

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS LAND TRUST

Wilson SPRINGS

Preserve



NORTHWEST ARKANSAS
LAND TRUST

Wilson Springs © NWALT

WETLAND • PRAIRIE

- **WILDLIFE HABITAT**

One of the last remaining tall grass prairies and wetlands in Northwest Arkansas.

- **RARE SPECIES**

Wilson Springs is home to many rare plant and animal species whose habitats are declining, including the Arkansas darter, a small, rare fish that is of greatest conservation need in Arkansas.

- **WATER QUALITY**

Wetlands slow stormwater runoff and filter pollutants, protecting our streams and rivers. Wilson Springs is at the headwaters of Clabber Creek, a tributary of the Illinois River.



NORTHWEST ARKANSAS
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VISIT OUR WEBSITE
WWW.NWALANDTRUST.ORG

Get To Know Wilson Springs

The Wilson Springs Preserve is a unique wet prairie located in the Clabber Creek bottomlands, near Sam's Club in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

The 121-acre preserve is owned and managed by the Northwest Arkansas Land Trust. It is the largest wetland remnant in Fayetteville, AR and one of the last tall grass prairie remnants in the region.

Wetlands protect water quality and control flooding by slowing runoff and filtering pollutants before they reach our waterways. Wetlands also provide important habitat to many unique plants and animals.

The preserve is home to one of the rarest fishes in the state, the Arkansas darter. Over 130 species of birds, some listed as

species of greatest conservation need in Arkansas, have also been documented.

The high diversity of plants and animals at Wilson Springs is due to its rich variety of habitat, including streams, wetland, tall grass prairie and oak savannah.

The land trust works with local biologists, partner organizations and community groups to monitor, restore and protect this important natural area.

The land trust is currently working toward a public access plan for the preserve. In the meantime, we are happy to grant authorized access for birding, educational, and research purposes. Watch our website for scheduled field trips and volunteer opportunities at Wilson Springs Preserve. ■

The History of Wilson Springs

WILSON SPRINGS IS A
PROTECTED WETLAND
MITIGATION
PROPERTY.

WETLANDS PROTECT
WATER QUALITY BY
SLOWING RUNOFF
AND FILTERING
SEDIMENT AND
POLLUTANTS BEFORE
THEY REACH OUR
WATERWAYS.

THE NORTHWEST
ARKANSAS LAND
TRUST ACCEPTED
OWNERSHIP OF THE
PROPERTY IN 2011 AND
ACTIVELY WORKS TO
PROTECT AND
RESTORE ITS HABITAT.

The Wilson Springs Preserve is a 121-acre remnant of what was once a larger, intact wetland prairie habitat near the headwaters of Clabber Creek.

The area was subject to much public debate, spanning the better part of two decades, when plans to develop it began in the 1990's.

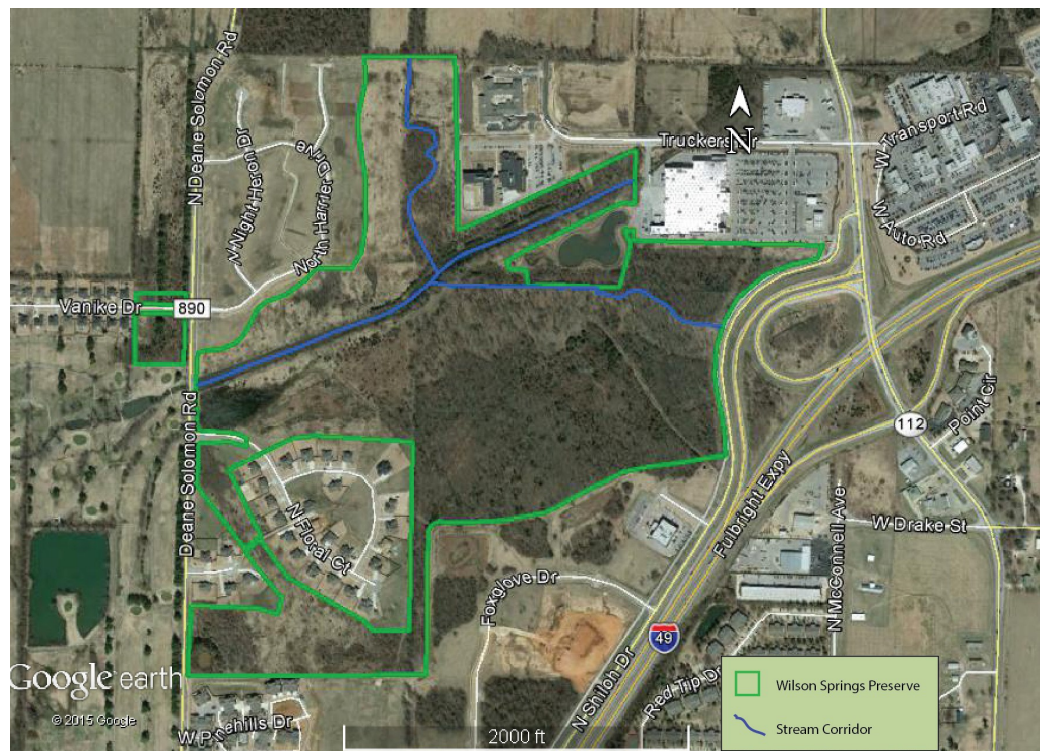
The low wet fields near Dean Solomon Road and surrounding areas provide important refuge for migratory birds, Ozark burrowing crayfish and other rare and unique wildlife.

