

# Coastal Prairie Conservancy

Since 1992, the Coastal Prairie Conservancy has been working to preserve diminishing prairie lands for people and wildlife. We are a leader in local land conservation and now protect more than 30,000 acres of prairie in Harris, Waller, Matagorda, and Fort Bend counties, most of which makes up the Katy Prairie Preserve just outside Houston. The Coastal Prairie Conservancy is also working to protect coastal prairie in other Texas counties and through conservation agreements protects an over 11,500 acres in Brazoria, Galveston, Matagorda, and Jackson Counties.

The Coastal Prairie Preserve does so much for our community by keeping land in agriculture for local farmers and ranchers and providing one of the last strongholds for wildlife in the region. Our education programs connect families with nature, and have earned local, statewide, and national awards. And timelier than ever, these protected lands aid with flood control, contribute to the protection of our watersheds, and create a resilient landscape from the prairie to the Gulf Coast.

The coastal prairie is threatened and once lost, it will never be replaced. The Coastal Prairie Conservancy is working to protect what remains while there is still time. Our vision for the future is to preserve an additional 10,000 to 30,000 acres on the Katy Prairie, which will ensure healthy communities, connect people with nature, and safeguard wildlife. You can help. Your generous financial gifts, your steadfast volunteer efforts, and your enthusiastic sharing of our story bring us success.

Learn more about land conservation, prairie restoration, upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, and sign up for our newsletter at [coastalprairieconservancy.org](http://coastalprairieconservancy.org). Check out the "Native Plants" page on our website with information on gardening with native plants, a "9 Natives for your Garden" brochure, and a video on Houston's urban pocket prairies. If you or someone you know owns land on the Texas coastal prairie, learn about ways to donate the land to the Coastal Prairie Conservancy as a trade land, protect the land through a conservation agreement, or sell the land to a land trust.

Thank you in advance for helping us preserve land for people and wildlife, today and tomorrow.

## Stay in Touch!

Visit our website at [coastalprairieconservancy.org](http://coastalprairieconservancy.org)  
Email us at [info@coastalprairieconservancy.org](mailto:info@coastalprairieconservancy.org)  
Follow us on social media @[coastalprairieconservancy](https://www.instagram.com/coastalprairieconservancy)  
Use #coastalprairie to share your photos online!



1

Welcome to the Coastal Prairie Conservancy's Indiangrass Preserve, 1,700 acres of wetlands, prairie, grazing land and small creeks. The big story here is renewal – of the land and facilities for wildlife and people.

2

The Ann Hamilton Trail is named for a local conservationist who helped provide funding for this trail and the 55-acre prairie-wetlands restoration that you are here to enjoy. We want adventure to be available to all our guests. The concrete loop and wetland platform in front of you is designed to allow young visitors and those with limited mobility an opportunity to view a wetland full of aquatic life up close.

3

In 2014, our conservation team began the process of recreating the vibrant tallgrass prairie and wetlands that were here hundreds of years ago. With the help of many experts, we located and excavated the old potholes and reseeded the upland areas with native prairie seeds. As the prairie returned to a more native state, wildlife returned, including the crawfish frog who sits at the edge of crawfish burrows patiently waiting for prey. Other species like bald eagles, turtles and even beaver have returned as the prairie has come back to life!

4

The return of native grasses and wildflowers is important to native wildlife and benefits pollinators. The wildflowers around you are a nectar source for migrating monarchs, butterflies and resident native bees and some serve as a food source for butterfly and moth caterpillars. Native bees burrow into plant stems to spend the winter.

5

At one time this land was used as an agricultural research station and the natural flow of water was altered. We are attempting to restore that natural water flow. A system of drain pipes is being used in an attempt to restore the natural flow of water and ensure that the elevated trail you are using does not dam water on the prairie. In the coming years, it is likely that beavers will try to dam the pipes to hold more water. Ecologists here will use innovative techniques to strike a balance between the beavers' needs for still water and our need to manage the prairie for a variety of wildlife and for people like us.

6

As we restore this preserve for wildlife, we will also be sensitive to changing too many things too quickly. The line of pine trees to your east are not native to the prairie and were intentionally planted many years ago. Over time, these trees become roosting sites for native owls, hawks and recently bald eagles. So,

although these trees were not a part of the original prairie of the Indiangrass Preserve, we will retain these pine trees and the pecan trees near our front entrance so that they can continue to serve wildlife.

7

To the north, Indiangrass Preserve is bounded by the paved Hebert Road and a fence line with trees and shrubs. What wildlife biologists call the "edge effect" is evident here – wildlife is diverse at the boundary of the habitat we have created. You may see red-tailed hawks, crested caracara, or vultures perched on the power poles. Northern cardinals may be heard chirping among the shrubs while woodpeckers hammer in the trees. Great egrets, blue heron, roseate spoonbill, and black-necked stilts feed in the shallow ponds. Meadowlarks, red-winged blackbirds, and dickcissels may be heard singing in the high grasses. Birdwatchers seek out edges like these because they can observe birds of many habitats from one vantage point.

8

Some of us think of the coastal prairie as Houston's big back yard. As every homeowner learns, the yard doesn't just take care of itself and needs regular maintenance. Historically, wildfires on the prairie destroyed woody growth and migrating herds of bison spread seed and stomped it in the ground. Our small staff needs a herd of volunteers to help with tasks like removing Chinese tallow trees, Brazilian vervain plants, and Vasey grass. These non-native, invasive plants are replaced with natives such as black willow, Texas vervain and Indiangrass. How can you help? Sign up for one of our seed collecting trips, join The Great Grow Out to get seeds and grow native plants, and join us for our annual Putting Down Roots event to plant natives on the prairie. You can also grow natives in your own garden—like providing a fast food restaurant for migrating butterflies and hummingbirds. And of course, your donations are essential to our on-going efforts to preserve and take care of a portion of the Texas coastal prairie for its wildlife and its people forever.

9

Take a look down at the trail you've been walking on or in the mud around the edge of this pothole. Do you see signs of other visitors? Humans aren't the only animals that appreciate a well-worn path. After a recent rain, you may see animal tracks like a deer's hoof print, a coyote's dog-like paw print, a bobcat's paw print with no claws, or a raccoon's track with 5 long toes. You may also notice animal feces or scat such as the small round pellets of a rabbit or slightly oval pellets of a deer. Looks like dog poop with fur in it? Could be coyote. Did you know that owls regurgitate a tight pellet made up of the indigestible portion of their prey including teeth, skulls, claws and feathers? You're more likely to find these under a tree limb or a ledge where the owls roost. Out here in the open, loose feathers on the ground are likely to be the remains of a hawk's dinner.

Stand very still, close your eyes, and tune your ears to the sounds of nature: the buzz of insects, the call of a bird, the sound the wind makes through the dry grasses. The prairie changes with the seasons. The wildflowers bloom; butterflies and bees come to collect pollen and drink nectar; the flowers fade and seeds are formed; wind carries some of the seed, some is eaten by birds and animals, some falls to ground. The rains come and wash away some of the seed but some remains hidden on the ground, cool and dormant in the winter, ready to sprout when the ground warms again. We hope you will come again to experience the prairie as it changes.