



Prairies and Savannas in Michigan

· REDISCOVERING OUR NATURAL HERITAGE ·



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Rediscovering Our Natural Heritage

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Prairies and savannas are a rare and unique part of Michigan's natural heritage. Once occupying a significant portion of Lower Michigan's landscape, these dynamic and varied communities have nearly vanished, along with numerous species that rely on the

habitats they provide. Home to many wildflowers, butterflies, birds, and insects, these naturally open landscapes were ideal sites for early European settlements. As the land was settled, fires and other natural processes that sustain these open landscapes were halted, and nearly all of these habitats have been lost as a result. Less than 1 percent of the original prairie and savanna acreage remains in Michigan, and the little that is left is threatened by habitat destruction, invasive species, and rapidly closing canopies. *Prairies and Savannas in Michigan* describes in detail these dynamic systems, the plants and animals they support, the ecological processes that sustain them, and current efforts to restore these valuable pieces of Michigan's natural heritage.

While there have been studies of other natural habitats in Michigan, such as dunes, wetlands, and forests, this is the only book now in print that focuses on prairie and savanna communities. Intended for general readers, it clearly describes the variety of natural habitats and itemizes noteworthy species found in each. In addition, it includes a special section on plants and animals, highlighting those species that are threatened or endangered, and it suggests what readers can do to help preserve and restore both habitats and species. The book fills a unique niche for practicing and armchair ecologists alike, and it provides a much needed educational overview for citizens living in a state with such unique and diverse—though rapidly disappearing—habitats.

Paper, 152 pages, 7 x 10, photos, index; 978-1-87013-845-4, \$24.95

Published in cooperation with the Michigan Natural Features Inventory



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