



SPECIES AND COMMUNITIES OF CONCERN IN TEXAS

INFORMATION FOR FOREST LANDOWNERS

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative combines the perpetual growing and harvesting of trees with the long-term protection of wildlife, plants, soil and water quality. In Texas, the SFI program is working with Texas Parks and Wildlife to provide you with information related to the conservation of biodiversity and critical wildlife habitat elements including species and plant communities of concern native to Texas. The species and plant communities featured in this profile are examples of many that depend on family forest owners for protection.

As a good land steward, it is important to be aware of plant and animal species and ecological communities of concern that are designated as “imperiled, critically imperiled, threatened, or endangered” and how forest management activities on your lands may affect these species or communities. Critically imperiled (G1) or imperiled (G2) species and ecological communities are globally rare or, because of some factor(s), especially vulnerable to extinction. They are designated as imperiled or critically imperiled by non-government organizations such as NatureServe (and its constituent Natural Heritage programs) or the IUCN (The World Conservation Organization).

Threatened and endangered species are listed by government agencies under the U.S. Endangered Species Act and may also be listed under state laws; yet they may or may not be listed as critically imperiled or imperiled, globally.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) (www.tpwd.state.tx.us), The Nature Conservancy (www.nature.org), NatureServe (www.natureserve.org), or U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (www.fws.gov) can provide information on species and communities of concern in your area. These and additional organizations coordinate the management of inventories of biological diversity in the United States and Texas.



WEST GULF COASTAL PLAIN SEEPAGE BOG

This G2/G3 wet, fire-maintained, hillside seepage community occurs on seepage slopes in sandy Longleaf pine uplands in the

West Gulf Coastal Plain of eastern Texas and western Louisiana. This wetland is maintained by seepage at the zone between an overlaying, permeable sandy layer and a lower layer of relatively impermeable material such as sandstone or clay. The vegetation of intact examples is dominated by a dense, species-rich, forb layer less than 1 m tall. Trumpet pitcherplant is often the aspect dominant of this community. Emergent stems of Poison sumac, Sweetbay magnolia, Redbay, and/or Longleaf pine may be present even in well-burned examples.

WEST GULF COASTAL PLAIN SALINE GLADE

This G1/G2 system occurs in portions of the Coastal Plain west of the Mississippi River on soils with high saline content, which are generally not conducive to woody plant growth. Thus, the vegetation forms a mosaic primarily consisting of open herbaceous or shrubby plant communities. This type is most common and best documented in Arkansas, western Louisiana, and east Texas. At least one federally threatened plant species, *Geocarpon minimum*, may occur in this system.

WEST GULF COASTAL PLAIN CATAHOULA BARRENS

This G1/G2 system is confined to the Catahoula geologic formation of eastern Texas and western Louisiana. It includes a vegetational mosaic ranging from herbaceous-dominated areas on shallow soil and exposed sandstone to deeper soils with open woodland vegetation. Catahoula barrens are not “barren” at all. They nearly always support a group of specialized and uncommon plants. Seasonal drought, shallow soils, aluminum toxicity, and periodic fires are important factors that influence the composition and structure of this system.

WESTERN UPLAND LONGLEAF PINE FOREST

This G2/G3 habitat occurs in the hilly uplands of eastern Texas. *Pinus palustris* (longleaf pine) is the dominant overstory species, particularly in locations where fire has frequently occurred. The herbaceous flora may be exceedingly diverse if fire has frequently occurred. *Andropogon* spp. (broomsedges) and *Schizachyrium*

spp. (bluestems) are usually the dominant grasses, but several other genera are usually present. Western upland longleaf pine forests historically dominated large areas in the Southeast. However, much of this area has been converted to other forest types or developed. There are numerous species of conservation concern associated with upland longleaf pine forests including but not limited to: red-cockaded woodpecker, Bachman’s sparrow, Henslow’s Sparrow, and Louisiana Pine Snake.

BACHMAN'S SPARROW - AIMOPHILA AESTIVALIS

Classified as a threatened species in Texas and vulnerable (G3) globally, the Bachman’s Sparrow is most frequently found in open pine forests that contain a diverse ground cover of herbaceous vegetation. Ideal habitat was originally the extensive longleaf pine woodlands of the south. Frequent burning to prevent the understory from becoming dominated by woody vegetation (trees, shrubs, and vines) is critical to maintaining diverse ground cover of herbaceous vegetation required.



LOUISIANA PINE SNAKE - PITUOPHIS RUTHVENI

The Louisiana pine snake is a globally imperiled (G2) species and is also a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act. It can be found in longleaf pine stands, primarily in underground burrows. The pine snake is an ally of forest owners, as it consumes rodents that can damage or kill seedlings. Loss of habitat to development and decreased use of prescribed fire are the major causes of decline for the snake. Regular use of prescribed fire and hardwood midstory control will improve habitat for the pine snake as well as quail and many other species.



TECHNICAL AND COST-SHARE ASSISTANCE:

If you want help developing a conservation strategy for a species or community of concern or find out if a rare species or community might occur on your land, contact the Texas Parks and Wildlife at (512) 912-7011 or go to www.tpwd.state.tx.us. The Partners for Fish & Wildlife program of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service offers technical and financial assistance to landowners for restoration of native habitat types. Contact: (817) 277-1100 or go to www.fws.gov/southeast/partners for more information. For more information or assistance, contact Texas Forestry Association at (936)632-TREE or visit the TFA website at www.texasforestry.org.