

Madison Parks: Celebrating 50 years of conservation parks; spotlighting Edna Taylor

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Madison Parks continues its [celebration of 50 years of conservation parks](#) with [an event](#) and [video spotlight](#) on an eastside gem. Located between Monona Drive and Stoughton Road, Edna Taylor Conservation Park provides a respite from the nearby city hustle with wetlands and trails meandering through prairies and woodlands. Named after teacher, writer, dairy farmer and landowner, Edna E.E. Taylor, whose 37 acres, purchased by the City in 1972, helped form this 60-acre park.

Visitors to the park today will notice a concrete slab to the right of the main trailhead on Femrite Drive. This is the future home of an informational kiosk, which will feature a park map and field trip guide. As you continue your walk from the parking lot entrance, ponds on either side of the trail are busy with waterfowl, turtles, and amphibians. Beyond this, you will see evidence of recent prescribed fires through much of the park.

Wandering the trail west, you'll connect with the Aldo Leopold Nature Center, an environmental education facility open to the public. Visitors who head right, or east at the fork in the trail, will soon see the "photo monitoring post." Staff and volunteers use this to take photos of the same scene at different times of the year to monitor vegetation and wildlife. As you continue the eastern trail loop, you'll also see an interesting small fenced area. Conservation staff installed the enclosure as a way to observe the effects of deer in the park. By excluding deer from this space we will more easily see the impact deer browse is having on the plant community.

On the eastern side of the park, visitors may look up the slope of a glacial drumlin and spot from a distance, six long linear mounds and one panther effigy, known to

be part of the Phlaum-McWilliams mound group from 650-1100 A.D. The former ridgetop trail has recently been re-routed to preserve and protect the mound group, designated in 1990 as a City of Madison landmark, and on the National Register of Historic Places. This cataloged burial site is also protected as a cemetery by state law.

As with any good park system, volunteers help make all the difference. The Friends of Edna Taylor Conservation Park help manage the lands with volunteer projects and work events. You can also explore the park with a guided monthly tour, also led by volunteers, at a [Bird and Nature Adventure](#) held on the fourth Saturday of each month. If you can't wait that long, join Conservation Resource Supervisor, Paul Quinlan on **Wednesday, May 11**, at the first [Conservation Park Tour](#) of the 2022 season starting at 5:30pm.

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