

THE PEACOCK PRAIRIE — A STUDY OF A VIRGIN ILLINOIS MESIC BLACK-SOIL PRAIRIE FORTY YEARS AFTER INITIAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT. — The Peacock Prairie is a 5½ acre tract of land in Cook County, 4 acres of which are comparatively high quality mesic black soil prairie. According to historical records and to testimony of the descendants of the Peacock family, the original owners of the property, the land has never been plowed or systematically grazed. The nature of the vegetative cover tends to support this view. Although of comparatively small size, this tract of land is probably the largest virgin *mesic black-soil* prairie extant in Illinois. The few weeds that were found on the prairie in 1926-27, resulting from light grazing, had practically disappeared by 1967. Peacock Prairie contains approximately 130 species of comparatively rare "prairie plants," including ten species of prairie legumes, two lilies, two gentians, and one orchid. In the forty-year period (1927-1967) only one species of prairie plant seemed to have disappeared; however, nineteen species, not reported in 1927, were found on the prairie in 1967. It is remarkable that with no care whatsoever (e.g. no controlled burning or mowing) the prairie has resisted the invasion of both weeds and woody plants; consequently, it offers a norm or standard of comparison for future studies of prairie and prairie restoration.

There have been surprisingly few studies made of Illinois prairies. Gleason (1910) studied the sand prairies of the inland sand deposits, and Gates (1912) the sand prairies of the beach area in northeastern

Illinois. Evers (1955) studied the hill prairies along the Illinois River and Fell & Fell (1956) examined those along the Rock River; yet with the exception of the studies of Vestal (1914) and Sampson (1921), there have been no studies of the virgin Illinois black-soil prairies, which at one time represented the major portion of the vegetation of northern and central Illinois. The survival of a virgin black-soil prairie in Illinois is extremely fortuitous because most of them have been practically destroyed through overgrazing and cultivation during the past 150 years of settlement.

In 1929, Paintin published a paper about a small prairie in northeastern Illinois which occupied a tract of land that was part of the Peacock estate and which was (and still is) known as the Peacock Prairie. It is located on the southwest outskirts of Glenview in Cook County and is a virgin black-soil prairie which contains patches of low prairie. At the time of the initial study (1926-27) the prairie was approximately ten acres, but during the intervening years the eastern part has been destroyed for a housing development;

today the prairie is about 5½ acres, 4 of which are high quality virgin prairie. In Paintin's paper the prairie was described, the plants found on it were recorded, and an effort was made to quantify the collected data.

Forty years have elapsed since the original study was made, and it would seem timely to make a comparative study to determine what changes, if any, have occurred during this period.

TOPOGRAPHY AND COMPOSITION OF THE PRAIRIE

Mr. Warren Long, a direct descendant (fifth generation) of the original owner, has stated that as far as he knows, the land (Peacock Prairie) has never been broken, fenced, or grazed. He further notes that it was traversed by a wagon exit from the farm, which lay to the east, onto Milwaukee Avenue (Indian Trail Road) at one time. The prairie is located on Tinley ground moraine. The soil is developed on calcareous silty clay till and borings made at the site show the leached, or "A" zone, to extend to a depth of approximately 20 inches. The upper 15 inches is black, organic rich, soil.

The prairie's original topographic surface is still evident with a low swale containing typically low prairie vegetation in the western section and with moderately higher knolls covered with

upland or mesic prairie vegetation elsewhere. Upland prairie grasses, such as *Stipa spartea*, *Sorghastrum nutans*, *Andropogon gerardii*, *Andropogon scoparius* and *Panicum virgatum*, and those of the lowland, such as *Calamagrostis canadensis* and *Spartina pectinata*, produce a short thick sward about 2-3 feet high. Many of these grasses produce relatively few flowering culms in this dense prairie sward. Similarly, many of the late blooming composites, such as *Liatris* sp. flower sparsely under these conditions.

