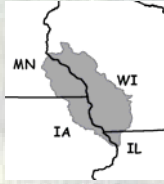


HILL PRAIRIES of the Driftless Area

Where are they?

The unglaciated portions of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois, known as the Driftless Area, contain rugged topography that supports a wide range of habitats. Much of the area was historically prairie and savanna (areas with few trees). Hill prairies were one of the common types of prairies.



Location of the Driftless Area

Hill prairies are island-like patches of prairie vegetation occurring on otherwise wooded steep slopes. This prairie vegetation usually occurs only on the slopes, where a combination of factors such as the south to west-facing slope aspect, steep slope angle, dry prevailing winds, and well drained soil result in droughty conditions. Other common names for hill prairies include bluff prairies, goat prairies, and prairie openings. Hill prairies likely never formed large continuous belts, but were fragmented by forested ravines that dissect the uplands.

Don't let them disappear!

These small patches (remnants) will not persist into the future without some management action. Because the prairies are defined as treeless areas, the invasion of trees and brush is the most common threat. In addition, there are non-native flowers and grasses that can out compete our native prairie flora.

Here are some common management actions:

Fire

- Removes thatch
- Promotes soil warming
- Favors warm season grasses
- Kills some trees and brush



Only trained individuals should attempt prairie burns!

Removing woody species

Some woody species are tolerant of fire and must be killed by other methods. **Herbicides** can be used on cut stumps. Another method is the removal of the outer bark (**girdling**), which will kill trees over a year or two. Cutting alone will not kill some trees, and will only offer short-term benefits.

Removing non-native plants

Some non-native plants can be controlled with fire and herbicides. Some require removal by hand.

This poster was produced by:



(www.theprairieenthusiasts.org) - TPE is a non-profit organization committed to protection and management of native prairie and savanna of the Upper Midwest. Members work together on private lands, as well as protected lands that TPE owns or manages.

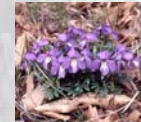
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What's found there?

Common Flora

There are several hundred plant species that may occupy a prairie. A few that are common to hill prairies are illustrated below.



Pasque flower and Bird's-foot violet



Leadplant, Purple prairie clover, and Coreopsis

Spring Forbs

Summer Forbs



Silky aster, Cylindric blazingstar, and Grey goldenrod



Little bluestem and Side-oats grama

Fall Forbs

Grasses

How common are they?

As with most prairie types, only a small fraction of the original hill prairies still exist. However, unlike most prairie types that were primarily lost due to plowing, the hill prairies were primarily lost due to the lack of fire. That is somewhat good news, as the rate of loss was not as rapid. Today, many small remnants exist, but there are few that exceed 10 acres in size.



Based on the mapping example above, about 100 potential hill prairies (most less than an acre) were identified in this township.

Interesting Fauna

Due to the small size and patchy distribution of hill prairies, most larger animal life are not restricted to hill prairies. However, many "Species of Greatest Conservation Needs" (such as the two examples here) are associated with prairies.



Small land snails, such as the wing snaggletooth, are one of the often overlooked invertebrates of hill prairies.



Lizards, such as the prairie racerunner pictured above, are found on hill prairies.