

Indian Cave Bluffs

landscape includes the steep bluffs of the Missouri River in Nemaha and Richardson counties. The majority of the bluffs support an



eastern deciduous forest of oaks, hickories and basswood. Because of its location in southeastern Nebraska, these woodlands support a high diversity of eastern deciduous forest plant and animal species. Tall-grass prairie remnants still occur on some bluff tops and south- and west-facing slopes. These have been greatly reduced in size and degraded over the years by shrub and tree encroachment resulting from lack of wildfires. Indian Cave State Park is the only protected area in the landscape.



Natural Legacy Demonstration Site

Indian Cave State Park - Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

This Park is approximately 3300 acres in size. The park is mostly wooded bluffs but is bordered by the Missouri River and includes a recently restored backwater. Natural communities at this park include oak hickory ironwood forest and red oak-basswood-ironwood forest. Park managers are currently working to eradicate garlic mustard in cooperation with neighboring landowners. The managers improve wildlife habitat through a variety of techniques including prescribed woodland burns.

Stresses Affecting Species and Habitats

- ❖ Specific livestock grazing and haying practices that may reduce native plant diversity and promote uniform habitat structure
- ❖ Invasive plant species, including garlic mustard, common buckthorn and other exotic plants.
- ❖ Tree and shrub encroachment of prairie remnants
- ❖ Lack of fire in native woodlands leading to increased tree and shrub densities
- ❖ Housing development and other forms of fragmentation
- ❖ High-grade logging

- ❖ Deer over-browsing in native forests and woodlands
- ❖ Invasive insects, especially the emerald ash borer
- ❖ Poorly-sited utility-scale wind turbines

Conservation Strategies

- ❖ Conduct annual surveys and implement control programs for garlic mustard, exotic buckthorns and honeysuckles and other invasive woodland plants on conservation lands and adjacent private lands
- ❖ Continued implementation of the Indian Cave State Park management plan including tree and shrub thinning and prescribed fire in park woodlands and invasive species control.
- ❖ Implement prescribed burns in native woodlands to enhance woodland structure, floral composition and oak regeneration on conservation lands and adjacent private lands.
- ❖ Coordinate with landowners interested in conservation easements or voluntary fee title acquisition to protect key habitats from development and commercial logging of mature forests
- ❖ Improve access to and harvest of deer
- ❖ If emerald ash borer occur, remove infected trees and restrict the importation of firewood
- ❖ Work with wind energy companies to select turbine sites that minimize fragmentation and impacts to native species. See Nebraska Game and Parks Commission guidelines for wind energy development.

Tier I At-risk Species

Plants:

American Ginseng⁴

Animals:

Southern Flying Squirrel³

Cerulean Warbler⁴

Timber Rattlesnake

Wood Thrush

Regal Fritillary

Ghost Tiger Beetle

Aquatic Communities:

None

Terrestrial Communities:

Red Oak-Basswood-Ironwood Forest*

Oak-Hickory-Ironwood Forest*

Mesic Bur Oak Forest and Woodland*

Dry-Mesic Bur Oak Forest and Woodland*
Dry Upland Bur Oak Woodland*
Freshwater Seep
Upland Tall-grass Prairie
Eastern Sandstone Bluff and Cliff

* Priority for conservation in this BUL

¹ This is the only BUL where the species is known to occur

² Known to occur in only one other BUL

³ Known to occur in only two other BULs

⁴ Known to occur in only three other BULs