The 129 species of native prairie plants and 21 species of weeds that have been found and recorded for the Peacock Prairie and listed in Table 1 together with a comparison of their relative frequencies in 1927 and 1967. Among the 129 species of native prairie plants, 19 of them were not reported by Paintin in 1927. They are:

- Andropogon scoparius* (little blue-stem)
- Asclepias incarnata* (swamp milkweed)
- Asclepias tuberosa* (butterfly weed)
- Desmodium illinoense* (Illinois tick trefoil)
- Galium boreale* (Northern bedstraw)
- Gentiana andrewsii* (closed gentian)
- Gerardia tenuifolia* (purple false foxglove)
- Hypericum canadense* (Canadian St. John's wort)
- Juncus acuminatus* (sharp-fruited rush)
- Juncus tenuis* (roadside rush)
- Lathyrus palustris* (marsh vetchling)
- Lespedeza capitata* (round-headed bush clover)

TABLE 1. — Changes in the Vascular Plants of the Peacock Prairie during the Period 1927-1967.

Since the terms "abundant", "frequent", "infrequent", and "local" were used in describing the relative frequencies of the plants found on the prairie in 1927, the same terms and, in addition, the term "rare" are used in this paper to describe the relative frequencies of the plants. Paintin did not give meanings of these terms in her paper, hence, it is not known whether they have the same approximate meanings as are intended by the present authors. In this paper the terms are used to indicate the relative frequencies of each species in the Peacock Prairie based on their individual patterns of occurrence as observed in the midwestern prairies studies by the authors. For example, in an acre of prairie, 25 plants of big bluestem grass (*Andropogon gerardii*) would be considered "infrequent" while to find 25 plants of the prairie lily (*Lilium philadelphicum* var. *andinum*) in an acre would be "common". The same number of Mead's milkweed (*Asclepias meadii*) would certainly be "abundant" for that species. Since each species is characterized by unique habits of growth, there is no valid way of comparing them all on a single absolute numerical scale.

Nomenclature for this paper is in accordance with Gray's Manual of Botany, 8th Edition, except for occasional alteration of single "i" endings to double "ii" endings as recommended by the current rules of nomenclature.

TABLE 1.

Prairie Plants	1927	1967
<i>Agrostis alba</i> (w)	frequent	frequent, local
<i>Agrostis hyemalis</i> (w)	abundant	infrequent, local
<i>Allium canadense</i> (w)	abundant	infrequent
<i>Allium cernuum</i>	frequent	frequent
<i>Amorpha canescens</i>	infrequent	frequent
<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>	frequent	frequent
<i>Andropogon scoparius</i> (d)		frequent
<i>Anemone cylindrica</i>	infrequent	infrequent
<i>Antennaria neglecta</i>	abundant	infrequent, local
<i>Apocynum cannabinum</i>	frequent	frequent
<i>Asclepias incarnata</i> (w)		frequent, local
<i>Asclepias sullivantii</i> (w)	frequent	frequent
<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>		infrequent
<i>Aster azureus</i>	infrequent	rare
<i>Aster ericoides</i>	frequent	frequent
<i>Aster laevis</i>	frequent	abundant
<i>Aster novae-angliae</i>	infrequent	infrequent
<i>Aster ptarmicoides</i> (d)	infrequent	infrequent
<i>Aster simplex</i> (w)	abundant, local	infrequent, local
<i>Baptisia leucantha</i>	infrequent	infrequent
<i>Baptisia leucophaea</i>	frequent	frequent
<i>Bidens frondosa</i> (w)	frequent	frequent, local
<i>Bromus kalmii</i>	infrequent	frequent
<i>Cacalia tuberosa</i>	infrequent	infrequent
<i>Carex buxbaumii</i> (w)	infrequent, local	infrequent, local
<i>Carex crawei</i> (w)	infrequent, local	infrequent, local
<i>Carex vulpinoidea</i> (w)	infrequent, local	infrequent, local
<i>Calamagrostis canadensis</i> (w)	frequent	abundant, local
<i>Cicuta maculata</i> (w)	infrequent	infrequent
<i>Cirsium hillii</i>	frequent	infrequent
<i>Comandra richardsiana</i>	abundant	abundant
<i>Coreopsis palmata</i>	abundant	abundant
<i>Desmodium illinoense</i> (d)		rare
<i>Dodecatheon meadia</i>	infrequent	frequent
<i>Eleocharis palustris</i> (w)	abundant	infrequent, local
<i>Elymus canadensis</i>	infrequent	infrequent
<i>Equisetum arvense</i>	frequent	rare, local
<i>Eryngium yuccifolium</i>	frequent	frequent
<i>Fragaria virginiana</i>	frequent	frequent
<i>Galium obtusum</i> (w)	infrequent	frequent
<i>Galium boreale</i>		infrequent
<i>Gentiana andrewsii</i> (w)		frequent
<i>Gentiana puberula</i>	frequent	frequent
<i>Gerardia aspera</i>	rare, 2 plants	
<i>Gerardia tenuifolia</i>		infrequent, local

