

Wildcat Hills Nature Center Education Programs



Wildcat Hills Nature Center and SRA

210615 Hwy 71, Gering, NE 69341 | 308-436-3777

Whether you become captivated by indoor interactive displays or from the exploration of 1,094 acres of wilderness, you are sure to gain a deeper appreciation for the outdoors with a visit to the Wildcat Hills State Recreation Area and Nature Center. The park, which is situated high on a rocky escarpment in the Wildcat Hills, offers an escape to the region's signature rugged topography and evergreen-studded canyons. Not to mention, the area features an extraordinary view of the North Platte River Valley from its system of trails and observation decks at the nature center. Modern improvements to this park solidify its standing as a premier attraction in the Panhandle. The Wildcat Hills Nature Center is easily accessible, located 10 miles south of Gering along Nebraska Highway 71.

Students will discover ecosystems found only in western Nebraska, through hands-on, cross-curriculum programs. Certified staff will lead various field trips and programs targeted to your students' needs and grade level.

This booklet provides a list of programs and field trips offered by the Wildcat Hills Nature Center. Not finding a program to fit your lesson plan? Other lesson topics are available or we can adapt our offering to provide the best learning experience for your students.

Chaperone Expectations: Teachers/chaperones are responsible for the behavior and safety of their students. Because of the nature of field-based programming, we ask that you have an adult to student ratio of at least 1-to-10 and that you are engaging with the program by putting away your cellphone.

Upon Arrival: School busses can park in the center of the parking lot. We will meet you in front of the Nature Center. Chaperones in need of park permits will be able to purchase the day of the program at the front desk.

Lunch: If you are planning to have a sack lunch during your field trip, please note that food and drinks are not recommended in the center. There are several outdoor locations for your group's picnic. Please visit with us if the weather does not allow for an outdoor picnic.

Waste: All lunch waste need to be picked up and put into a park trash container or packed out. If you need a garbage bag, please ask for one at the Nature Center.

Water: We encourage the use of reusable water bottles. Wildcat Hills Nature Center has a water bottle filling station located by the restroom.

Photography Consent: Please notify us in advance of any particular students or their parents/guardians *not* consenting to the student being photographed.

What should my students wear/bring? Please make sure your students are prepared for inclement and ever changing Nebraska weather! Think about the weather and outdoor conditions. It is recommended that student dress in season appropriate layers and wear closed toed shoes (no sandals). They also are encouraged to bring hats, water bottles, sunscreen and bug spray.

Inclusivity: We strive to offer the best outdoor learning experience for your students. Please inform us before your field trip of any special needs or accommodations that would enhance your students learning.

Staff reserves the right to cancel or reschedule programs because of unforeseen circumstances.

Admission: Programs are offered for FREE! Nebraska State Park Entry Permits are required for all vehicles with non-government license plates.

For questions or to book your field trip, contact
Amanda Filipi, Outdoor Education Specialist
 308-436-3777 | amanda.filipi@nebraska.gov

Field Trip Programs

Healthy Habitats

Level: K-4 grades

Description: Uncover the basic needs of living things! Food, water, shelter and space are essential to survive. Student will explore the various habitats of the Wildcat Hills and the life it supports.

Meets Nebraska Science Standards: SC.K.7.2.A, SC.K.2.B, SC.1.6.2.A, SC.2.7.2.C, SC.3.7.2.C, SC.3.7.2.D, SC.4.6.3.B

Amazing Adaptations

Level: K-6 grades

Description: Animals and plants have amazing adaptations for survival. Explore how these changes affect their existence.

Meets Nebraska Science Standards: SCK.7.2.C, SC.1.6.2.A, SC.1.6.2.C, SC.1.6.2.D, SC.3.7.2.D, SC.3.9.3.C, SC.4.6.3.B, SC.5.8.2.A, SC.6.9.3.A

Powerful Plants

Level: K-6 grades

Description: What do plants need to survive? Students will discover what plants need to grow, their component parts, how they make their own food and produce seeds during this program.

Meets Nebraska Science Standards: SC.1.6.2.A, SC.1.6.2.C, SC.2.3.1.A, SC.2.1.1.A, SC.2.7.2.A, SC.2.7.2.B, SC.3.9.3.B, SC.4.6.3.B, SC.5.8.2.B, SC.6.9.3.A

Erosion and Weathering

Level: 2-6 grades

Description: Students will explore erosion, channelization and streams with our hands-on stream table.

Meets Nebraska Science Standards: SC.2.3.1.A, SC.2.13.3.A, SC.2.13.3.B, SC.2.13.3.C, SC.2.13.3.D, SC.4.13.4.A, SC.4.13.4.B, SC.5.13.3.B, SC.6.13.5.A

Tiny Creatures, Big Impacts

Level: 2-3 grades

Description: Students will uncover the role pollinator's play in the ecosystem. We will explore the Nature Center's pollinator garden and find out what we can do to help these tiny creatures.

Meets Nebraska Science Standards: SC.2.7.2.B, SC.3.9.3.C

Fantastic Fossils

Level: 3rd grade

Description: Wildcat Hills is home to several different types of fossils from the Millennium End Quarry. Students will uncover animals that once called Nebraska home long ago.

Meets Nebraska Science Standards: SC.3.7.2.B, SC.3.7.2.C, SC.3.7.2.D, SC.3.9.3A, SC.3.9.3.C, SC.3.9.3.D,

Feathered Friends

Level: 6th grade

Description: Students will examine several common western Nebraska bird species and use banding data to look for evidence of trends or common factors for their success.

Meets Nebraska Science Standards: SC.6.9.3.A, SC.6.9.3.B

Field Trip Programs

Beautiful Bats

Level: All ages

Description: These often-misunderstood creatures of the night get a bad rap. Let's explore bats! Learn about their amazing adaptations and what we can do to help our only flying mammal!

Birding

Level: All ages

Description: Let's go birding. Students will use binoculars and field guides to identify common birds of the Wildcat Hills. We will go on a short hike in search for birds found in the various habitats around the Nature Center.

Critter Corner

Level: All ages

Description: Uncover the animals that call western Nebraska home. Students will have the opportunity to connect with our educational animals by asking questions, looking up close and even touching them. Staff will touch on the animal's habitat, lifespan and fun facts about the critters.

Fantastic Fish

Level: 5th grade and Up

Description: Learn about the different types of fish in western Nebraska. Discover their amazing adaptations and compare real-world data to make recommendations like a real life fisheries biologist.

Nature Hikes

Level: All ages

Description: Discover the Wildcat Hills with a nature hike, hands-on observation and activity. Students will record observations, use simple tools and explore native habitats and the wildlife that live here.

Nature Journals

Level: All ages

Description: Combine art and science as we record observations in our very own nature journal!

Neat Nest

Level: 4th grade and up

Description: During this STEM based activity, students will uncover the different types of nest birds build. They will then try their hand at building a nest with various materials.

Owls

Level: All ages

Description: This activity is sure to be a hoot! Students will explore the different owls of Nebraska, what makes them unique and even dissect an owl pellet!

Scavenger Hunt

Level: All ages

Description: Explore the Wildcat Hills Nature Center! Find the various tracks, mounts and ever-changing displays through an interactive scavenger hunt.