



Southern Plains Land Trust
GAINING GROUND FOR PRAIRIE WILDLIFE



Sean Boggs for EDF

Grassland Conservation Carbon Offsets

Southern Plains Land Trust (SPLT)

- SPLT is an accredited land trust that works to preserve the shortgrass prairie ecosystems of the southern Great Plains. The Environmental Defense Fund helped SPLT generate carbon offset credits through the conservation of two properties, Raven's Nest and Heartland Ranch, that cover 23,000 acres. These native prairie preserves keep the belowground soil carbon intact.
- Protection of Raven's Nest and Heartland Ranch generate ~10,000 credits each year. SPLT's are the first carbon offset credits to come out of the Climate Action Reserve's Grassland Protocol, a new methodology that lowers development and transaction costs for projects. SPLT started with two projects and added a third in 2018. The organization may expand to additional properties in the future.
- 100% of net revenue from offsets goes to furthering SPLT's mission of creating and protecting a network of prairie preserves that provide refuge for wildlife.

A Truly Wild West: Protection for Valuable Native Ecosystems

- On SPLT preserves, one finds movie-set-quality, soul-stirring native prairie that evokes the old, wild west and inspires visitors to re-imagine the American Serengeti that the Great Plains once was. Bison thunder across thousands of unfenced acres. Human population densities are at frontier levels. The SPLT preserves contain sweeping expanses of native grasslands hosting a wide variety of native wildlife, with dramatic rock outcroppings, lush canyons and bottomlands, juniper woodlands, and dozens of stream miles and springs.
- The varied terrain is home to rare, threatened, and endangered animals and plants. SPLT preserves provide refuge for at least ten populations of black-tailed prairie dog, a keystone

species critical to grassland health, which benefits imperiled animals such as the swift fox, ferruginous hawk, burrowing owl, and mountain plover.

- The region experiences a fascinating phenomenon each fall: dispersal of male tarantulas in search of mates. These charismatic and long-lived spiders can be seen crossing the prairie en masse to create new generations of tarantulas.
- Scientists have documented rare plants and animals on SPLT preserves, which are managed for native biodiversity. One of these rare plants, Colorado green gentian, is found in southeastern Colorado and nowhere else on earth. SPLT's properties contain some of the largest populations of this extremely rare and beautiful plant.
- Heartland Ranch and Raven's Nest are located in Bent County, Southeastern Colorado, where risk of conversion to cropland is high because the value of cropland is 5 times that of grassland. This area is considered by scientists to be a biodiversity hotspot, given that species from the Central Shortgrass Prairie, Southern Shortgrass Prairie, and Chihuahuan Desert Ecoregions occur here.

Protecting & Restoring Native Prairie

- SPLT reintroduced bison to its Heartland Ranch property in 2015, which is a native grazer and the U.S. National Mammal. Bison and black-tailed prairie dogs are two of the most ecologically important species in the Great Plains; among their most important role is to maintain grassland by limiting shrub and tree encroachment. Other native herbivores found on SPLT's refuges are elk, deer, and pronghorn. SPLT's aim is to restore the "American Serengeti" by protecting remaining wildlife and reintroducing species that historically occurred in the region. The animals are not hunted or raised for commercial purposes.
- SPLT allows public access to its preserves for educational and restoration purposes. SPLT works with the local public school and historical society and regularly hosts tours and workshops in order to give back to the local community.



*Contact SPLT today for more information: email splt@southernplains.org
or call 720-841-1757.*