

## 16. PRICKLY PEAR CACTUS

Cacti are classified as succulents, which have incredible water storage ability. This cactus bears pear-like fruit in late summer.

## 17. OSAGE ORANGE

This tree's fruit (hedge apples) contains a natural bug repellent. The wildlife use them for food, and Indians used their supple branches for bows.

Have you noticed the variety and abundance of bird like in the park? Bird songs almost always provide background music when you're outdoors. When they sing, birds are announcing who they are and their territory. Males may be trying to attract a mate or warn other males not to trespass in his area or territory. Males are generally more colorful to be more visible and attract females. They will mob predators (owls, hawks) and create a fuss to discourage the predator from being near.

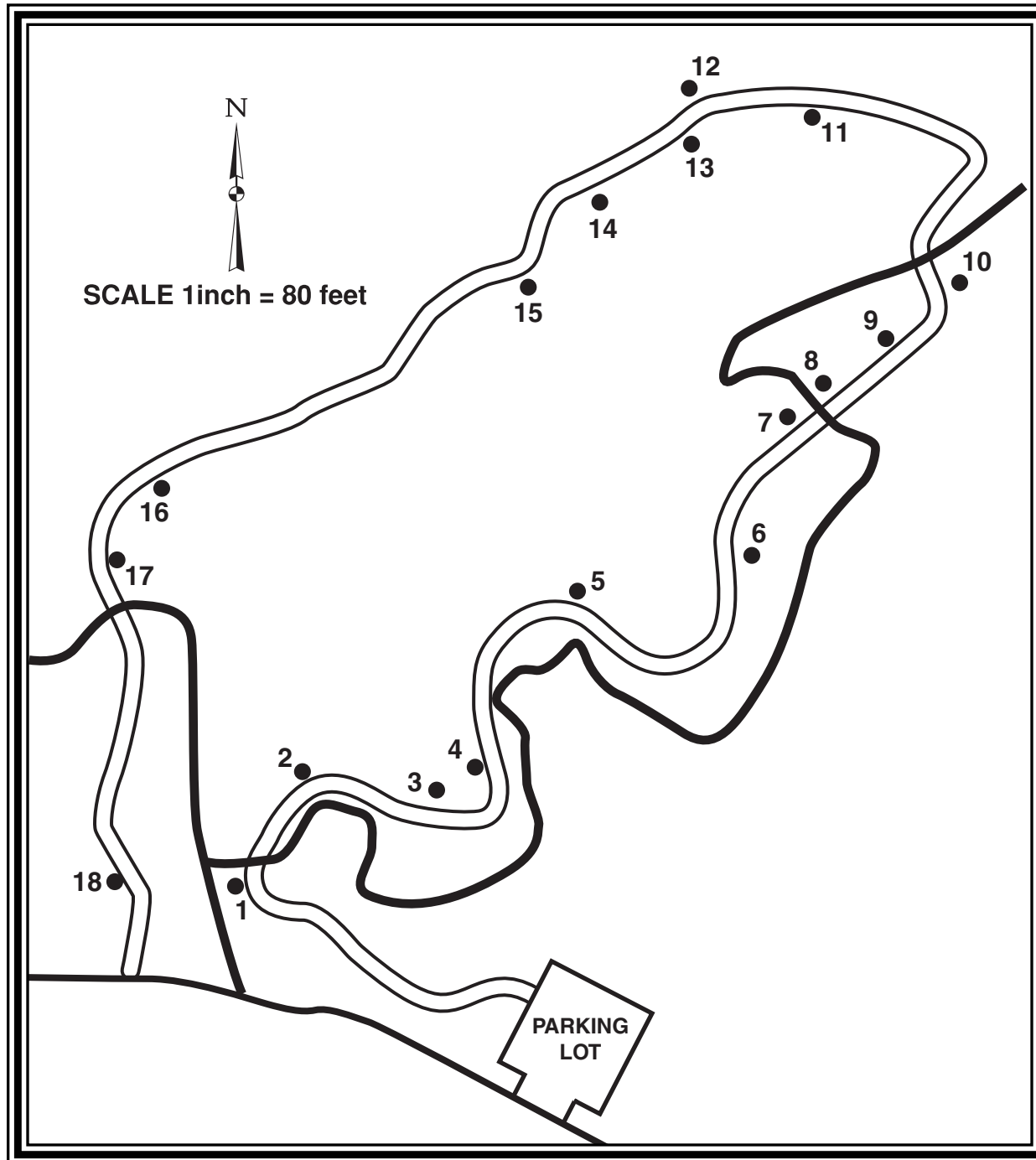
## 18. EASTERN RED CEDAR

The blue berries found on the berries is a form of yeast that can be used for making starters in baking. The berries are also a staple food for wildlife.

The variety of living things which inhabit the Giefer Nature Trail exist on an island in a sea of agriculture and urban lands. We, at Cheney State Park, hope you have enjoyed your walk and for a different perspective, turn around and travel through the trail in the other direction.

**THANK YOU FOR VISITING AND  
ENJOY YOUR DAY.**

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# CHENEY State Park



## Giefer Nature Trail

Giefer Nature Trail was developed in 1978 with the help of the YACC (Young Adult Conservation Corps). The trail is named after the Giefer family who originally owned the land that is now part of the Nature Trail and Cheney State Park.