w—wet
d—dry

TABLE 1.—Continued.

Prairie Plants	1927	1967
<i>Geum triflorum</i> (d)	rare	infrequent
<i>Glyceria striata</i> (w)	frequent	infrequent
<i>Helianthus grosseserratus</i>	abundant	infrequent
<i>Helianthus laetiflorus</i>	abundant	frequent
v. <i>rigidus</i>		
<i>Heuchera richardsonii</i>	frequent	frequent
<i>Hypericum canadense</i> (w)		rare, 1 plant
<i>Hypoxis hirsuta</i>	abundant	frequent
<i>Juncus acuminatus</i> (w)		infrequent, local
<i>Juncus balticus</i>	abundant	infrequent, local
v. <i>littoralis</i> (w)		
<i>Juncus dudleyi</i> (w)	frequent	infrequent, local
<i>Juncus tenuis</i>		infrequent, local
<i>Juncus torreyi</i> (w)	infrequent	infrequent, local
<i>Koeleria cristata</i> (d)	infrequent	frequent
<i>Krigia biflora</i> (w)	frequent	frequent
<i>Kuhnia eupatorioides</i> (d)	infrequent	rare
<i>Lathyrus palustris</i>		infrequent
<i>Lactuca canadensis</i>	frequent	rare
<i>Lespedeza capitata</i> (d)		infrequent
<i>Liatris aspera</i>	frequent	frequent
<i>Liatris spicata</i>	infrequent	frequent
<i>Lilium michiganense</i> (w)	infrequent	infrequent
<i>Lilium philadelphicum</i>	infrequent	infrequent
v. <i>andinum</i>		
<i>Lithospermum canescens</i>	frequent	frequent
<i>Lobelia spicata</i>	frequent	frequent
<i>Ludwigia polycarpa</i> (w)	abundant, local	infrequent, local
<i>Lycopus americana</i> (w)	frequent	frequent, local
<i>Lysimachia ciliata</i> (w)	frequent, local	infrequent, local
<i>Lysimachia quadriflora</i> (w)	abundant	infrequent
<i>Lythrum alatum</i> (w)	abundant	frequent
<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>		frequent
<i>Oxalis stricta</i>	rare	rare
<i>Oxalis violacea</i>	frequent	frequent
<i>Oxypolis rigidior</i> (w)	infrequent	infrequent
<i>Panicum lanuginosum</i> (w)	infrequent	infrequent, local
<i>Panicum leibergii</i>	infrequent	frequent
<i>Panicum virgatum</i>	frequent	frequent
<i>Parthenium integrifolium</i>	infrequent	frequent
<i>Pedicularis canadensis</i>	frequent	frequent
<i>Penthorum sedoides</i> (w)	frequent, local	rare, local
<i>Petalostemum candidum</i>	frequent	abundant
<i>Petalostemum purpureum</i>	frequent	abundant
<i>Phlox glaberrima</i> (w)	abundant	frequent
<i>Phlox pilosa</i>	frequent	frequent
<i>Polygala senega</i>	frequent	frequent, local
<i>Polygonum amphibium</i>	abundant, local	frequent, local
v. <i>stipulaceum</i> (w)		

w—wet
d—dry

TABLE 1. — Continued.

