Visitors to the preserve should be aware that hunting is allowed in this area during open hunting seasons. With the exception of legally taken game animals, nuts, berries and mushrooms, all other plants and animals in this preserve are protected and should not be picked, collected or otherwise disturbed. We hope you enjoy your visit to Tefft Savanna Nature Preserve.

Further information about this and other nature preserves may be obtained from:

Department of Natural Resources
Division of Nature Preserves
402 W. Washington Street, W267
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2739

Further information about other Fish and Wildlife Areas may be obtained from:

Division of Fish and Wildlife
Indiana Department of Natural Resources
402 W. Washington St. RM W273
Indianapolis, IN 46204

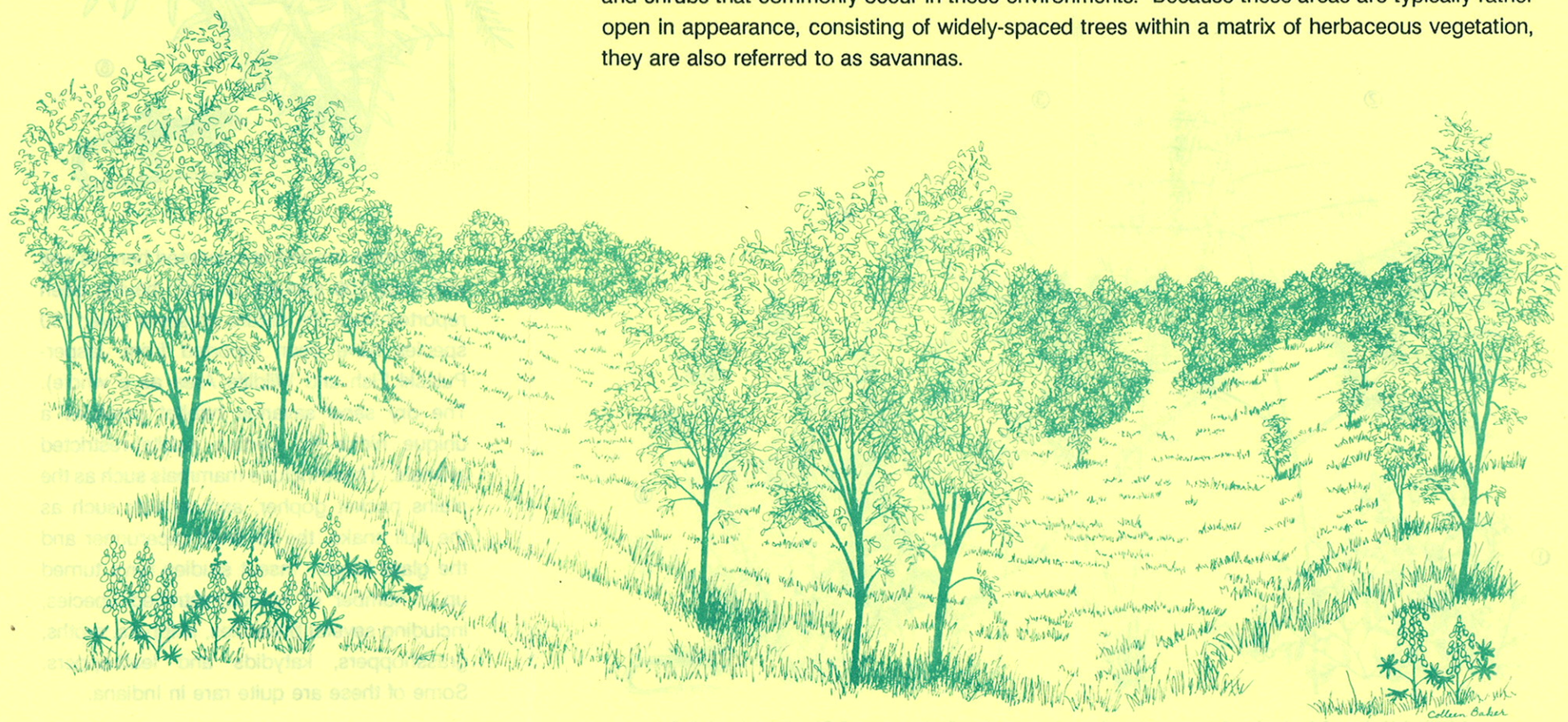
11/89

Tefft Savanna Nature Preserve

