

sand prairie

CHARACTERISTICS

The different prairie types were the result of variations in soil moisture, soil composition, geological substrate, glacial history and topography. Sand prairies developed on the extensive sand deposits that were left when the glaciers melted. They also formed on sand dunes that were blown up by the wind, such as along Lake Michigan. Well-drained, sandy soils are characteristic of sand prairies.

WHAT LIVES HERE?

Because the prairie ecosystem is recently evolved, few prairie species are restricted to the prairie habitat and may be found in other habitats as well. Plants tend to be more characteristic of specific prairie habitats than animals. Plants that grow in the sand prairie are adapted to grow in well-drained soil. These plants are typically shorter than those in black soil prairies. Little bluestem, leadplant, green milkweed, butterfly-weed, purple coneflower, sand primrose, prickly pear cactus, colic root, grass pink orchid, silvery bladderpod, blackjack oak, bearberry and winged sumac are all plants of Illinois sand prairies. The badger, Illinois chorus frog, common tern, western meadowlark, yellow mud turtle, bullsnake and plains hog-nosed snake are animals typically found in this prairie type.

RECREATION

hiking, wildlife observation, photography

WHERE IS IT FOUND?

Sand prairies are present along the Mississippi, Illinois, Green and Kankakee rivers and along Lake Michigan. Approximately 2,360 acres (poor and good quality) of sand prairies remain in Illinois. The majority of these sites are less than five acres in size. Below you will find a list of some sand prairies found in Illinois. For many of these prairies, you will need to call in advance to make arrangements before visiting the site. Ayers Sand Prairie Nature Preserve near Savanna in Carroll County; Bonnie's Prairie Nature Preserve near Watseka in Iroquois County; Foley Sand Prairie Nature Preserve near Rock Falls in Lee County; Iroquois County State Wildlife Area near Beaverville in Iroquois County; Hanover Bluff Nature Preserve near Hanover in Jo Daviess County; Henry Allan Gleason Nature Preserve near Topeka in Mason County; Illinois Beach State Park near Zion in Lake County; Long Branch Sand Prairie Nature Preserve near Kilbourne in Mason County; Sand Prairie Scrub Oak Nature Preserve and Sand Ridge State Forest near Forest City in Mason County; and Thomson-Fulton Sand Prairie Nature Preserve near Fulton in Whiteside County.

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