Prairie Plants	1927	1967
<i>Potentilla arguta</i>	infrequent	infrequent
<i>Potentilla simplex</i>	abundant	infrequent, local
<i>Prenanthes aspera</i>	frequent	infrequent
<i>Prenanthes racemosa</i> (w)	infrequent	infrequent
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	infrequent	infrequent, local
v. <i>lanceolata</i> (w)		
<i>Pycnanthemum virginianum</i> (w)	abundant	frequent
<i>Rosa carolina</i>	frequent	frequent
<i>Ratibida pinnata</i>	frequent	infrequent
<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	abundant	infrequent
<i>Scirpus lineatus</i> (w)		infrequent, local
<i>Scutellaria parvula</i>		infrequent
v. <i>leonardii</i>		
<i>Senecio pauperculus</i>	abundant	frequent, local
v. <i>balsamitae</i>		
<i>Sphenopholis obtusata</i> (w)		infrequent
<i>Silphium integrifolium</i>	abundant	frequent
<i>Silphium laciniatum</i>	frequent	frequent
<i>Silphium terebinthinaceum</i>	frequent	frequent
<i>Sisyrinchium albidum</i>	abundant	frequent
<i>Smilacina stellata</i>	abundant	frequent
<i>Solidago altissima</i> (<i>canadensis</i>)	infrequent	infrequent, local
<i>Solidago graminifolia</i> (w)	infrequent	infrequent
<i>Solidago nemoralis</i>	frequent	frequent
<i>Solidago riddellii</i> (w)	abundant	frequent
<i>Solidago rigida</i>	frequent	frequent
<i>Sorghastrum nutans</i>	frequent	abundant
<i>Spartina pectinata</i> (w)	abundant	frequent, local
<i>Spiranthes cernua</i>	rare, 2 plants	rare, 1 plant
<i>Sporobolus heterolepis</i>		frequent
<i>Stachys palustris</i> (w)	abundant, local	infrequent, local
<i>Stipa spartea</i>	frequent	abundant
<i>Thalictrum dasycarpum</i> (w)		rare
<i>Tradescantia ohioensis</i>	infrequent	infrequent
<i>Typha latifolia</i> (w)	infrequent	infrequent, local
<i>Valeriana ciliata</i> (w)		rare
<i>Verbena hastata</i> (w)	infrequent	rare
<i>Veronicastrum virginicum</i>	abundant	infrequent
<i>Vicia americana</i>	frequent	infrequent
<i>Viola papilionacea</i>	abundant	frequent
<i>Viola pedatifida</i>	abundant	frequent
<i>Zizia aurea</i> (w)	frequent	frequent

Monarda fistulosa (wild bergamot)
Scirpus lineatus (red bulrush)
Scutellaria parvula v. *leonardii* (small skullcap)
Sphenopholis obtusata (wedge grass)
Sporobolus heterolepis (Northern dropseed)

Thalictrum dasycarpum (meadow rue)
Valeriana ciliata (valerian)

It is remarkable that the very characteristic and conspicuous prairie grasses, *Andropogon scoparius* and *Sporobolus heterolepis*, were not observed by Paintin in 1927.

TABLE 1.—Concluded.

Prairie Plants	1927	1967
Eurasian Weeds		
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	frequent	infrequent, local
<i>Asparagus officinalis</i>	infrequent, edge	.....
<i>Chrysanthemum leucanthemum</i>	abundant, edge	.....
<i>v. pinnatifidum</i>		
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	infrequent, edge	.....
<i>Festuca elatior</i>	rare	.....
<i>Medicago sativa</i>	rare, local	.....
<i>Melilotus alba</i>	infrequent	rare
<i>Phleum pratense</i>	infrequent, local	.....
<i>Poa compressa</i>	infrequent	rare, local
<i>Poa pratensis</i>	infrequent	infrequent, local
<i>Rumex crispus</i>	rare, edge	.....
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	infrequent	.....
<i>Tragopogon pratensis</i>	rare	.....
<i>Trifolium hybridum</i>	frequent	.....
<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	frequent	.....
Native Weeds		
<i>Ambrosia artemisiifolia</i>	infrequent	rare, local
<i>Erigeron strigosus</i>	infrequent, edge	rare
<i>Hordeum jubatum</i> (west).....	infrequent, edge	.....
<i>Oenothera biennis</i>	infrequent	.....
<i>Plantago rugelii</i>	rare	.....
<i>Xanthium pennsylvanicum</i>	infrequent	.....

