

7# Biocore Prairie Restoration

The prairie restoration you see before you is the result of over a decade of hard work by the students and faculty from the Biocore program. The undergraduate students participating in 4 semesters of Biocore get to DO biology—by working and learning in this living laboratory called the Biocore Prairie.

The prairie provides an ever changing landscape for all who visit.

If it is late March or early April, you may see patches of black ground where we have recently conducted a controlled burn. Dig into a bunch of grasses and see if you can find charred tops of vegetation. Fire is an essential element of a healthy prairie. Fire kills weeds and trees, but also encourages prairie plant growth.

If you see a plume of smoke rising over Picnic Point next spring, walk up the hill and watch how we burn.

If it is late May or early June, you may see deep blue spiderwort flowers mixed with the white stalks of cream baptisia. Bright orange butterfly weed welcome swallowtail and monarch butterflies to the site. Look carefully for bumblebees who detect the blue ultraviolet spectrum in a spiderwort flowers as they open and close quickly in just one day.

As summer progresses into July, Biocore students may be preparing soil, hand-pulling weeds, planting prairie seed, or transplanting and watering seedlings. In the Biocore Prairie, students plan and conduct experiments to learn about prairie insects, plants and animals, and investigate new methods to control weeds.

In late fall and winter, the prairie seems quiet, but look closely and you will notice tracks of voles and rabbits who make their home in the prairie. Small mammals are monitored constantly from above by resident hawks and the occasional owl.

Come back and visit in all seasons. Join our efforts to encourage this amazing living laboratory!

You can learn more about the cultural and natural history of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve at other stops on this audio tour. Visit our website or check the signs near major trailheads for maps and more information. Happy trails!