

# Young HAWK

*Self Guided Trail*

Fort Abraham  
Lincoln State Park

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# Young Hawk Trail

## *Self-Guided Trail Loop*

Welcome to Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park and the Self-Guided Young Hawk Trail. By pointing out interesting things along the trail, this brochure will serve as your interpreter for the 1.18 miles long trail loop. The Park is rich in both military and early Native American history and was once an important infantry and cavalry post. It was from Fort Abraham Lincoln that Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer and the Seventh Cavalry rode out on their ill-fated expedition against the Sioux at the Little Big Horn. The trail is named after Young Hawk, a private Arikara Indian Scout that served with the Seventh Cavalry at the Battle of Little Big Horn.

The Park is located in the heart of the Northern Great Plains Steppe Ecoregion. The location of the park is what makes the natural vegetation and scenic views unique. This booklet serves as your guide. Simply match the numbers in it with those on the posts beside the trail. For your convenience, there is a map printed in the center of the guide.

Take time to investigate the interesting things you find, but take care to leave them behind so future hikers can enjoy them as well. We recommend good walking shoes and binoculars to enhance your hiking experience.



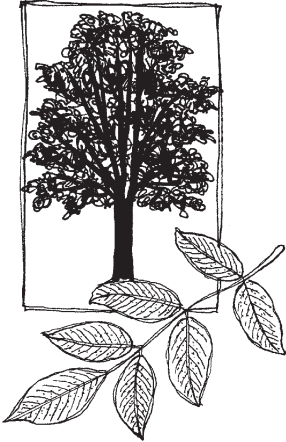
# Self-Guided Trail Loop

## Site 1. SHRUBLANDS

The shrublands within the park are often vigorous, and mostly dominated by species such as western snowberry/buckbrush, rocky mountain juniper, chokecherry, dogwood, and buckthorn. Patches of low brush often grow in shallow hollows and drainage channels where extra water collects. The dense growth provides a good escape for rabbits and other small animals as well as winter cover for sharp-tailed grouse and pheasants.

## Site 2. WOODLANDS

*Ash*



The woodland communities in the park occur along upland ravines and hillslopes within the park. This particular woodland is dominated by bur oak and green ash. The woodlands provide food and shelter for species such as deer, rabbits, and raccoons. Green ash, one of the most common and rapidly growing woodland trees in North

Dakota, is also well-known for its adaptability to grow on almost any site. Bur oak, a majestic oak, is found across North Dakota and is so named for the characteristic fringed cup around its acorn.



*Bur Oak*

### *Site 3.* **YUCCA**

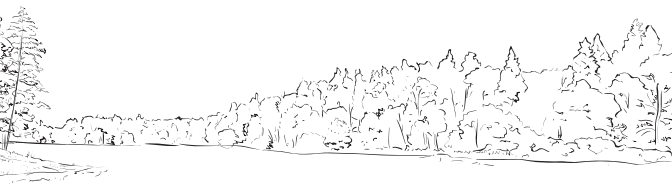


The structure of some plants makes them better adapted to growing in dry areas than other species. Yucca does not store very much water, but the stiff, sharp pointed leaves have a tough surface that resists water loss. The yucca's roots are able to collect water from a large area. Some roots extend 20 to 30 feet from the plant.

In the summer, large, nodding, greenish white flowers can be seen on tall, stout stalks rising from the center of the leaves. Later in the season you can see large capsules filled with many flat-winged, black seeds.

### *Site 4.* **SOUTH FACING SLOPES**

The slope on which you stand faces south. The sun's rays strike this surface more directly, so the soil becomes much warmer and evaporation increases making this slope drier than hillsides which face in other directions. Notice the differences in the vegetation between this slope and the wooded, north-facing slope across the ravine.

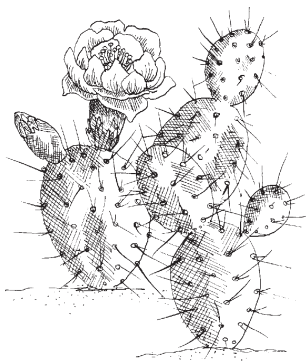


## Site 5. **PRICKLY PEAR**

Prickly pear cactus is relatively common along the trail so keep a keen eye out for them as rubbing against them can be quite painful. Indian tribes of this area used the prickly pear cactus in several ways.

