

## QUOTES ABOUT SOUTHEASTERN GRASSLANDS

### Historical

"So dense was the original forest, it was claimed, that a squirrel might travel from the Atlantic to the Mississippi from tree limb to tree limb without ever touching the ground. Cleared of this nineteenth-century romanticism, the original accounts tell a different story..."

"So open were the woods, one author advised with a touch of hyperbole, it was possible to drive a stagecoach from the eastern seaboard to St. Louis without benefit of a cleared road. The virgin forest seemed to many explorers not much different from the parks and champion fields they had known in Old England..."

"It was not the forests of the New World that startled them and strained their vocabulary, but the grasslands. The virgin forest was not encountered in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; it was invented in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries."

- Stephen J. Pyne, *Fire in America*

"The top of the mountain is...a vast upland prairie, covered with a most luxuriant growth of native grasses, pastured over as far as the eye could see, with numerous herds of deer, elk and buffalo, gamboling in playful security over these secluded plains."

- Francis Bailey, *describing Cumberland Mountain (Tennessee) in the 1780s*

"a high and dry plateau, where trees are sparse and grass and shrubs plentiful. One sees only small, stunted trees, most of them oaks and hickories, and everywhere lush grass dotted with charming flowers."

- Louis-Philippe (1797) *in south-central Kentucky.*

"...an amazing extensive plains about us, covered with high grass. The plains are partly good bottoms, partly more elevated." "...trees were scattered, and we noticed pine, hickory...everywhere was the high grass."

*-Steiner and De Schweinitz (1799) describing eastern TN ridge & valley*

"It would be difficult to imagine anything more beautiful. Far as the eye could reach, they seemed one vast deep-green meadow, adorned with countless numbers of bright flowers springing up in all directions ... only a few clumps of trees and now and then a solitary post oak were to be seen...Here I first saw the prairie bird, or barren-hen.... Here the wild strawberries grew in such profusion as to stain the horses hoofs a deep red color."

*- Rueben Ross, describing the Pennyroyal Plain Prairie of southern Kentucky and northern Tennessee, 1812*

"The country passed over yesterday, after leaving the valley of the White River, presented a character of unvaried sterility, consisting of a succession of limestone ridges, skirted with a feeble growth of oaks, with no depth of soil, often bare rocks upon the surface, and covered with coarse wild grass; and sometimes we crossed patches of considerable extent, without trees or brush of any kind, and resembling the Illinois prairies in appearance, but lacking their fertility and extent. Frequently these prairies occupied the tops of conical hills, or extended ridges, while the intervening valleys were covered with oaks..."

*- Henry Rowe Shcoolcraft, describing the dolomite glade country of the White River Hills near the Missouri/Arkansas border, 1818*

"Here a vast prairie opens to view, like a shorn desert, but well covered with grasses and herbaceous plants."

*- Thomas Nuttall, describing the southern tip of the Grand Prairie, a few miles north of Arkansas Post, Arkansas, 1819*

"Our route was continued through prairies, occasionally divided by somber belts of timber, which serve to mark the course of the rivulets. These vast plains, beautiful almost as the fancied Elysium, were now enameled with innumerable flowers, along the most splendid of which were the azure Larkspur, gilded Coreopsides, Rudbeckias, fragrant Phloxes, and the purple Psilotria. Serene and charming as the blissful

regions of fancy, nothing here appeared to exist but what contributes to harmony".

- *Thomas Nuttall, describing the area near the Poteau River on the Arkansas/Oklahoma border, 1819*

"All the country through which these hunters passed was covered with high grass, which seemed inexhaustible...."

- *Haywood 1819, describing central Tennessee and Kentucky.*

### **Conservation Science**

"The Southern Grassland Biome...is probably the richest terrestrial biome in all of North America. To understand, cherish, and preserve the great natural heritage of the Southern Grassland Biome should be a priority goal in America's environmental movement."

- *E.O. Wilson, 2014, in Forgotten Grasslands of the South by Reed Noss*

The loss of Southern Grasslands is the greatest threat to terrestrial biodiversity in North America. Yet, it is not even on the radar of most conservation funders and many conservation organizations.

-*Dwayne Estes, SGI Executive Director and Professor & Principal Investigator, Center of Excellence for Field Biology, Austin Peay State University.*

"What the modern Southern grasslands lack in size they make up for in biodiversity."

-*Dwayne Estes, SGI Executive Director and Professor & Principal Investigator, Center of Excellence for Field Biology, Austin Peay State University.*

"Are we prepared to accept the permanent loss of Southern grasslands? Until there is a coordinated effort to conserve, research, and rebuilt them they will continue to slip into oblivion."

