

NASH PRAIRIE PRESERVE

2016 TMN-COT INTERN TEAM PROJECT





Project Team Members (as pictured l-r)

**Suzie Safley, Marshana Gill, (Chris Kneupper (Mentor)), Melba Beken,
Larry Peterson and Susan Conaty (Mentor behind camera)**



NASH PRAIRIE Team Presentation

- 1. What is a prairie? - Melba Beken**
 - 2. Nash Prairie Preserve - Larry Peterson**
 - 3. Animals of Nash Prairie - Suzie Safley**
 - 4. Plants of Nash Prairie - Marshana Gill**
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What Is A Prairie?

A diverse ecosystem...

not a field of almost single plant form and appearance.





**Betsy Ross & Larry
on 02/10/2016 at
Nash Prairie**



Nash Prairie Preserve



This 400 acres, nearly untouched by man, is a snapshot of Texas as it used to be.

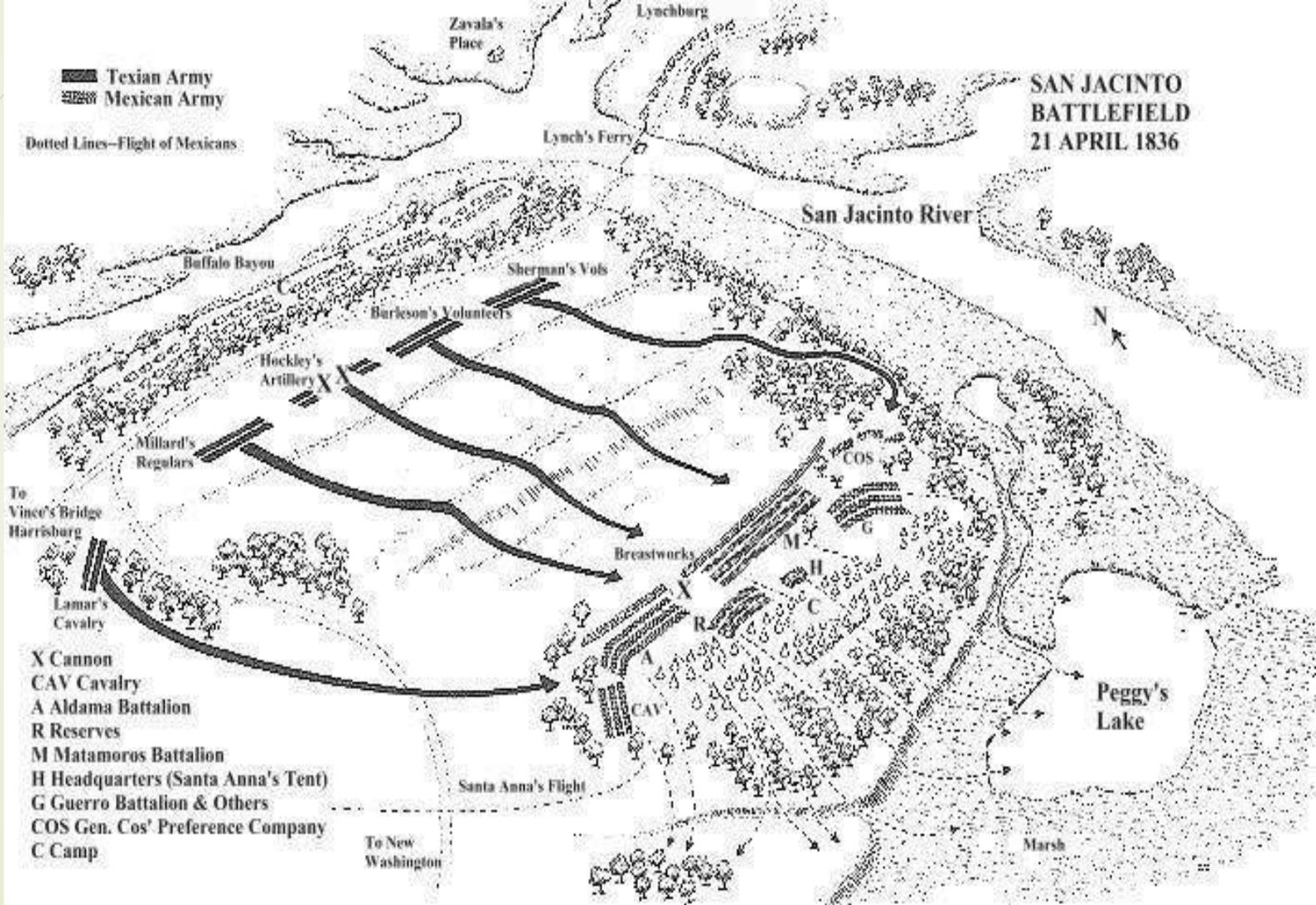


Nash Prairie on 2/10/16

Where is the coastal prairie region?
What habitats does it encompass?



