



Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie

Newton & Henslow Interim Hiking Trails



Welcome to the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. Midewin was established in 1996 as the first national tallgrass prairie in the country. It is administered by the USDA Forest Service, in close cooperation with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the support of hundreds of volunteers and partner agencies, businesses, and organizations.

As a major portion of the peacetime conversion of the former Joliet Army Ammunition Plant, Midewin represents the largest prairie restoration attempted in the United States. Located just 40 miles south of Chicago, it also represents an unprecedented opportunity for urban dwellers to experience the wide open spaces that characterized the Prairie State 200 years ago.

One of the reasons Midewin was established was to provide recreation opportunities. A land use plan is currently being developed for the entire site, and will include proposals and analysis about the types and locations of recreation activities to be offered at Midewin.

In the meantime, two "interim" hiking trails are available today. Please take time to enjoy these first hiking trails at Midewin. Inside this brochure you will find a map, and some information about what you'll see on the trails. Take your bird guide and binoculars, and listen for the sounds of the prairie.

Hiking Tips, Rules, and Regulations

The following rules and regulations will help protect our natural resources and ensure visitor safety. If needed for management reasons, the Forest Service may temporarily or permanently close a trail. Refer to the bulletin board for the most up-to-date information.

- **Foot traffic only**
- **Please sign in at the trailhead**
- **Dogs must be kept on a leash at all times**
- **This area is for day use only**
- **Please stay on the trail.** Each trail is marked at several points with a white diamond-shaped blaze on a brown post. Walking off the trail may disturb or harm nesting birds. Shortcutting the trail can cause resource damage.
- **Pack it in! Pack it out!** Please don't litter.
- **Caution!! For your own safety do not approach tractors, heavy equipment, or farm machinery operating in the area. Equipment operators may not be able to hear or see you in time to stop**



Henslow Interim Trail

Length: 1.5 Miles (2.5 Km) loop

Level of Difficulty: easy to moderate.

Stop 1: The medium to tall grass on this side of the fence provides nesting habitat for Henslow's sparrows, bobolinks, and other grassland birds. Henslow's sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*) is one of several grassland birds that have become endangered in Illinois due in part to habitat loss. Look to the west through the fence – this field is maintained in short grass condition to provide nesting habitat for upland sandpipers and loggerhead shrikes. Many grassland birds are migratory and may only visit for breeding purposes. The peak nesting period, May-August, is considered the best time for observing most grassland birds. The red-tailed hawk, kestrel, and great-horned owl are year round residents of Midewin and could be spotted at any time.

Stop 2: If you look to the west, you will see several grass-covered mounds. These are bunkers, constructed during the 1940s when the Joliet Army Ammunition Plant (JAAP) was created. Designed to store explosives, their concrete walls are 3 to 5 feet thick and their earthen covering both camouflaged them from aerial view and helped to keep the TNT inside at a stable temperature. Hundreds of these bunkers remain at Midewin today, as well as over 1,300 structures, 200 miles of road, and 166 miles of railbed – reminders of munitions production here from World War II, through the Korean and Vietnam eras.

Newton Interim Trail

Length: 1.5 Miles (2.5 Km) loop

Level of Difficulty: Easy.

Stop 1: Native American people inhabited Midwin for thousands of years, through the mid-1800s. They left little behind of their hunting and gathering lifestyle.

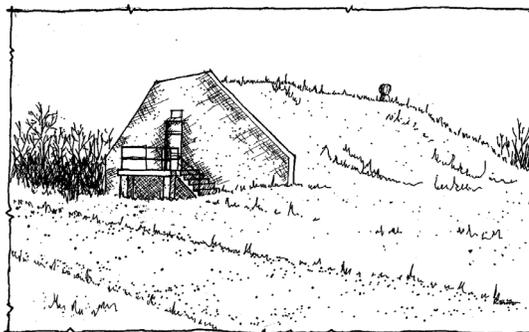
The Euro American people who came next, however, established more permanent farmsteads, churches, schools, cemeteries, and roads. If you look to the west through the steel fence, you will see a grove of trees. During the last half of the 19th century this was the site of a bustling farmstead. Only crumbling stone and aggregate foundations remain of the home and farm buildings.

Stop 2: Midwin is home to 5 cemeteries. The Newton cemetery is the site of a single grave for Mr. Edward Newton, who died in 1865. Several stories exist concerning the fate of Mr. Newton, who may have lived on a nearby farmstead and is thought to have been a Civil War veteran.