Seventeen species of plants which were reported by Paintin but not found in 1967 are listed below. Several of these species are far from their natural range in the Chicago area. The authors have indicated in parentheses species which may have been misidentified by Paintin.

Aster commutatus (*Aster ericoides*?)
Aster oblongifolius
Galium tinctorium (*Galium obtusum*?)
Gerardia aspera
Gentiana affinis (*Gentiana puberula*?)
Lactuca campestris (*Lactuca canadensis*?)
Lactuca hirsuta (*Lactuca canadensis*?)
Liatris graminifolia (*Liatris spicata*?)
Oxalis cymosa (*Oxalis stricta*?)
Petalostemum tenuifolium (*Petalostemum purpureum*?)
Pycnanthemum pilosum (*Pycnanthemum virginianum*?)
Rosa humilis (*Rosa carolina*)
Rosa woodsii (*Rosa carolina*)

Senecio plattensis (*Senecio pauperculus*?)
Sisyrinchium campestre (*Sisyrinchium albidum*?)
Viola cucullata (*Viola papilionacea*?)
Xanthium commune (*Xanthium pennsylvanicum*?)

The following three species are identified by Paintin to genus, but not to species:

Aster sp. (white) (*Aster simplex*?)
Equisetum sp. (*Equisetum arvense*?)
Viola sp.

Many of the species of low prairie, such as, *Ludwigia polycarpa* and *Penthorum sedoides*, are less common today than in 1927, undoubtedly due to a lowering of the water table brought about by changes in drainage. Mr. Long stated that in former days (1910) the prairie was much wetter than it is today.

Most of the weeds recorded in 1927

seem to have disappeared from the prairie proper by 1967. Only 6 of the 21 species of weeds reported in 1927 were still to be found on the prairie. They are either rare or infrequent. It is possible that they may owe their continued presence on the prairie today to slight disturbances caused by man.

In an effort to give some quantitative estimation of the rich vegetative cover, 5 one-meter quadrats at random locations were staked and the non-gramineous vascular plants counted. In addition, the total number of grass shoots

(tillers) were counted in a one-decimeter quadrat. These quadrat studies are listed in Table II.

With the exception of a low swale covered with *Calamagrostis canadensis* (blue joint grass), most quadrats contained from 18 to 24 different species of plants. In addition, most of the quadrats exhibited dense growth of the prairie grasses, including the rare *Panicum leibergii*, which is probably more indicative of a high-quality black-soil prairie than is *Andropogon gerardii* (big bluestem).

TABLE 2.—Counts of Vascular Plants in Various Quadrats on the Peacock Prairie.