Tefft Savanna Nature Preserve is a 480 acre portion of the 8,000 acre Jasper-Pulaski Fish and Wildlife Area. A cooperative arrangement between the Division of Fish and Wildlife and Division of Nature Preserves led to its establishment in 1980. The preserve contains excellent examples of the land forms and associated plant communities that were characteristic of the area at the time of settlement.

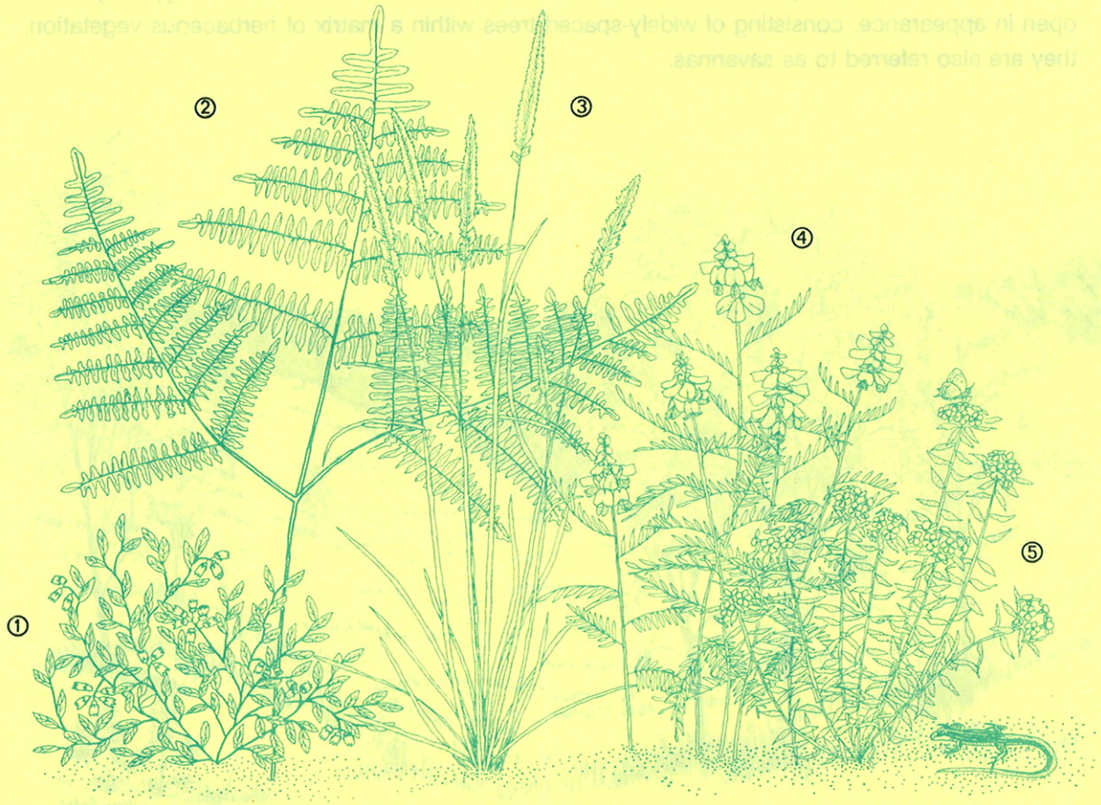
Areas of fine quartz sand cover extensive portions of Newton, Jasper, Pulaski and Starke Counties south of the Kankakee River. This sand originated from Wisconsinan-age glacial moraines located to the north and east of the area, and was carried into the Kankakee River basin by outwash channels emanating from the melting ice sheet. Over time, prevailing westerly winds dispersed the sand over a wide area beyond the river basin. Some of these wind-blown deposits exist today as flat sand plains, whereas others, like much of that in the nature preserve, are rolling dunes and depressions.