The native wet prairie was historically maintained by large grazing herbivores such as bison and elk who roamed the land.

Wetlands are federally protected under the Clean Water Act. To build within a wetland area, development must satisfy certain mitigation requirements to offset the loss of functional wetland that will occur.

This is how Wilson Springs came to be. It is an undeveloped remnant which was preserved as mitigation offset to allow for construction of certain surrounding lots.

The Northwest Arkansas Land Trust took ownership of the property in 2011, to maintain its preservation for future generations, and to restore its unique wet prairie habitat. ■



Map of Wilson Springs Preserve © NWALT

Habitat Restoration at Wilson Springs

Heavy equipment and timber clearing are not what most people expect to see on a conservation property, yet that is what was needed to begin restoring habitat at the Wilson Springs Preserve.

Agriculture conversion and urbanization altered the landscape. Years of fire suppression and lack of large grazing herbivores led to an overgrowth of woody, invasive and nonnative plant species.

State Wildlife Grants from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, along with support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, allowed the Northwest Arkansas Land Trust to begin habitat restoration in 2012.

Timber removal, brush hogging, grazing and prescribed burning are some of the techniques available for continued habitat restoration and maintenance.

Biological surveys conducted by state and local experts, including land trust staff and board, help guide habitat restoration priorities and monitor the response of wildlife populations.



Native prairie returns to Wilson Springs © NWALT

An increase in the number of Arkansas darter has been documented since restoration began, along with four species of native plants that are tracked by the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission for conservation concern. ■

To learn more about this and other places protected by the Northwest Arkansas Land Trust, visit www.nwalandtrust.org.



Restoration begins © NWALT



Arkansas darter: the little fish on the prairie

Retired U.S. Forest Service biologist Joe Neal described them as a "lovely, two-inch long native fish that look like gold in the shallow water where they live." The Arkansas darter is a species of greatest conservation need in Arkansas, and is one of the rarest fishes in the state.

The Wilson Springs area is where the Arkansas darter was first discovered in the state in 1979, and it is home to one of the last populations remaining in Arkansas.

Efforts to remove overgrowth have successfully opened the canopy over Wilson Springs. With sunlight restored, streamside and aquatic vegetation have returned, providing conditions most suitable to the Arkansas darter.



Volunteers help monitor and maintain wildlife habitat at Wilson Springs.



Ozark burrowing crayfish leave unique "chimneys" as they burrow to the shallow underground water table.



The land trust hosts scheduled outings at Wilson Springs throughout the year.



Biological surveys help guide the land trust's restoration activities and conservation priorities.

Questions and Answers:

Is Wilson Springs open to the general public?

We are currently in the process of drafting a public access plan that will offer a unique wetland experience to the community and surrounding neighborhoods. In the meantime, however, due to heavy habitat restoration that is still underway, and the presence of sensitive species and habitats, prior written consent is required for access. The land trust also hosts field trips and volunteer opportunities at Wilson Springs – follow us at our website and on social media for notices.

Why are trees being removed?

Tree thinning is necessary to restore the former native wet prairie habitat and to protect the site's unique plants and animals. The land trust works to remove overgrowth and control invasive plants, allowing the native seed bank to regenerate.

Why does the area flood?

The role of a wetland is to capture runoff, filtering sediment and other pollutants before they reach our waterways. The Wilson Springs wetland is located in the Clabber Creek floodway. It and other low-lying properties temporarily flood during rain events, especially as increased development speeds runoff to the area.

Are there any volunteer opportunities at Wilson Springs?

Yes! The land trust encourages individuals, community organizations, youth groups and businesses to volunteer at Wilson Springs. Visit our website and contact the land trust to learn more.

How can I support efforts to protect Wilson Springs?

First, spread the word. Many people are unaware of the important function of wetlands. Secondly, in addition to volunteering your time, you can make a financial contribution to the land trust to support Wilson Springs preservation. Go to www.nwalandtrust.com and click "donate" to learn more. Thank you!

For More Information:

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**NORTHWEST ARKANSAS
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**Thank you to our
Wilson Springs partners!**

