

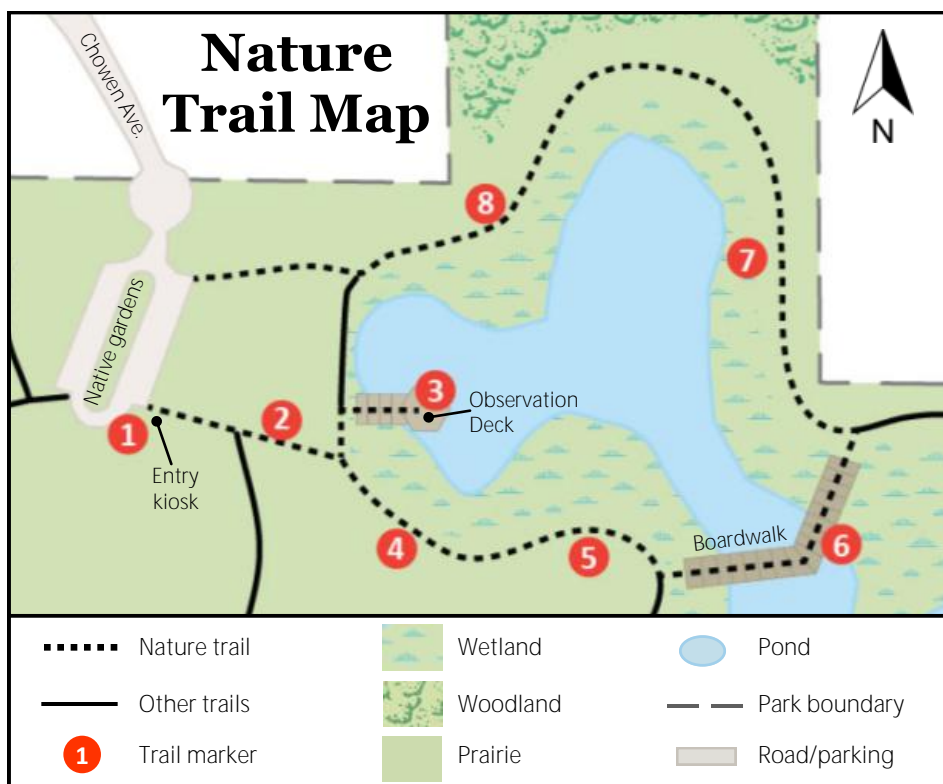
# Rudy L. Kraemer Nature Preserve

## SELF-GUIDED NATURE TRAIL



Welcome! The City of Burnsville manages Kraemer Nature Preserve to restore and maintain its natural habitats. About 1/2 mile long, the nature trail leads you through prairie and around a wetland. Use the trail map to find numbered trail markers, which highlight areas of interest.

Walk quietly to increase your chances of seeing wildlife, and bring binoculars if you have them. Before you leave, check out the native plant gardens, located in the center of the Kraemer parking lot.



# Welcome to the Kraemer Nature Trail.

Numbered trail markers will guide your way.

## 1 A Home for Chimney Swifts



Swifts can't perch and stand upright. They use claws and tail bristles to cling onto rough vertical surfaces.

Chimney swifts spend their day catching insects in the air. At night they seek shelter in hollow trees and chimneys. Loss of forest habitat and fewer uncapped chimneys have left these birds out in the cold. Over the last 40 years, chimney swift numbers have dropped by more than half.

Towers such as this one help provide more homes for these birds. The tower is built like a chimney, hollow inside with an entrance on top. A metal sheet wrapped around the top discourages predators such as raccoons from climbing inside.

Identify chimney swifts by their cigar-shaped bodies and 12-inch wingspan.



## 2 The Healing Power of Fire

Controlled fires are key to a healthy prairie. Burning dead plants returns nutrients to the soil, exposes soil to sunlight and encourages seed germination of native plants. Fire also helps control the spread of invasive non-native plants. Do you see signs of a recent burn?



Controlled burn at Kraemer Nature Preserve

## 3 Birds Welcome Here!

Wetlands provide important feeding, nesting and migrating areas for birds. Look for waterfowl such as mallard ducks and Canada geese and wading birds such as great egrets and great blue herons. Also, look in the cattails for red-winged blackbirds.