These sandy areas support a variety of vegetation types, including an interesting type that has traditionally been referred to as barrens. The term barrens was coined by early surveyors and ecologists to describe the dry, excessively drained soils and the poor, scrubby growth of the trees and shrubs that commonly occur in these environments. Because these areas are typically rather open in appearance, consisting of widely-spaced trees within a matrix of herbaceous vegetation, they are also referred to as savannas.

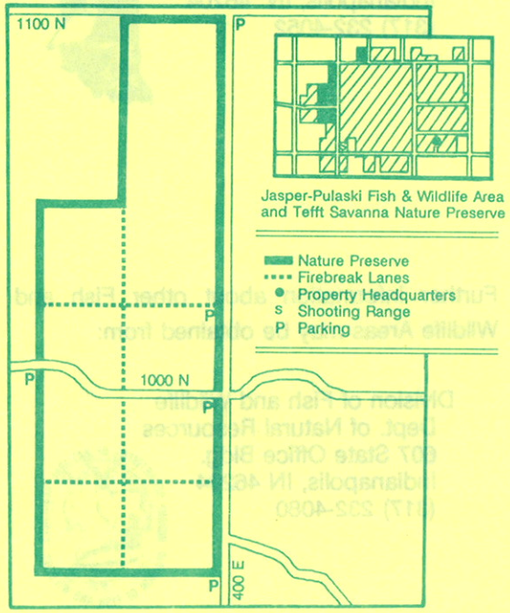


As a result of the harsh conditions present on the sandy ridges at Tefft Savanna, only plants specially adapted to drought, heat, and acid soils are present. Of the trees, black oak is by far the dominant, with large-tooth aspen, sassafras, and white oak also present. Some of the typical ground level plants include low bush blueberry, black huckleberry, bracken fern, wild lupine, puccoon, Pennsylvania sedge, flowering spurge, goat's rue, junegrass, and big and little bluestem.

Other plant communities present include moist pin oak flats, bluejoint grass marshes and moist open sand flats. The diversity of habitats allows for many species of plants to be present here - over 260 species have been identified in the nature preserve. Remarkably, over 30 of these are listed as rare, threatened or endangered in Indiana. Several species of plants, including some of the rarer ones, are widely disjunct from their normal range of distribution which is in the Atlantic Coastal Plain. Most of these disjuncts grow in the moist open sand flats and in or near the bluejoint grass marshes.



1. low bush blueberry 2. bracken fern 3. junegrass 4. goat's rue 5. pucoon 6. six-lined racerunner 7. Edward's hairstreak butterfly

Animals are well represented here as well with over 100 species of birds having been reported from the nature preserve (over 250 species have been reported from Jasper-Pulaski Fish and Wildlife Area as a whole). The dry sand savanna habitat provides a unique niche for certain habitat-restricted animals. These include mammals such as the plains pocket gopher, and reptiles such as the bull snake, the six-lined racerunner and the glass lizard. Insect studies have turned up a number of habitat-restricted species, including several butterflies, skippers, moths, grasshoppers, katydids and leafhoppers. Some of these are quite rare in Indiana.

Wildfires swept through these dry oak savannas in the old days, keeping them quite open by killing back encroaching tree and shrub growth. As a result of decades of fire suppression, woody vegetation succeeded to the point of closing in many of the savannas, resulting in a reduction of prairie grasses and wildflowers. In order to restore the grown-over savannas to a more open condition, prescribed fires are being implemented on a regular basis. Firebreak lanes are maintained within the preserve to allow fires to be controlled properly. No other trails, however, have been developed in the preserve.