



Driftless Prairies: Native Ecosystems

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Black Light Photography

Black Light Photography

To attract the insects to locations that I can then photograph them, I use a black light. It's fairly easy to set up and there's many ways to accomplish this. We tried several techniques before we found the one that worked for us. We had an oak quilt hanging rack that we don't use any longer, so we repurposed it to hang the white sheet. This quilt rack is made to clamp together, holding the quilt so that it wouldn't be damaged with holes when it was screwed into the studs. To keep it together without the need for screws each time as that would eventually wear the screw holes, we used hand clamps. Then we screwed long screws into the top of the garage door frame and hung this over the screws.



We use 4 hand clamps across the top of the quilt rack.



Here's a close up of the end of the quilt rack so you see how it would hold the sheet.

I used a white sheet set. I removed the elastic from the fitted sheet and hemmed it then I sewed it to the "top" of the flat sheet. Then I opened the sides of that "top" hem and placed a leftover metal conduit pipe through the casing that was made. This pipe provides enough weight to keep the sheet taut and mostly still when a breeze comes through.



The “fitted” sheet is sewn to the flat sheet and lays on the ground.



The top hem of the flat sheet is opened on the ends for the conduit pipe.

The black light is a 4' long shop light fixture that holds 2 black light tubes. They can be purchased at any home improvement store. With the chain on the shop light, we added a length of rope that would allow us to slip the fixture over a ladder so the light was about shoulder high.



Above: This is a close up of how the rope attaches to the chain and slips over the ladder.

To the right: The light rests securely on the ladder at an ideal height.



Here is the complete set up



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