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This guide introduces you to certain surroundings by markers along the trail. If you walk quietly, using your senses, you will make many interesting discoveries. This 1/8th of a mile trail includes the two major habitats of the park: riparian woodlands and mixed-grass prairie.

Intermixing of these two habitats provides an edge, homes, cover, nesting, food and resting areas for a variety of plants and animals.

### **POISON IVY, “Leaflets 3-Let it be”.**

Animals can eat the leaves of this plant and birds eat their berries, but some people can develop an irritating rash if they come into contact with it-so watch out for it! Poison Ivy can be a small plant, climbing vine or large bush. All will have three leaves in clumps, reddish stems, and in the fall, white berries.

### **1. GIEFER CREEK**

This spring-fed, clear, cool and sandy bottomed creek originates just a few miles away underground in a pasture. The land that it runs through has never been broken by the plow, therefore runoff has not fouled the creek. The sand was created when the glaciers melted and brought down a rough sand which covered the Permian era soils and rocks that underlay the Ninnescah Valley.

If you look carefully along the banks you will find the tracks of deer, raccoon and other animals.

### **2. AMERICAN ELM**

This tree’s wood has many uses in manufacturing. The American Elm is the most common native elm in Kansas. Trees provide an overhead canopy which gives shade from the sun, protection from the wind, prevents erosion and adds moisture and oxygen to the air.

### **3. VIRGINIA CREEPER**

This ground cover is often confused with poison ivy. Notice the five leaves grouped at the top of the plant instead of three.

### **4. COTTONWOOD**

**KS State Tree**

This tree was important to the Indians. During heavy snow, they kept their ponies alive by feeding them tender bark stripped from small limbs. The bark was also used as a quinine substitute. The “cotton” from female trees was used as mattress stuffing and for diapers.

### **5. HACKBERRY**

**(Palo Blanco)**

The Spanish name of this tree means “White Stick” and refers to the color of the bark, especially on the branches.

The erosion you see on the creek bank was caused by people treading the same area and from flooding.

### **6. RIVERBANK GRAPE**

LOOK UP- This vine is intertwined in a tree. If you look closely, you will recognize this plant many times along the trail. It’s fruit is edible, but always make sure you have correctly identified a plant before you eat the known edible part.

On the sides of the trail you will see large brush piles. They provide the basic wildlife requirements of food, shelter and nesting for animals.

### **7. GIANT RAGWEED**

High in protein and oils, wildlife feed on this plant year round. The seed heads and leaves can make a red dye, which was used by the Indians for warpaint.

LOOK close and you’ll see many insects along the trail. They have three body regions, six legs, and two antennae. What insect is it? They are found almost everywhere in the work in unimaginable numbers. Many insects pollinate flowers, transfer seeds and fertilize soil.

Some provide honey and silk and are a source of food for many animals.

### **8. CATALPA**

Notice the large leaves of this tree. In late spring it produces long slender seed pods. Catalpa is the old Indian name for this plant.

### **9. REDBUD**

This tree is known for its beautiful, aromatic red flowers it produces in spring.

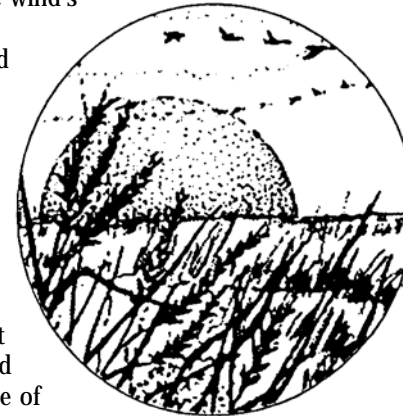
### **10. PRAIRIE**

**(French for Meadow)**

Life is quite different on the prairie than in the woodland. Sunlight and wind are very intense here, and plants and animals have had to adapt. This is a mixed-grass prairie: rainfall, climate, and soil determine the specific ecosystems and grass heights.

There are few trees on the prairie compared to the woodlands because of droughts and fires. Grasses have long fibrous roots that can survive adversity. Tree seedlings require a lot of water that the prairie doesn’t always provide. Plants must survive the wind’s drying effects. Grasses will bend while trees can break.

You won’t see many SNAKES on the nature trail. In fact, the only venomous species at Cheney is located on the north side of the lake and is the small Massassauga Rattlesnake. The best time to see snakes is in the spring and fall when they are soaking up the sun’s rays or eating prey.



### **11. BLACK WILLOW**

A natural form of aspirin, called salicin, is present in the bark of all willow trees. It has been used since prehistoric days.

### **12. TREE RINGS**

Trees are the longest living organisms on earth. Each band between two distinct lines represents one year of growth. A tree can tell the history of an area by looking at its rings. Wide rings indicate ample rainfall and growth. Narrow rings indicate drought and little growth.

### **13. BLACK WALNUT**

Not only are the nuts of this tree edible for wildlife and man, but the bark and hulls can be used medicinally as a gargle for colic and for tape worms.

### **14. RED MULBERRY**

In most plants leaf shapes and sizes are generally the same, but the Mulberry tree has a wide variety of them.

### **15. BLACKBERRY BUSHES**

Enjoyed by wildlife and people alike the berries from a blackberry bush can be picked and eaten in mid-summer. The bark and leaves can be used to make a medicinal tea for coughs, sore throats and diarrhea.

Animals can also use these thorny bushes as protection from predators.

This AREA between woodland and prairie is excellent habitat for many animals. Deer use this area for bedding in the summer and yarding in the winter. Game birds use it as a nesting area.