Tall grasses around Battle of San Jacinto protected General Sam Houston's men.



What is this?





Here are two prairie queens from the Nash Prairie team!!

Why is it important to protect and restore prairie?



Native grasses protect the watersheds



Tallgrass prairie is needed as habitat for wildlife such as grassland birds and native pollinators









“I can sit on the porch before my door and see miles of the most beautiful prairie interwoven with groves of timber, surpassing, in my mind, the beauties of the sea. Think of seeing a tract of land on a slight incline covered with flowers and rich meadow grass for 12 to 20 miles” - John Brooke, an early settler in the tallgrass prairies of Texas, 1849



History of the Nash Prairie

- **Early Texas**
 - **KNG RANCH PROPERTIES**
 - **St. Mary's Church, Trustees & Heirs**
 - **THE NATURE CONSERVANCY**
 - **PLANT LIST** *2007 Prairie and 2011 All Habitats*
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History of the Nash Prairie

➤ Early Texas

- **Ranching has been a major Texas industry for nearly three centuries.** As early as 1690 the Spaniards brought in stock to feed missionaries, soldiers and civilians in the Coastal Bend. As missions declined ranching shifted to private ranchers.
- Mexican Texas and the Republic of Texas were less liberal with land grants, but still favorable to range husbandry. Individual citizens had access to vast areas of public land for grazing. **American colonists flowing into Texas in the 1830's were primarily farmers, not ranchers, but they quickly saw the significance of lush pastures where cattle could thrive with minimum care.**
- Modern academia places the birth of the Texas ranching industry to Southeast Texas where herds were driven to New Orleans. **In the 1840's and 1850's ranchers continued to drive small herds to New Orleans, some headed north. In the 1850s Texas cattle were shipped from coastal ports to New Orleans.**
- The Post-Civil War era brought rapid settlement to Texas due to vast lands offering great opportunity for Ranching, Farming and Lumber industries.
- The KNG Ranch was one of the large Texas ranches of the early 20th century.

History of the Nash Prairie

➔ KNG RANCH PROPERTIES

- ➔ The 12,000 acre ranch, named for daughter Kittie Nash Groce, consists of some 27 tracts located from West Columbia northward to Fort Bend County, generally between the Brazos and San Bernard rivers.
- ➔ In 1930 after her father died, Kittie, a Episcopalian and Houston Socialite gave up her life in Houston to take over management of the ranch.
- ➔ It is said that after she traded in her designer dresses for work boots, journalists described her as the “biggest rancher in Brazoria County to wear pants, lipstick and rouge.”
- ➔ A major contribution from her helped fund the construction of St. Mary's Church and Parish Hall in West Columbia. At her death in 1957, her will left the ranch to St. Mary's, the local hospital district and a series of heirs. The last of the heirs passed away in 2006 and the ranch completely reverted to St. Mary's and the hospital district.



History of the Nash Prairie

- **The ranch stewards, including the rector of St. Mary's, Rev. Peter Conaty, his wife and the congregation rediscovered the true significance of what is now the Nash Prairie Preserve.**
- **Often referred to as the Hay Meadow, it's a pristine piece of prairieland, largely unaltered by man or machine.**
- **Father Peter Conaty of St. Mary's describes the Nash in these simple but profound terms: "In theology, we talk about a thin place where heaven and earth meet, where we find GOD. And this is where I find GOD!"**

History of the Nash Prairie

- In 2011, **THE NATURE CONSERVANCY** acquired the **NASH PRAIRIE PRESERVE**, a 400 acre never-plowed coastal prairie with more than 300 species of grasses, wildflowers and habitat for over 120 species of birds.
- The NASH is one of the last remaining segments of the “Great Coastal Prairie” which once encompassed 6 million acres between Lafayette, LA. & Corpus Christi, TX.
- The gentle landscape and its diversity of plant life creates a natural seed source for other prairies in need.
- **The connection to nature that all of us possess, that innate responsibility to preserve, protect and educate our communities of this “Thin Place Where Heaven & Earth Meet”, prompted St. Mary’s and The Nature Conservancy to protect the Nash Prairie Preserve.**

History of the Nash Prairie

- **PLANT LIST – 316 listed species** on 2011 update of all habitats based on Rosen 2007 prairie list
- **289 Natives** ,
- **46 species found abundantly or frequent**
- **61 widely scattered but not difficult to find**
- **209 rare or infrequent which are more difficult to find**

Nativity	Native= 289	Endemic= 4	Exotic= 27	= 316 Plant species	
Relative Abundance	Abundant= 8	Frequent= 38	Occasional= 61	Infrequent= 140	Rare= 69
Habitat	Prairie= 80	Wetlands= 95	Disturbed sites= 83	Pimple mounds= 52	Woodland= 21
Form	FP= 113 FPV= 6	FA= 66 FAV= 3	GP= 103 GA= 12	S= 10 T= 10	WV= 6 PP= 0

