

Tending this sacred space

Benedictine Women of Madison is committed to restoring and preserving the land entrusted to us. For more than 10 years, we have partnered with hundreds of environmental, civic and community groups and worked with thousands of individuals who share our vision of caring for the earth.

The Madison Community Foundation generously supported a new demonstration area that provides a living/learning model of prairie restoration.

The Bruce Company donated time, equipment and endless hours toward the dredging and maintenance of Lost Lake.

Summer environmental interns from area colleges and universities help us with ongoing restoration efforts.

Bruce Murray designed the icons used on our nature trails and in this brochure.

Volunteer your time

We need your help with trail maintenance, prairie seeding, wood cutting, tree pruning, apple picking, gardening and many other important activities.

In addition to planned workdays, you can arrange your own volunteer schedule. For more information, call Susan Shands at 608-836-1631, ext. 119, or email sshands@benedictinewomen.org.



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Benedictine Women of Madison

Nature trails at Holy Wisdom Monastery



Lost Lake Trail



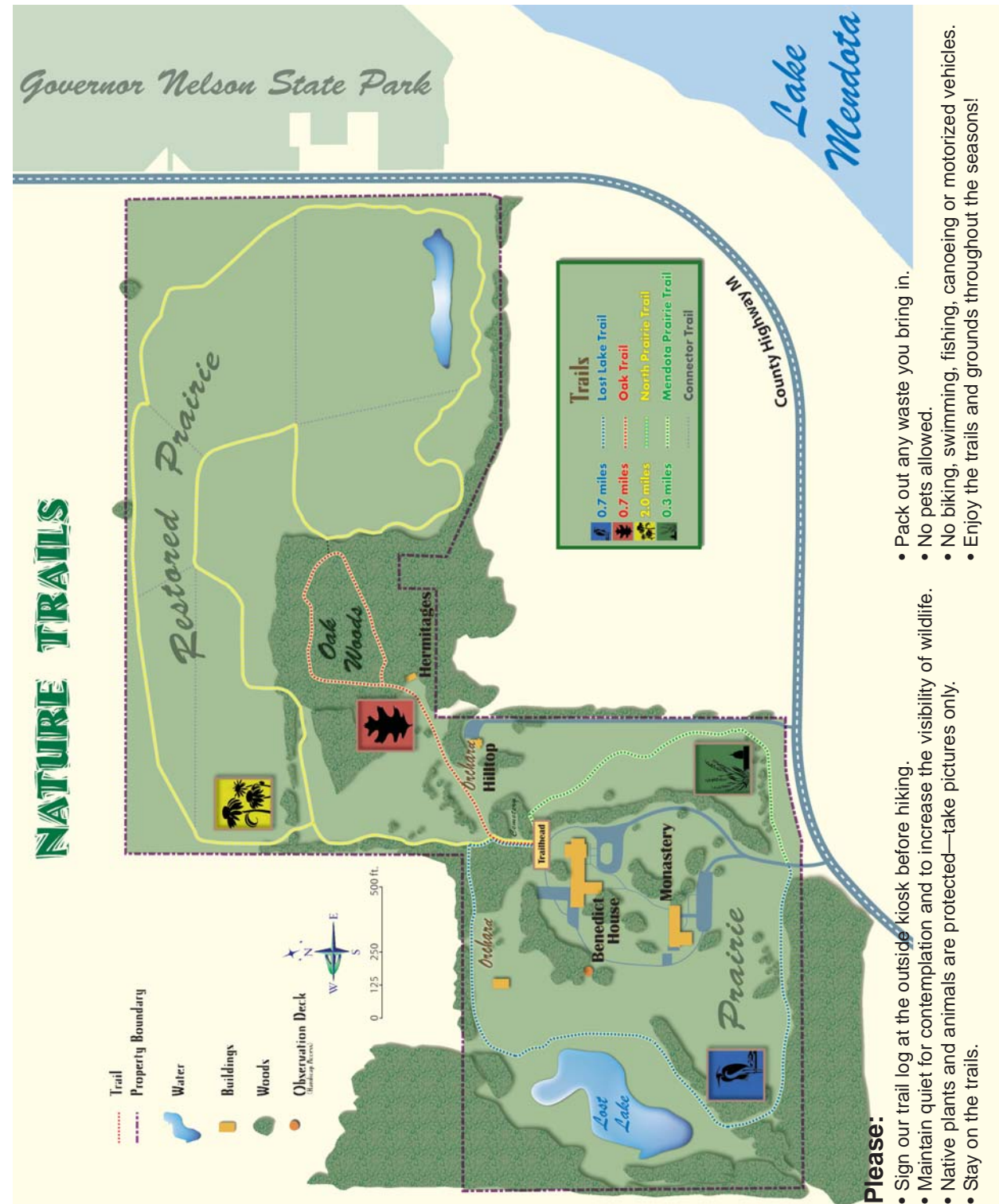
Oak Trail



North Prairie Trail



Mendota Prairie Trail





Lost Lake Trail 0.7 miles

As you descend this trail, a glacial kettle lake hidden behind the hillside appears. It attracts abundant wildlife and offers you a place for solitude and reflection. At the lakeshore, a tall-grass blend of wet prairie and sedge meadow species extends upland. This trail passes in front of the monastery which is edged with prairie on one side and an oak-hickory woods on the other. Near the main entry drive, this trail meets up with the Mendota Prairie Trail.



A sandhill crane lingers near the Lost Lake Trail (top). Prairie flowers bloom on the banks of Lost Lake (bottom).



Oak Trail 0.7 miles

This trail follows along the upper ridge until you reach a woodland trail loop through mature oak trees. You can see some of the characteristic trees of oak savannas, with their outstretched branches, along the woodland edge as the trail dips down. At the half-way point, this trail branches off to the North Prairie Trail and opens to a sunny savanna scene.



Tall bellflower grows at the edge of the Oak Trail (top). Leave the prairie behind and hike through the cool woods (bottom).



North Prairie Trail 2.0 miles

This trail gradually curves down a north-west-facing secluded hillside through groves of young walnuts, oaks and evergreens planted in an abandoned agricultural field. The path reaches an expanse of prairie with a vista of scattered oak trees on the distant ridge and fence row that characterized our savanna landscape.

The trail traverses prairies planted between 1997 and 2001, with an option to return via the Oak Trail. Located midway around the North Prairie is a detention basin created in 1996 as part of a Lake Mendota Priority Watershed Project. It buffers the impact of surface water runoff that flows east into Lake Mendota. As you walk the return portion of the prairie loop, the oak woodland comes into full view. It is especially colorful in fall, but enjoyable in any season.



Brightly colored rosinweed paints the North Prairie Trail.



Mendota Prairie Trail 0.3 miles

This trail offers a panoramic view of Lake Mendota and the Madison skyline. Winding down a south-facing sunny slope, the trail descends 70 feet through a restoration that exemplifies the diversity of our local prairie flora. The lower plateau was seeded with the help of volunteers and staff in the fall of 2003, continuing with the mid-slope in 2004 and the hilltop portion in 2005-2006. Near the main entry drive, the trail meets up with the Lost Lake Trail.



A red-tailed hawk lands on a bluebird box (top). The Lake Mendota Trail overlooks the state capitol and Lake Mendota (bottom).