The fruits were eaten fresh and raw after the spines had been removed, or they were cooked. The cactus was also dried

for winter use. The taste of raw prickly pear cactus is similar to that of raw okra or cucumber.



*Prickly pear cactus*

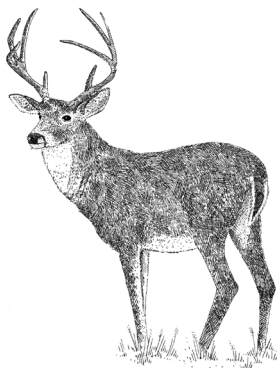
## Site 6. **BENCH OVERLOOK**

This bench overlook provides a panoramic view of Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park, and the converging point of the Heart and Missouri Rivers. Elevations within the park range from about 1910 feet to 1640 feet along the Missouri River. Below is a modern campground, a free museum, and concessions. Tours are available, so feel free to take in the culture and history by visiting them after your hike.



## Site 7. HEART RIVER

The park includes portions of the Heart River, which is a tributary of the Missouri River. Bison once abounded in the grasslands of the Heart River drainage. Today, deer and antelope are the remaining big game animals in the region.



*White-tailed Deer*

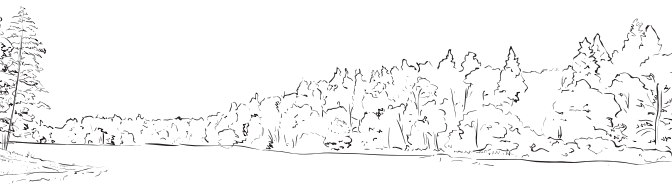
## Site 8. CAVALRY POST

From this location you can look down towards the beginning of the trail and see the cavalry post, which once housed the Seventh Cavalry and its commander, Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer. Of the approximately 30 buildings that made up Fort Abraham Lincoln the current post contains the commanding officer's quarters (the Custer House), the commissary storehouse, central barracks, granary, and stables.



gen. Custer

Interpretation at the Custer House centers on guided tour by interpreters dressed in period clothing. The interpreter leads you through the house and focuses on the lives of the General and Mrs. Custer as they may have been in the year 1875.



## Site 9. **LITTLE HEART BUTTE**

Here you can see Little Heart Butte, one of many high distinctively shaped hills often used by Indians, soldiers, trappers, and settlers to help them find their way. Little Heart Butte, ten miles to the south, was and is still a landmark in this area.

## Site 10. **PRAIRIE DIVERSITY**

This is a great place to see the diversity of mixed and tall-grass prairie. The dominant tall-grass species are big bluestem, Indian grass, and little bluestem. Mixed-grass prairie grass species include junegrass, western wheat grass, and green needle

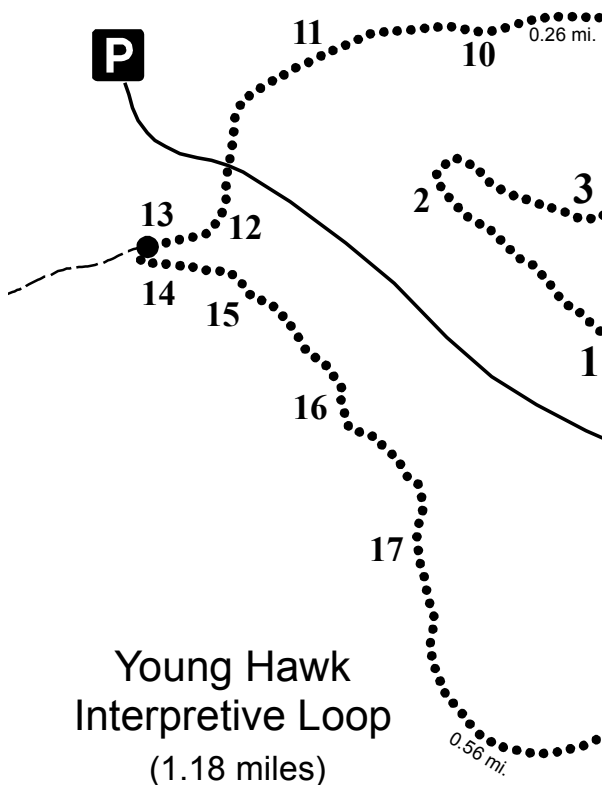


## Site 11. **BUNKHOUSE**

The foundation corners you have just passed and the reconstructed blockhouses you are approaching are part of the infantry post of Fort Abraham Lincoln. You may wish to take time to tour the site before continuing on the nature trail.