NASH PRAIRIE MAMMALS & BIRDS

Our First Impressions
of the Nash Prairie



Mammals Found on
the Nash Prairie:

The Attwater Pocket Gopher (*Geomys attwateri* Merriam)



Mammals Found on the Nash Prairie

The American Least Shrew (*Cryptotis parva*)



Mammals Found on the Nash Prairie

The Hispid Cotton Rat (*Sigmodon hispidus*)





Birds Observed on Our First Visit:

Northern Harrier





Birds Observed on Our First Visit:
White-tailed Kite (Elanus leucurus)





Birds Observed on Our First Visit:
Turkey Vulture (Cathartes aura)



PLANTS OF NASH PRAIRIE

A thriving prairie will show an abundance of over 200 to 300 different native wildflowers and grasses. The Nash Prairie is a 400 acre home to more than 300 plant species and is considered to be one of the most diverse prairies left in Texas. Three of the documented plants found on Nash prairie are listed in *The Book of Rare Plants of Texas*.

They are:

Buttonbush flat sedge (*Cyperus cephalanthus*),



PLANTS OF NASH PRAIRIE

Coastal Gayfeather (*Liatris Bracteata*)



PLANTS OF NASH PRAIRIE

and, Houston Meadow Rue
(*Thalictrum Tetanus*).





The plants of a prairie are a vital part of the eco system and have also supported human health and well being throughout time.

I want to touch a bit on a few of the plants we discovered while studying this prairie.

Many people do not know the medicinal and nutritional value of plants outside of their local grocery store, so as I talk about these plants, please use common sense when and if deciding to forage wildly. It can be very detrimental to consume a misidentified plant and certain people will be sensitive or possibly allergic to a newly introduced food or plant medicine.

I chose to list three plants I found interesting, that vary in benefit, class and use. The first plant that I want to introduce is –

Rattle Snake Master (*Eryngium Yuccifolium*)

It is a perennial from the parsley family, flowering April-July. Native to tall grass prairies of Texas and throughout North America.



Here in Texas, Rattlesnake Master, is a host plant for the Black Swallowtail Butterfly.

Rattlesnake master was used by Native Americans as an anecdote to rattlesnake venom, giving it its common name. The root was harvested and made into a strong tea, as well as dried and powdered and applied topically to aid a bitten person.

Fibers of this plant have been found as one of the primary materials used in the ancient shoe construction of Midwestern Native Americans.



The next plant listed is-

Spiderwort (*Tradescantia Occidentalis*), it is a three petal perennial, found all over Texas, that blooms April-June, mostly in prairie or an open woodlands setting.



The name is thought to come from the way the buds hang down like a spider.



Both the leaves and the stems of this plant can be consumed. Spiderwort stems can be used like okra to thicken soups and stews, because of its mucilaginous quality (full of slime).

Stems can be chopped and prepared steamed, or sautéed, the leaves tossed in a salad, and the flower petals candied as a treat (As listed in Lee Allen Peterson's, book-Edible Wild Plants).

Topically the inner gel can be applied to minor burns for relief the same way aloe is used.

Something very unique to this plant, is that the normally blue stamen hairs will turn pink when exposed to radiation or chemical pollution.



The third plant-

Prairie Coneflower (*Ratibida columnifera*)

A native perennial from the

Daisy family (Asteraceae), that blooms April-July.





Prairie Coneflower is a butterfly attractant and good nectar plant that is found in prairies as well as overgrazed areas. Deer, goats, sheep and cattle will not eat this plant.

This flower is known to be an analgesic, and is reported to have been used by Indians to relieve headaches, reduce fevers, as well as treat poison ivy, rash and snake bites.

It is prepared as a strong tea to drink or used as a soak and applied to afflicted areas.



There are many more wonderful and useful plants at Nash Prairie.

I would love to have included them all.

Again, if you are not 110% sure of what you're harvesting, DO NOT consume it. Safety is number one.

If this is something that truly interests you and you want to learn more, there is a well known forager in Houston, Mark Vordenbruggen, (aka- Merriwether), who teaches hands on classes about wild edibles.

Many are held at the Houston Arboretum year round.

He lists all native edibles found within the region on his website and includes books on topic for purchase.

He also goes over basic rules and guidelines that are very important to your well being, as well as respect, technique and restrictions.

His website is- www.foragingtexas.com

Native American Seed, is another site I gathered information from.

Their website is- www.seedsource.com

They have a wealth of information on these plants as well as native Texas seeds for purchase, if you're interested in integrating beneficial natives onto your property.



THE END