

FIRE

Fire, often seen as a negative force of nature, is crucial to a healthy prairie. Fires are responsible for returning nutrients to the soil. In the Blackland Prairie, a fire eliminates invasive plants and trees leaving deep rooted grasses behind. The surviving plants resprout within weeks. Land managers enlist the help of professionals to use prescribed burns to lower the risk of intense fires in dry, windy conditions and combat overgrowing vegetation.

STAGES OF FIRE MANAGEMENT

Match the numbers with the photo of the correct stage

1. PREBURN

2. DURING BURN

3. POST BURN

4. REJUVENATED PRAIRIE

What stage do you think the prairie is in today?



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THE BLACKLAND PRAIRIE

COME EXPLORE THE 'SEA OF GRASS'



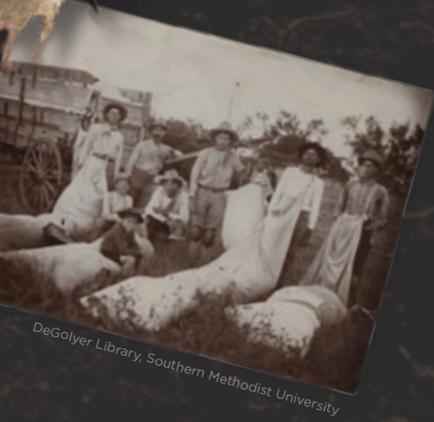
THE BLACKLAND PRAIRIE ECOREGION

Stretching from the Red River to San Antonio, the Blackland Prairie is a long sliver of fertile ground described as a 'sea of grass' by European settlers. Along the tall grasses were the American bison that frequently moved in large herds to avoid predation from gray and red wolves. While on the run they would trample saplings, bury seeds in the soil and leave behind valuable manure. Other large animals like pronghorns, black bears and mountain lions once called this land their home beside the bison and wolves until humans started to settle out west.



AGRICULTURE & DEVELOPMENT

The Blackland Prairie features an easily farmed fertile black soil. These rich soils led to the boom of the cotton industry and several other crops in Texas from the 1800s to the 1930s but also destroyed 99% of the ecoregion. Many organizations, including governmental, are working to restore, conserve and preserve the ecoregion.



DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University

ANIMALS

Small creatures like the mocking bird, eastern fox squirrel, eastern cottontail, rat snake, white-tail deer, and coyotes are just a few of many that can be found. All the animals play an important part of helping the prairie thrive.

Can you find these animals (or their tracks) in the prairie today?

EASTERN FOX SQUIRREL

COYOTE

BLACK RAT SNAKE

WHITE TAIL DEER

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD

PLANTS

There are two types of plants that can be found in Blackland prairie: annuals and perennials. Annuals are plants that will grow for a single year and die. Annuals will have shorter roots as they won't need to worry about coming back at the end of their season. Perennials are plants that will keep coming back every year. Some perennials will have roots that can be over 10 feet deep in the ground. These plants will use the roots to grow back in the spring, after fires, or even after being eaten by bison.

Can you find these plants that make up the sea of grass?

SIDE OATS GRAMA

INDIAN GRASS

BLUEBONNET

SWITCHGRASS

BIG BLUESTEM

LITTLE BLUESTEM