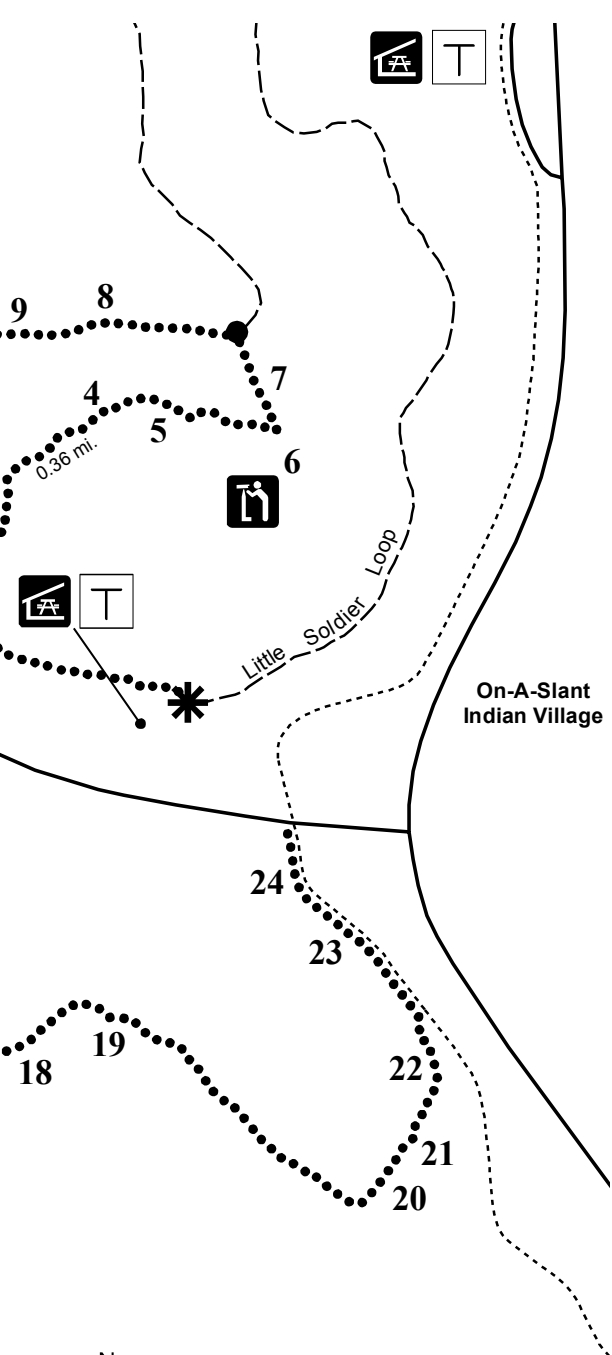
# Infantry Post



## Young Hawk Interpretive Loop (1.18 miles)

- ..... Interpretive Trail
- - - Multiuse Non-Motorized Trail
- - - - Paved Non-Motorized Trail
- Roads
- \* Trailhead
-  Picnic Shelter
-  Vault Toilet
-  Parking
-  Scenic Overlook





0 500 Feet

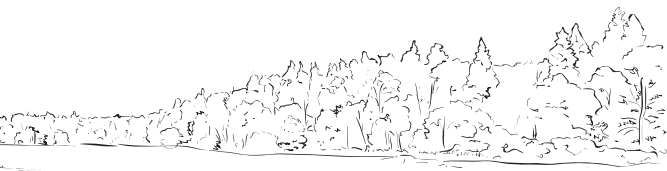
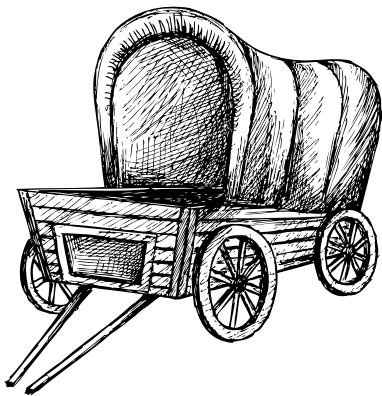
0 0.05 0.1 0.15 Miles

## Site 12. LICHENS

Lichens (pronounced like-ens) are the grayish-green growths attached to the surrounding rocks at this site. Look closely, there may be several forms of lichens growing on the rocks, varying in color and structure. Lichen is not a moss, but a combination of two plants, an alga and a fungus which live together for mutual benefits. Alga provides food through photosynthesis and the fungus provides the substrate in which to live.