Quadrat #1 (1 meter square)—N. W. Cent.	Quadrat #2 (1 meter square)—West Cent.
5 <i>Amorpha canescens</i>	3 <i>Allium cernuum</i>
10 <i>Aster ericoides</i>	1 <i>Apocynum cannabinum</i>
14 <i>Aster laevis</i>	7 <i>Aster laevis</i>
43 <i>Coreopsis palmata</i>	1 <i>Eleocharis palustris</i>
1 <i>Cornus racemosa</i> (seedling)	18 <i>Fragaria virginiana</i>
1 <i>Lithospermum canescens</i>	<i>Glyceria striata</i>
20 <i>Panicum leibergii</i>	1 <i>Lithospermum canescens</i>
2 <i>Panicum virgatum</i>	2 <i>Liatris aspera</i>
4 <i>Parthenium integrifolium</i>	10 <i>Lysimachia quadriflora</i>
1 <i>Petalostemum candidum</i>	38 <i>Panicum leibergii</i>
8 <i>Petalostemum purpureum</i>	6 <i>Pedicularis canadensis</i>
2 <i>Ratibida pinnata</i>	2 <i>Phlox glaberrima</i>
1 <i>Rosa carolina</i>	1 <i>Polygala senega</i>
1 <i>Silphium terebinthinaceum</i>	5 <i>Ratibida pinnata</i>
<i>Spartina pectinata</i>	7 <i>Silphium terebinthinaceum</i>
1 <i>Viola pedatifida</i>	6 <i>Smilacina stellata</i>
	6 <i>Solidago riddellii</i>
	1 <i>Solidago rigida</i>
	<i>Spartina pectinata</i>
	1 <i>Viola papilionacea</i>
Quadrat #3 (1 meter square)—East. Cent.	Quadrat #4 (1 meter square)—N. E. Cent.
3 <i>Allium cernuum</i>	28 <i>Allium cernuum</i>
51 <i>Andropogon scoparius</i>	1 <i>Amorpha canescens</i>
1 <i>Aster ericoides</i>	1 <i>Aster laevis</i>
24 <i>Aster laevis</i>	1 <i>Baptisia leucophaea</i>
8 <i>Comandra richardsoniana</i>	24 <i>Coreopsis palmata</i>
26 <i>Coreopsis palmata</i>	1 <i>Eryngium yuccifolium</i>
3 <i>Eryngium yuccifolium</i>	16 <i>Gentiana puberula</i>
10 <i>Gentiana puberula</i>	15 <i>Liatris aspera</i>
5 <i>Koeleria cristata</i>	3 <i>Lithospermum canescens</i>
10 <i>Liatris aspera</i>	7 <i>Panicum leibergii</i>
4 <i>Lithospermum canescens</i>	3 <i>Petalostemum purpureum</i>
3 <i>Lobelia spicata</i>	17 <i>Psoralea tenuifolia</i>
11 <i>Panicum leibergii</i>	3 <i>Silphium terebinthinaceum</i>
3 <i>Parthenium integrifolium</i>	<i>Spartina pectinata</i>
17 <i>Petalostemum purpureum</i>	<i>Sorghastrum nutans</i>
2 <i>Psoralea tenuiflora</i>	<i>Sporobolus heterolepis</i>
3 <i>Ratibida pinnata</i>	<i>Sorghastrum nutans</i>
1 <i>Silphium integrifolium</i>	1 <i>Viola papilionacea</i>
1 <i>Silphium terebinthinaceum</i>	1 <i>Viola pedatifida</i>
<i>Sporobolus heterolepis</i>	13 <i>Zizia aurea</i>
<i>Sorghastrum nutans</i>	
1 <i>Viola papilionacea</i>	
1 <i>Viola pedatifida</i>	
13 <i>Zizia aurea</i>	

TABLE 2. — Concluded.

Quadrat #5 (1 meter square)—North Cent.	Quadrat #6 (1 decimeter square)
2 <i>Allium cernuum</i>	18 <i>Calamagrostis canadensis</i>
1 <i>Aster ericoides</i>	54 <i>Koeleria cristata</i>
6 <i>Aster laevis</i>	52 <i>Panicum leibergii</i>
17 <i>Comandra richardiana</i>	40 <i>Panicum virgatum</i>
16 <i>Coreopsis palmata</i>	38 <i>Sorghastrum nutans</i>
1 <i>Dodecatheon meadia</i>	18 <i>Spartina pectinata</i>
7 <i>Fragaria virginiana</i>	
3 <i>Hypoxis hirsuta</i>	
2 <i>Liatrix spicata</i>	
2 <i>Lithospermum canescens</i>	
2 <i>Pedicularis canadensis</i>	
13 <i>Petalostemum candidum</i>	
83 <i>Petalostemum purpureum</i>	
6 <i>Phlox pilosa</i>	
1 <i>Senecio pauperculus</i> v. <i>balsamitae</i>	
2 <i>Sisyrinchium albidum</i>	
<i>Sorghastrum nutans</i>	
2 <i>Zizia aurea</i>	

DISCUSSION

A comparison of the Peacock Prairie with the now destroyed prairie near Elmhurst, Illinois, described by Vestal in 1914, shows that the Peacock Prairie equals or even surpasses the former Elmhurst prairie in richness. It is interesting to note that Weaver (1954) referred to the Elmhurst prairie as "an example of perhaps the most luxuriant type of true prairie".

