



WILDLIFE ON THE COASTAL PRAIRIE



Black swallowtail butterfly

From the graceful flight of the black swallowtail to the stealthy movements of the bobcat, the coastal prairie is home to a diverse array of fascinating wildlife. What is biodiversity? Biodiversity is the variety of life in a given area and is crucial for maintaining the balance and health of all ecosystems. In addition to maintaining that balance, the biodiversity of the prairie landscape helps reduce the effects of climate change by slowing and storing floodwaters from extreme weather and providing resilient habitat for native plants and wildlife. Let's take a look at the beautiful world of the coastal prairie and explore the significance of its biodiversity!

COASTAL TALLGRASS PRAIRIE ECOSYSTEMS

contain as
many as

1000

plant species

GRASSES & WILDFLOWERS

The grasses and wildflowers of the coastal prairie form a dynamic landscape, adding beauty and functionality. A remarkable variety of grass species, including big bluestem, little bluestem, and switchgrass, cover vast expanses of the prairie. These grasses provide homes for wildlife while their roots prevent soil erosion, fix carbon in the soil, and absorb excess rainfall. Complementing the grasses are a dazzling array of wildflowers; over 700 species of plants have been documented on the Katy Prairie. From the impressive common sunflowers to the delicate bluebonnets, these wildflowers burst into brilliant colors, attracting a multitude of pollinators.

INSECTS & POLLINATORS

Insects and pollinators are essential occupants of the coastal prairie, playing a critical role in the ecosystem's balance. Buzzing through the air, bees collect nectar from vibrant wildflowers, ensuring the pollination that allows native plants to reproduce. Butterflies, including the iconic monarch, travel from flower to flower, spreading pollen as they go. Other insect species, such as beetles and flies, also support pollination. In addition to their pollination services, insects are a food source for numerous birds, reptiles, and mammals on the prairie. From bees to butterflies, insects and pollinators all have a role to play on the coastal prairie.

BIODIVERSITY (continued)

WATERFOWL AND WADING BIRDS

The coastal prairie of Texas is home to a rich diversity of waterfowl and wading birds. With their towering statures, whooping cranes and sandhill cranes are symbols of grace and resilience. These iconic

birds migrate to the coastal prairie each year, seeking refuge in the wetlands and marshes that provide them with ample food and shelter. Wetlands on the

prairie are home to other fascinating waterfowl species, such as the elegant wood duck, renowned for its colorful plumage and nesting in

streamside woodlands. The mottled duck, a year-round resident, and the northern pintail, with a long, slender neck and distinctive pointed

tail, are other notable waterfowl species that can be observed on the coastal prairie. These species, along with others like sandpipers and

curlews, contribute to the biodiversity of the coastal prairie, showcasing the importance of this unique habitat for both wildlife and nature enthusiasts.



Northern pintail duck

GRASSLAND BIRDS

Grassland species thrive on the coastal prairie, helping disperse native plant seeds while raising their young under the shelter of clump-forming native grasses. Among the grassland birds that call this habitat home are the bobwhite quail, the endangered Attwater's prairie chicken, and the eastern meadowlark, known for its beautiful flute-like song. Grassland birds provide the soundtrack to the sights and sounds of the coastal prairie, and remind us that their survival depends upon healthy, native prairies.



MIGRATING SPECIES

The coastal prairie is an important stopover and winter home for migratory birds. In recognition of this important habitat, the Katy Prairie has been designated a Global Important Bird Area. This designation acknowledges the role this habitat plays in supporting the migratory birds that rely on it for rest, forage, and refuge. From colorful warblers to the majestic sandhill cranes, the annual movement of migratory birds reminds us of the importance of protecting this vital habitat in our region.

**Coastal
Prairie
Conservancy**

Since 1992, the Coastal Prairie Conservancy has been helping sustain a resilient Texas by preserving coastal prairies, wetlands, farms, and ranches to benefit people and wildlife forever.

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