## Site 13. POST TRAIL

The depression before you is all that remains of the wagon road that linked the cavalry post at the bottom of the hill and the infantry post at the top. In places two or three ruts were formed because drivers would seek out better routes when a portion of the trail became too rutted or muddy. In 1876, General Custer led his column up this trail on their way west to the Battle of the Little Bighorn. The ruts, therefore, are the beginning of the Custer Trail.



## Site 14. MIXED-GRASS PRAIRIE

You are now standing in a mixed grass prairie that contains many varieties of native grasses, including needle-and-thread, green needle grass, little bluestem, and western wheatgrass and shorter grasses like side-oats grama and blue grama. You may also see wildflowers such as yellow coneflower, penstemon, and prairie rose.



*Coneflower*



*Penstemon*

## Site 15. PRAIRIE BIRDS



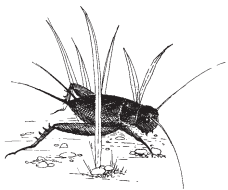
*Meadow lark*

Pause for a moment, close your eyes, and listen. Listen for the sound of songbirds, the high pitched screech of the red-tailed hawk, northern harriers and ferruginous hawks, or the chatter of songbirds, such as meadow larks and field and chipping sparrows, bobolinks, living among the prairie.



*Field sparrow*

## Site 16. PRAIRIE INSECTS



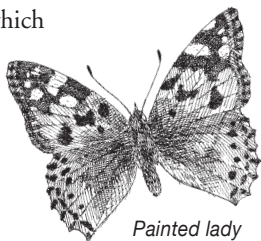
*Field Cricket*

The grasses and plants of the prairie are teeming with life. Among the plants in the soil live millions of small insects, and they can often be heard before they are seen. Crickets and grasshoppers produce mating calls, butterflies and bees flit across flowers collecting nectar and pollinating the prairie flowers. You may see some mounds of sand, these are anthills, which vary from dozens to thousands of ants living and working in a maze of underground tunnels and chambers.

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*Monarch*

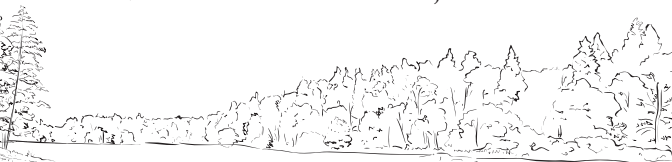
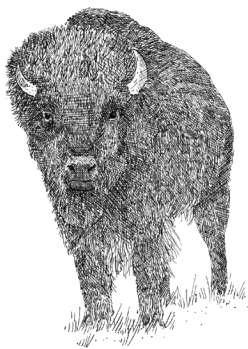


*Painted lady*

## Site 17. BUFFALOBERRY SHRUBLAND

Buffalo berry, silver buffaloberry, and bullberry; all of these names were given to this shrub species because buffalo were fond of them. Buffaloberry occurs in small, scattered thickets, where moisture is more plentiful than the surrounding landscape.

Buffaloberry is armed with sharp thorns and bears tiny yellow flowers in the spring which develop into small reddish fruits in the fall. Ripe fruit (sweetened by frost) can be eaten raw, cooked or dried, also have been used to make juice.



## Site 18. PRAIRIE FLOWERS

During the summer months in the mixed grass prairies of the park you will see more than just a variety of grasses. There are an abundance of wild flowers that grow in these

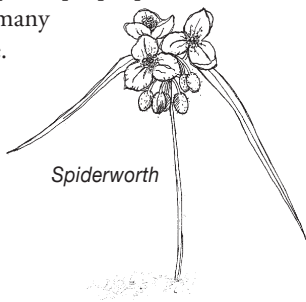


*Pasque flower*

prairies, some of which include bluebells, blue flax, spiderwort, yellow cone flower, pasque flower, yarrow, golden aster, prairie rose, lead plant, purple prairie-clover, and many more.