-*Dwayne Estes, SGI Executive Director and Professor & Principal Investigator, Center of Excellence for Field Biology, Austin Peay State University.*

"Twenty-five years will be too late."

*-Dwayne Estes, SGI Executive Director and Professor & Principal Investigator, Center of Excellence for Field Biology, Austin Peay State University.*

### **Volunteers/Community Involvement**

"I came with the idea of volunteering time just to help out, but left with a whole new understanding, appreciation, and sense of urgency for native grassland restoration. I got to meet a lot of great people of all ages from the community who also shared a passion for restoring native habitat."

*-volunteer John Webb*

"I took the opportunity to spend this past Sunday volunteering with SGI at one of their TN restoration sites. The organization has reestablished a beautiful and diverse natural grassland within Dunbar Cave State Park property. I, along with 30+ other volunteers, helped with invasive species control, native species release, and seeding. We also learned a lot - what a wonderful opportunity to learn about the importance of grasslands hands-on and to appreciate the peace and aesthetics of just being in a well-established grassland! SGI exudes the passion, drive, and knowledge necessary for the success of their efforts. I encourage anyone to support and/or volunteer with them in the future!"

*- volunteer Daniel Chuquin*

"SGI's volunteer day opened the community's eyes to the unprecedented loss of the Southern grassland ecosystems. But, it also gave us a lesson on the resilience of nature and with that a bright path for the communities to take action in the restoration of these landscapes."

*- volunteer David Pineros*

"We sowed seeds of flowering plants in the park's new prairie. How delightful on a winter's day to hold the promise of spring in my hands and imagine all the bees, butterflies, and birds to come!"

*- volunteer Margie Hunter*

"The SGI volunteer day was one of the most encouraging and moving experiences I've had. I can't express how amazing it truly was to see so many citizens in motion to help restore native prairie right here in Montgomery County. As a candidate for State Senate, it was nice to get off the campaign trail for a morning, roll up my sleeves, and help make a noticeable difference at our local State Park."

– *volunteer Doyle Clark*

"My husband and I were extremely impressed by the vision, game plan, knowledge and enthusiasm of Dwayne and his group. His message of acting now and empowering individuals to do so is one that would work for many areas of conservation. We were so happy to work side-by-side with the experts and other volunteers there that day, and we look forward to continuing to do so in the future. Thanks to all involved!"

– *volunteer Elizabeth and David Lemke*

"Prairie day was super fun! I think all of us kids including me had a great time. All of us teamed up to build an amazing wickiup for wild animals such as rabbits, field mice, etc. I would love for another prairie day to happen soon."

– *volunteer Anna (age 10)*

"The fun, inspiring, and educational event included an in-depth history of the area and a detailed mission extending across one third of the country. A group of 40+ strangers instantly became one big Citizen Scientist Team with wide range of technical, physical, and engagement skills, armed with well thought out strategy and an arsenal of amazing tools. Together we recorded existing plants, eradicated dreaded invasive exotics, and planted carefully curated seeds with a plan that combines human help with nature's inclination. We were lauded for BEING THE CHANGE, saying that all the money in the world is inert without people doing the actual work."

"The visual reinforcement of our actions was surprising as the landscape transformed before our very eyes! We can look forward to visual updates in the future, giving us more ownership of the project.

"The inter-generational group purposefully included youngsters, which brought a fresh and energetic perspective. We witnessed the project through the eyes of the children, with an innocence and urgency, as they will inherit what we leave them. Also, I was 10 years old again for a tiny part of the day. Bliss!

"Our singular future depends on more unifying and community building efforts like these. Thanks for organizing it and inviting me to play a small, yet vital part."

– *volunteer Brenda Stein*

"I came on volunteer day mainly to see how you planned to go about invasive removal and what you wanted to show us and talk about on the hike around. I was encouraged to hear how much financial backing you've already secured for your goals and am always looking for any new ideas on the how to's of native restoration that I might apply to my own land."

– *volunteer Frank Lyne*

"So much environmental news is bleak and disquieting. My family was excited to be involved in a conservation effort in our community, to learn more about the nature around us, and to be part of a positive environmental change. The kids were so engaged with the wickiup-building, and I know that our daughter will feel connected to that place because of the volunteer day. Thank you!"

– *volunteer Anne Post*

"We had an absolutely terrific time at the prairie day. All of the children helped to build a wickiup, which is still standing through all of our recent rainshowers! I thoroughly enjoyed everyone's company, and I hope to see another prairie day happen again in the near future."

– *volunteer Olivia M.*

"Volunteering with Southeastern Grasslands Initiative was a great experience! We were able to both learn more about our local habitats and contribute to saving them. It was also great to meet others in the community who are also passionate about conservation. We are looking forward to the next event!"

– *volunteer Carly Rekosh*