! Many seedlings and divisions are from our own grounds, though some are produced from seeds collected elsewhere in our region and donated by members. Many of these plants will be available for purchase at our fall FloraKansas fundraiser, such as *Oenothera macrocarpa* (Missouri Evening Primrose), *Rudbeckia maxima* (Giant Rudbeckia), *Senna marilandica* (Maryland Senna) and *Vernonia baldwinii* (Western Ironweed). Other seedlings have sprouted nicely, but won't be mature enough until our spring 2027 event, including *Dalea candida* (White Prairie Clover) and some *Asclepias* (Milkweed) species.

We will continue to source most of our plants from reputable nurseries, but having a propagation greenhouse of our own allows us to diversify our offerings, lower our cost and carbon footprint, and grow more local varieties as seed becomes available.

This work is only possible because of generous donations funding the construction, as well as the diligent volunteers who seed, water, trim, and tend these delicate plants through the most crucial time in their development.

If you are interested in volunteering in the propagation greenhouse, email kaitlin.schmidt@hesston.edu for more information.



In this Google Earth image, the woodland trail is marked in red. Please stay on the mulched path to allow habitat to fill in around it. The path is uneven - venture at your own risk.

Dyck Arboretum of the Plains

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MEET OUR SUMMER INTERN!

My name is Cj Eblen. I am the 2026 Dyck Arboretum summer intern. I recently graduated from Columbia College of Missouri with a major in History and a minor in Environmental Science while serving on the Dean's Advisory Board.

I spend much of my free time outside, exploring the natural beauty that Kansas has to offer. When I'm not outdoors, you can usually find me reading philosophy or historical fiction, or online gaming with my younger twin brothers.

My passion for learning inspired me to pursue a bachelor's degree, and my long-term goal is to work for a national park. Following this internship, I hope to continue building the knowledge and experience needed for a career in conservation, public lands, and history.

I am grateful for the opportunity to intern at Dyck Arboretum, where I have expanded my knowledge while developing new skills through hands-on experience. Each day is an opportunity to learn, and I have enjoyed working alongside a charismatic and dedicated team that shares my passion for environmental stewardship and conservation.



For more information about our Summer Internship, please visit dyckarboretum.org/internship. The application period for 2027 opens in January.

Staff

Scott Vogt, Executive Director/Horticulturist
Brad Guhr, Education/Prairie Restoration/
Concert Series Coordinator
Janelle Flory Schrock, Public Engagement
Coordinator
Katie Schmidt, Horticulturist/ Grounds Manager

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Established in 1981 by Harold and Elva Mae Dyck, the Dyck Arboretum of the Plains operates under the auspices of

HESSTON COLLEGE