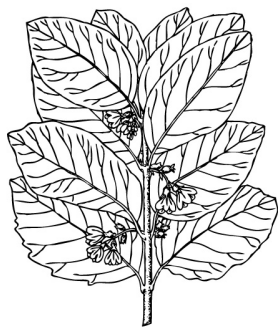


*Blue flax*



*Spiderwort*

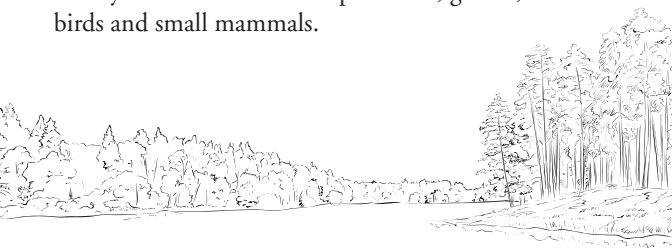
## Site 19. BUCKBRUSH



*Buckbrush (snowberry)*

mostly valuable as cover for pheasants, grouse, and other birds and small mammals.

This shrub community is found interspersed within native grasslands within the park. It is composed of buckbrush (Western snowberry) that forms dense clumps excluding most of other species. It is a short, dark green shrub seen in many of the gullies and depressions of the park. The plant is used for food, but



## *Site 20.* **MISSOURI RIVER**

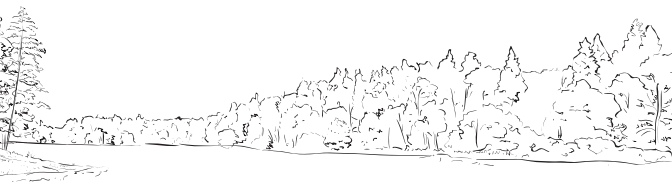
From here you can see a section of the Missouri River Channel. Notice that the bank on the outside of the curve drops off abruptly to the water's edge. As water flows around the bend, it is carried to the outside just as a passenger is swayed to the side when a speeding car rounds a curve. The current destabilizes the outside bank. On the inside, the speed of the current decreases and sand and silt are deposited. Such bends in the river are called meanders.



## *Site 21.* **FLOODPLAIN TERRACE**

The flat land that which borders a river is called a floodplain because at flood stage the river overflows its channels and floods at least part of the valley floor. The river cut into its former floodplain and eroded much of it away leaving bench like remnants called terraces.

Four different terrace levels can be found along the Missouri River, but can't all be seen from one location. The cavalry post of Fort Abraham Lincoln is on one of these terraces, and the present campground is on the present river floodplain. You will notice that you must travel down a steep incline (edge of terrace) to reach the campground.



## Site 22. INDIAN VILLAGE

Studies suggest the On-A-Slant Village was established about 1575, and was abandoned in 1781 due to an outbreak of small pox. On-A-Slant located on the mouth of the Heart River, was the southernmost village of nine villages along both the Heart and Missouri Rivers. It used to contain about 86 earthlodges with a village population of around 1000. The earthlodges were constructed and owned by the women. The frame was made of cottonwood logs, covered with a thick mat of willow, grass and earth. Typical earthlodges were between 20 and 40 feet in diameter and 15 to 20 feet high. In the center of the roof, a circular hole acted as a skylight and smoke hole for the fire pit.

## Site 23. WOODBINE

At this site you may see woodbine (Virginia creeper). Many people confuse woodbine with poison ivy. However, if you look carefully, you'll see that the leaves of woodbine have five leaflets with toothed edges; whereas poison ivy has only three leaflets (leaves of three let it be). Woodbine



*Woodbine*

is a woody vine, and you can see it climbing on trees and shrubs in the park. If you can spot woodbine compare it to the poison ivy growing under the shrubs, and see if you can tell the difference.



*Poison ivy*



## Site 24. Woodland Birds



Wooded ravines provide an entirely different environment than the surrounding prairie. The different conditions provide proper habitat for many species that

cannot live on the prairie. Woodland birds you are likely to hear or see include woodpeewee, least flycatcher, brown thrasher, cedar waxwing, red start, red-eyed vireo, goldfinch, chickadee, nuthatch and woodpecker.



*Hairy woodpecker*



*Goldfinch*

## Trails End

This is the end of the Young Hawk Trail. We hope you have enjoyed your hike and leave with a better understanding of Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park. If you do not plan on keeping this trail guide, please help us conserve our natural resources and leave it in the box at the trail head so that it may be used again.

*Want to learn more about the park? Visit the Museum or take a guided tour of the Custer House.*

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