The presence of the following ten characteristic prairie legumes attests to the richness of the Peacock Prairie:

- Amorpha canescens* (lead plant)
- Baptisia leucantha* (white wild indigo)
- Baptisia leucophaea* (cream wild indigo)
- Desmodium illinoense* (Illinois tick trefoil)
- Lathyrus palustris* (marsh vetchling)
- Lespedeza capitata* (round-headed bush clover)

- Petalostemum candidum* (white prairie clover)
- Petalostemum purpureum* (purple prairie clover)
- Psoralea tenuiflora* (scurfy pea)
- Vicia americana* (American vetch)

Its richness can also be seen in the presence of two lilies: *Lilium michiganense* (Turk's cap lily) and *Lilium philadelphicum* v. *andinum* (prairie lily); two gentians: *Gentiana andrewsii* (bottle gentian) and *Gentiana puberula* (prairie gentian); and one orchid: *Spiranthes cernua* (ladies' tresses). The Peacock Prairie is the only Cook County station where *Geum triflorum* (prairie smoke) has been reported recently, and it may be the eastern-most station for this plant. It is one of the few prairies in the region that does not contain the ubiquitous *Poa pratensis* (Kentucky blue grass) and *Poa compressa* (Canada blue grass).

While the Peacock Prairie is amazingly rich for its small size, there are a number of prairie species which are found within a twenty-five mile radius

of the prairie but which are not found on it. They include:

- Asclepias meadii* (Mead's milkweed)
- Asclepias viridiflora* (green milkweed)
- Carex bicknellii* (Bicknell's sedge)
- Castilleja coccinea* (Indian paintbrush)
- Ceanothus americanus* (New Jersey tea)
- Desmodium canadense* (showy tick trefoil)
- Echinacea pallida* (purple cone flower)
- Euphorbia corollata* (flowering spurge)
- Helianthus occidentalis* (Western sunflower)
- Lespedeza leptostachya* (prairie bush clover)
- Panicum oligosanthos* v. *scribnerianum* (few-flowered panic grass)
- Physostegia virginiana* (false dragonhead)
- Polygala incarnata* (pink milkwort)
- Polytaenia nuttallii* (prairie parsley)
- Rudbeckia subtomentosa* (fragrant coneflower)
- Salix humilis* (prairie willow)
- Scolidago missouriensis* (prairie goldenrod)
- Zizia aptera* (heart-leaved meadow parsnip)

The lack of the usually common *Euphorbia corollata* on the Peacock Prairie is interesting. This species is found on comparatively rich sand prairies, and its presence in other mesic black-soil prairies may be only due to disturbance. At the same time the high quality of the Peacock prairie is shown by the great variability and lack of uniformity in the vegetative cover. The lack of domi-

nance of any one species, including *Andropogon gerardii* (big bluestem grass), may be an indicator of prolonged virgin conditions.

With little or no management (e.g., fencing, controlled burning, protection from rubbish, vandals) this prairie has been able to maintain itself in comparatively fine condition. Approximately 6 woody plant specimens (all less than two feet high) have established themselves on the prairie. These woody plants belonged to the following species:

- Cornus racemosa* (gray dogwood)
- Populus deltoides* (cottonwood poplar)
- Prunus serotina* (wild black cherry)
- Rhamnus cathartica* (European buckthorn)
- Ulmus americana* (American elm)

It is also remarkable that this prairie has been able to repel the invasion of non-prairie plants inasmuch as it is continually being inundated with weed seeds from plants along its edges as well as from the host of exotic trees and shrubs in the surrounding neighborhood.

Apparently some minor disturbance of the prairie may have taken place prior to 1927. The fact that *Achillea millefolium* (yarrow), *Poa pratensis* (Kentucky blue grass), *Antennaria neglecta* (pussy toes) and *Potentilla simplex* (common cinquefoil), which are now either rare or infrequent on this prairie, but which were common and even abundant in some portions of the prairie in 1927 would tend to substantiate this. The minor disturbance could have been due to such factors as trampling by man and by animals, wagon trails, light grazing, and digging prairie

plants for gardens; however, in 1967, there was little evidence of such a disturbance.

At present a number of organizations and individuals are joined together in an effort to preserve the Peacock Prairie for future scientific and educational use. With the almost complete destruction of the eastern tall-grass prairies, the Peacock Prairie should be preserved as a standard for comparison in future ecological work on Illinois prairies.

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