Stop 3: Other reminders of early Euro American farm life are miles of remnant fence. Early farmers often planted a row of thorny Osage orange shrubs to create a living fence. When abandoned, these shrubs grew into rows of large trees. Early farmers also stacked stones for fence. During the last half of the 19th century, barbed wire replaced these natural materials for fencing.

Thank you for visiting the Midwin National Tallgrass Prairie.

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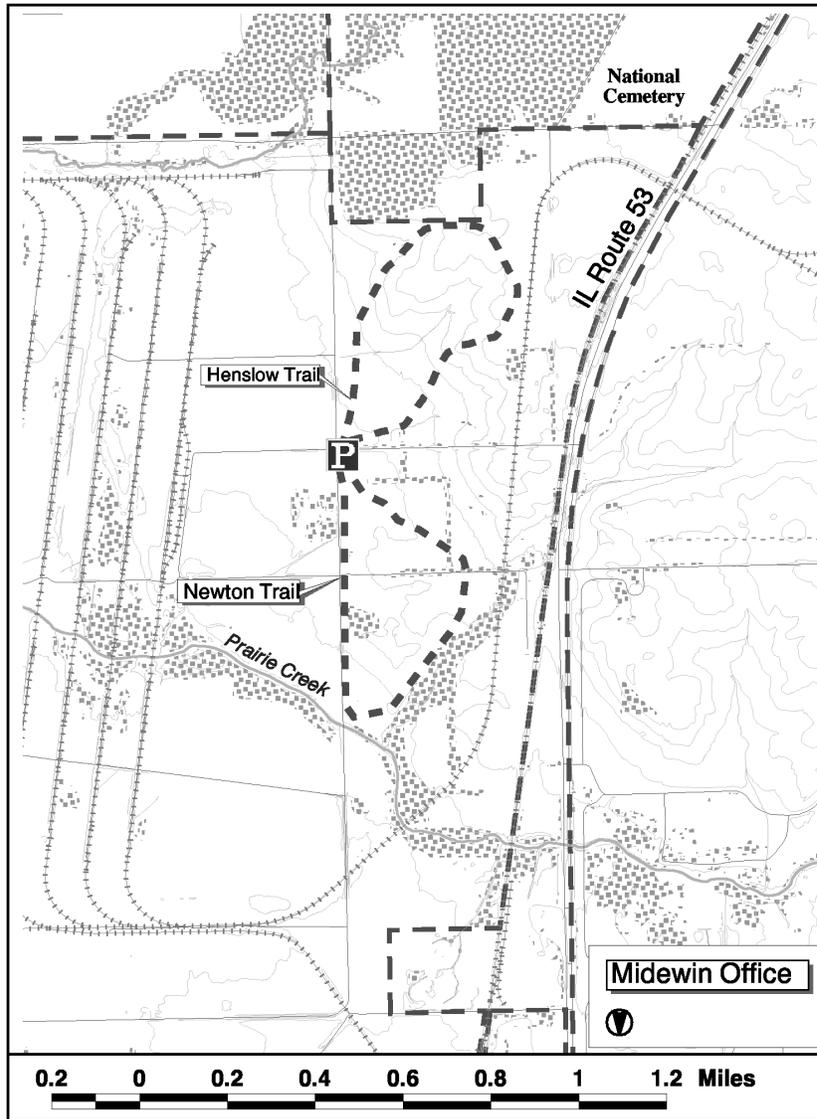
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Credits: Cover photo of Henslow's Sparrow by Ron Panzer, McHenry County Conservation District; prairie plants drawing by Eric Ulaszek, Midwin; bunker drawing by Rick Short, Midwin; Midwin logo by Denise Wurl.

Newton & Henslow Interim Hiking Trails Map

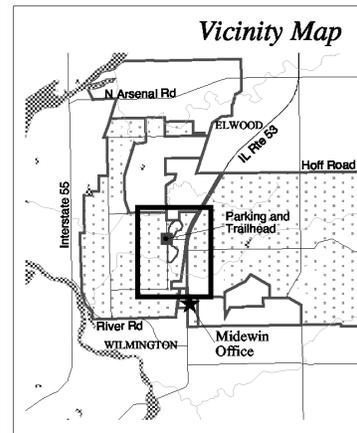


Interim Hiking Trails

LEGEND

- Trail
- Railbed
- Road
- Stream
- Boundary
- Contour
- Woodland
- Parking & Trailhead

- Henslow Loop Trail (North)**
1.5 Miles
- Newton Loop Trail (South)**
1.5 Miles



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