

## Outstanding Orchid

It is estimated that around 30,000 species per year are being driven into



extinction. That's about three species per hour! If we don't do something, the Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid could become one of these species. The Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid grows in 15 different states in the U.S.

Unfortunately, this plant could become extinct because of habitat destruction.

There are plenty of things to learn about this fascinating plant, such as why the Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid is endangered. There are a couple of

things we could do to help preserve this amazing plant so it sticks around for a while longer.

To begin with, the Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid has a lot of interesting characteristics that help benefit it. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid lives in a variety of habitats such as prairies, wetlands, marsh edges, and bogs. The Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid lives mostly in these places because it needs complete sun for optimal growth. This plant mainly lives in the midwest. Most states that this plant is located in are Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Michigan Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin. Sadly, the Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid is being greatly affected and could be gone from these areas.

To continue, the Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid is threatened by habitat destruction, causing a decrease in population. The U.S. Forest Service states that the Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid is being found less because, specifically in prairies, most of the land is being converted for agricultural purposes. One of the biggest causes of habitat loss is because of agriculture. To have enough space to do agriculture, it results in clearing huge areas to turn into farmland. Fortunately, there could be a way to help this devastating issue.

Furthermore, the Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid can be conserved if we make an effort to keep it from going into extinction. Currently, there is a conservation act for grasslands, which also helps prairies. This is important because the Eastern Prairie

Fringed Orchid lives in these kinds of habitats. According to the National Wildlife Federation, the decline of grasslands all across the nation followed a similar pattern, which was large amounts of grassland areas decreasing. Conservation groups were and are doing work to conserve areas like these for species that rely on these habitats in hopes that everything in and around these places can continue on being unbothered.



To conclude, the Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid is threatened, but can continue to thrive and be taken out of this category if we support conservation efforts. Now that you have learned all about the Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid's habitats and threats, I encourage you to preserve grasslands so this plant can continue to be an important part of its ecosystem. Orchids are an indicator in representing a healthy ecosystem. If this plant wasn't around, its pollinators would also go extinct. The next time you think about tilling up soil for crops in grasslands, remember that this could be eliminating critical habitat required for the Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid.

#### Resources:

- Benda, Christopher David . "Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid (*Platanthera leucophaea*)." *U.S. FOREST SERVICE*, United States Department of Agriculture, [www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/plant-of-the-week/platanthera\\_leucophaea.shtml#:~:text=This%20perennial%20wildflower%20was%20once,orchid%20is%20currently%20federally%20threatened](http://www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/plant-of-the-week/platanthera_leucophaea.shtml#:~:text=This%20perennial%20wildflower%20was%20once,orchid%20is%20currently%20federally%20threatened). Accessed 4 Oct. 2023.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid." *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*, 22 Sept. 2022, [www.fws.gov/species/eastern-prairie-fringed-orchid-platanthera-leucophaea](http://www.fws.gov/species/eastern-prairie-fringed-orchid-platanthera-leucophaea).
- Wilkins, Andrew. "North American Grasslands Conservation Act Brings Restoration Partnerships to the Prairie." *National Wildlife Federation*, 9 Feb. 2023, [www.nwf.org/Outdoors/Blog/02-09-2023-Grasslands](http://www.nwf.org/Outdoors/Blog/02-09-2023-Grasslands).