

Prairie Bird Facts



Sandhill Crane

Over forty species of birds can be found in the grasslands and prairies of North America. They include many families of birds including hawks, sparrows, blackbirds, quails, meadowlarks, geese, cranes, wrens, buntings and grosbeaks.

In early springtime, the male bobwhite makes a recognizable "bob-white" call to attract a female bobwhite; hence the name.

Sandhill crane couples "dance" together in the spring. They engage in a complex bowing display with wings stretched out and then they jump into the air. They will also pick up a small object such as a stick and throw it upward.

Tall grasses in the prairie can grow as high as ten feet, which provide protected nesting areas for birds. Grasses typically found in Texas prairies include eastern gamagrass, big bluestem, yellow Indian grass, gulf muhly.

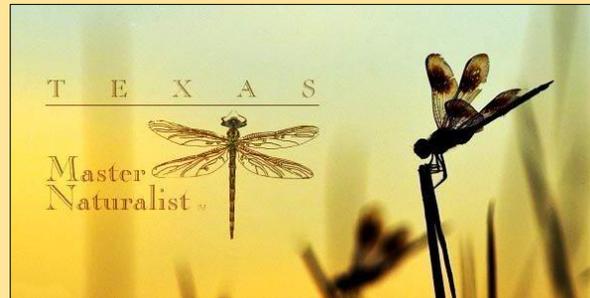
The prairie is our most endangered ecosystem due to habitat destruction from agriculture and urbanization. Prairies once covered about 40% of the USA; only about 1% remains. This adversely affects the lives of prairie birds.

Coastal Prairie Chapter Texas Master Naturalist

We are a group of trained volunteers who share our appreciation and knowledge of nature with the community through outreach, education and conservation/restoration projects.

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Prairie Birds



Northern Bobwhite



Finding Prairie Birds



Crested Caracara

Look for grassland birds year-round in tall or short grass prairies. Seed eaters can be found swinging on seed heads and grass stalks, especially in spring when the migrants stop to rest and eat. Birds of prey such as the crested caracara can be found flying low over the fields spotting their next meal. Quails are secretive and can be heard calling in the morning hours.



Dickcissel

Prairies in the Seabourne Creek Nature Park are home to many grassland birds. Seed-eating birds commonly seen include savannah sparrow, indigo and painted buntings, dickcissel, American goldfinch. Insect eaters of the prairie include northern bobwhite, eastern meadowlark, loggerhead shrike. Birds of prey include northern harrier, Mississippi kite, and American kestrel.

Pocket Prairies: Attracting Prairie Birds to your Yard



Painted Bunting

Create a pocket prairie in your own yard to attract small colorful song birds of the prairie. These little gardens don't have to be huge to make a positive difference in the lives of these avian friends.



Indigo Bunting

Site your pocket prairie in a sunny location. Native plants and a mix of grasses, wildflowers and shrubs will attract the most species. Grasses available in nurseries include little blue stem, Eastern gamagrass, Gulf muhly. Wildflowers include sunflower, coreopsis, penstemon, coneflower. Shrubs include elderberry and coralberry. To bring in spring migrants, a red mulberry tree can be added somewhere else in the garden. Also, a bird bath stocked with cool fresh water will attract all species of birds.

Providing a Backyard Feeder for Prairie Birds

The addition of a seed feeder to your backyard habitat garden provides another food source for birds and the opportunity to enjoy watching the colorful seed-eating birds as they feed.



Eastern Meadowlark

Song birds of the prairie, such as dickcissel, indigo and painted buntings, will use tube feeders as well as seed placed on a flat rock on the dry ground. Seed that attracts the widest variety of birds is black oil sunflower.

Other varieties of seed can attract other birds: safflower for grosbeaks and sparrows or nyger thistle for American goldfinch. Place the feeder in a spot that's easy to reach for refilling and where you will be able to have a good view of the birds as they feed.

Seed mixes containing red millet, oats, corn and other fillers are not attractive to most birds. Clean feeders at least once a month with a warm soapy solution to prevent the spread of disease.