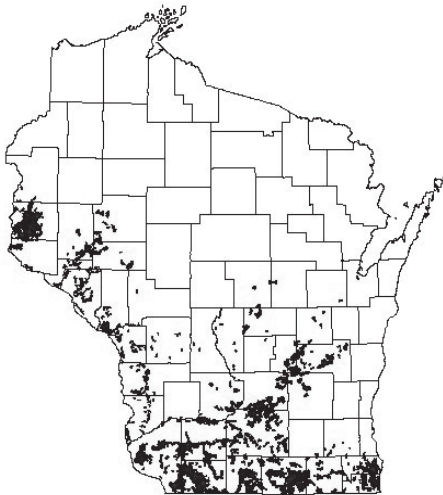


Where were prairies historically found in Wisconsin?

- Wisconsin is the northern edge of the historic range of tall grass prairie.
- Prairies could be found in flat areas or, in more hilly regions, often on south and west facing slopes.



Wisconsin prairie distribution, pre-European settlement. Data created by Robert Finley, 1976.

What role can prescribed burning play in prairie management?

- Together with controlled grazing and mowing, prescribed burns mimic the original environment of prairies.
- Regular burning has been shown to control invasive species.

What are the characteristics of the tall grass prairie ecosystem?

- Mostly composed of perennial flowers and grasses, some as tall as six feet high.
- Grows in wetter climates than that of the short grass prairies along the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains, with temperatures that range seasonally from below freezing to above 100 degrees.
- Remaining parcels of prairie are being identified in areas never altered from their original prairie composition - railroad right of ways, borders between crop fields, etc. - leading to preservation and restoration opportunities.
- Many public and private organizations at local, state, and federal levels have programs to help private landowners pay for and execute prairie restoration on their property. (Please see the back of this flier for contact information).

How is this situation improving?

- Citizens are beginning to value the importance of native prairies for local scenic beauty, preservation of rare plants and wildlife, and maintenance of diverse genetic resources.

What happened to Wisconsin prairie ecosystems?

- Settlers plowed up millions of acres of fertile, organic rich prairie soil for agriculture.
- Fire suppression led to an invasion of brush in remaining prairies.
- Today, only 0.5 percent of Wisconsin's original tall grass prairie ecosystem remains, most of it degraded or fragmented into small one to five acre plots.
- Grassland birds were particularly dependent on prairies and have declined to a greater extent than any other bird community.



Western Meadowlark

Drawing by Jim McEvoy,
courtesy of the Wisconsin DNR