Mallards

Richard B. Brown

In spring and late summer, you may see migrating shorebirds as they travel from Arctic breeding grounds to southern wintering grounds, which stretch from Texas into South America.



Great blue heron

# 4

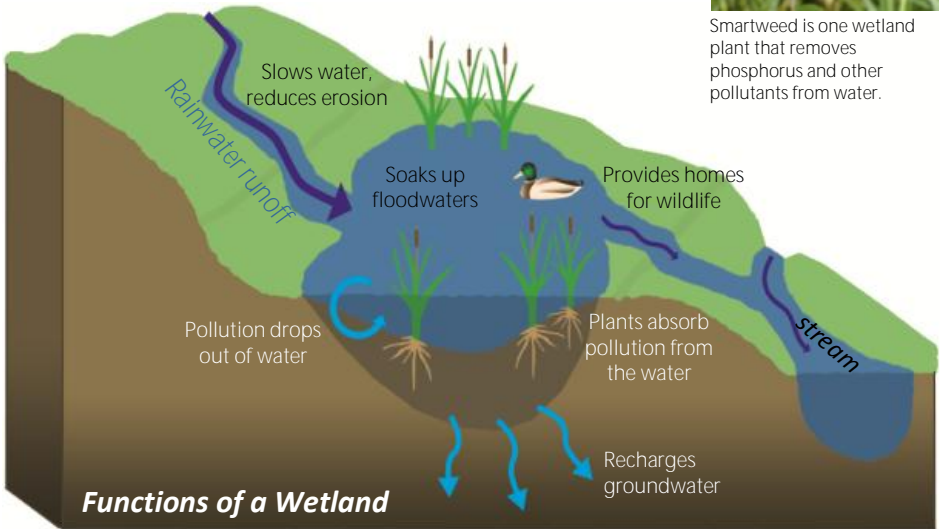
## Wonderful Wetlands

Wetlands play a major role in controlling and cleaning water. Every time it rains, water races downhill, collecting pollutants along the way. Wetlands work like a sponge to capture this rainwater runoff, forcing water to slow down and reducing the risk of floods.

When water slows down, pollutants settle out. Wetlands also allow water to soak into the ground, which recharges our groundwater supply.



Smartweed is one wetland plant that removes phosphorus and other pollutants from water.



# 5

## A Story of Survival

Cattails grow in wetlands and survive in water up to two feet deep. Networks of tunnels inside their leaves and stems bring air to roots. This system is also used by other wetland plants.

Another survival strategy of cattails are tough seeds. Severe drought may kill cattail plants, but their seeds hang out in the soil until there's enough water to grow, even if it takes 100 years!

Cattails also form extensive colonies. In one summer, a single plant may grow roots out to 10 feet, sending up multiple shoots with leaves and spikes. Each brown spike or head produces as many as 250,000 seeds.



## 6 Life Along the Boardwalk

The boardwalk offers a great wetland view. Stand quietly for a few minutes. What can you see or hear?

Do you see ripples in the water? A muskrat may be swimming near. Or insects may be skating across the water's surface, followed closely by a fish.

Also, watch for turtle heads poking out of the water as they take a breath and check for predators. Look carefully along the shoreline. Is that a clump of mud or a newly hatched turtle making its way to the water?



## 7 Boxes for Bluebirds



Bluebird eggs

Bluebirds nest in tree cavities, but habitat loss and competition from English house sparrows and European starlings (both non-native) caused bluebird numbers to fall drastically in the 1930s through the 1960s. A nationwide bluebird nest box program helped these birds recover.

You can help bluebirds by installing a nest box or by keeping your cat indoors. Cats, even friendly household pets, catch and kill many songbirds and small mammals.



Bluebirds have blue backs, rusty chests and white bellies.

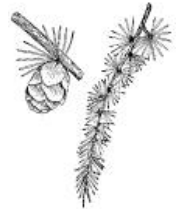
## 8 Tamarack: Unusual Conifer



Tamarack trees change color in autumn.

Tamarack are the only conifer or needle-leaved trees in Minnesota that change colors in autumn and drop their leaves in winter. More common in northern Minnesota, another name for the tamarack is larch.

Tamarack prefer sunny spots with damp soil — it's no wonder these tamaracks are doing well!



Please return this guide when you are finished.