

# Habitat

## Cajun Prairie

### What is the Cajun Prairie?

The Cajun Prairie, like all other prairies, is a grassland consisting primarily of grasses blended with a large number of broad-leaved wildflower species. There is minimal intrusion of trees in a healthy prairie. The main factors that allow a prairie to survive include drought, fire, migratory grazing animals and adaptations that allow plants to compete with woody vegetation.



Eastern Meadowlark



Blazing Stars

Cloudless Sulphur Caterpillar on Partridge Pea

Mountain Mint

Butterfly Weed



Green Milkweed

### What happened to the Cajun Prairie and what is being done to preserve/reestablish it?

The originally estimated 2.5 million acres of Cajun Prairie dwindled to only about 100 acres, due to urban development and changes in land use. The Cajun Prairie Preservation Society is restoring a prairie habitat in Eunice, Louisiana and is encouraging the preservation of prairie remnants that exist along railroad right of ways, which if managed correctly with fire, are potentially an important part of the restoration of this habitat.

### What plants might I see in the Cajun Prairie?

About 1,000 types of wildflowers and other plants grow in this habitat with the most common grass species being Switchgrass, Little Bluestem, Big Bluestem and Indiangrass. Many of these plants have underground root-like structures that can be up to three times the size of the above-ground part of the plant.



Narrowleaf Sunflower

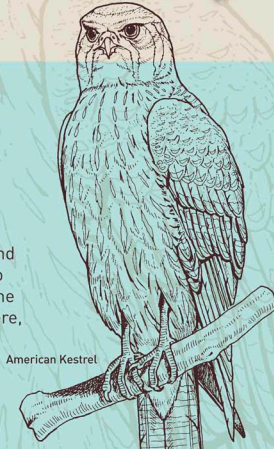
Little Bluestem



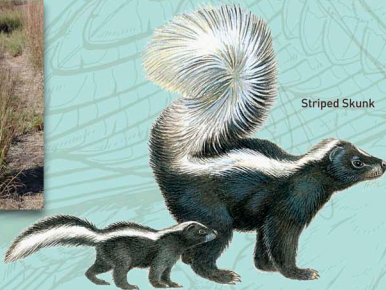
Gulf Fritillary Butterfly



Eastern Cottontail



American Kestrel



Striped Skunk



Red-winged Blackbird

### What animals live in the Cajun Prairie?

When the Cajun Prairie once stretched for millions of acres it was home to American Bison and Whooping Cranes. Today's smaller tracts of land aren't suitable for these species, but still provide habitat for a multitude of other vertebrates-- birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Many insects are attracted to the prairie, including the Gulf Fritillary, one of the most common butterflies found there, and the Prairie Forceptail Dragonfly, which only lives in the Cajun Prairie.