

Prairie chicken viewing will be offered

A free prairie chicken viewing event is being offered this spring at Dunn Ranch in Harrison County by The Nature Conservancy and the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). The Conservancy's Dunn Ranch has several leks, the spring mating grounds where males strut in the dawn hours and make booming sounds to attract females.

Reservations are required. The viewing blind provided by MDC holds eight people. Space is limited and blind reservations are already full for some days. The viewings will be Thursday through Sunday, starting March 28 and ending on April 20. Visitors must arrive before dawn to walk to the blind. Exact meeting times and locations will be provided upon reservation.

Prairie chickens are endangered in Missouri. Their natural habitat is tallgrass prairie. Very little prairie habitat remains in the state due to changes in land use patterns, causing prairie chicken numbers to decline dramatically. The prairie chicken viewing on Dunn Ranch occurs within MDC's Grand River Grasslands focus area, where the goal is to restore sustainable grassland ecosystems for all species of plants, fish, birds, and animals. MDC and The Conservancy work with multiple partners in Missouri and Iowa including private landowners to boost populations of prairie chickens and other grassland species.

For more information or to make a reservation for prairie chicken viewing, call MDC's Northwest Regional office at 816-271-3100.