

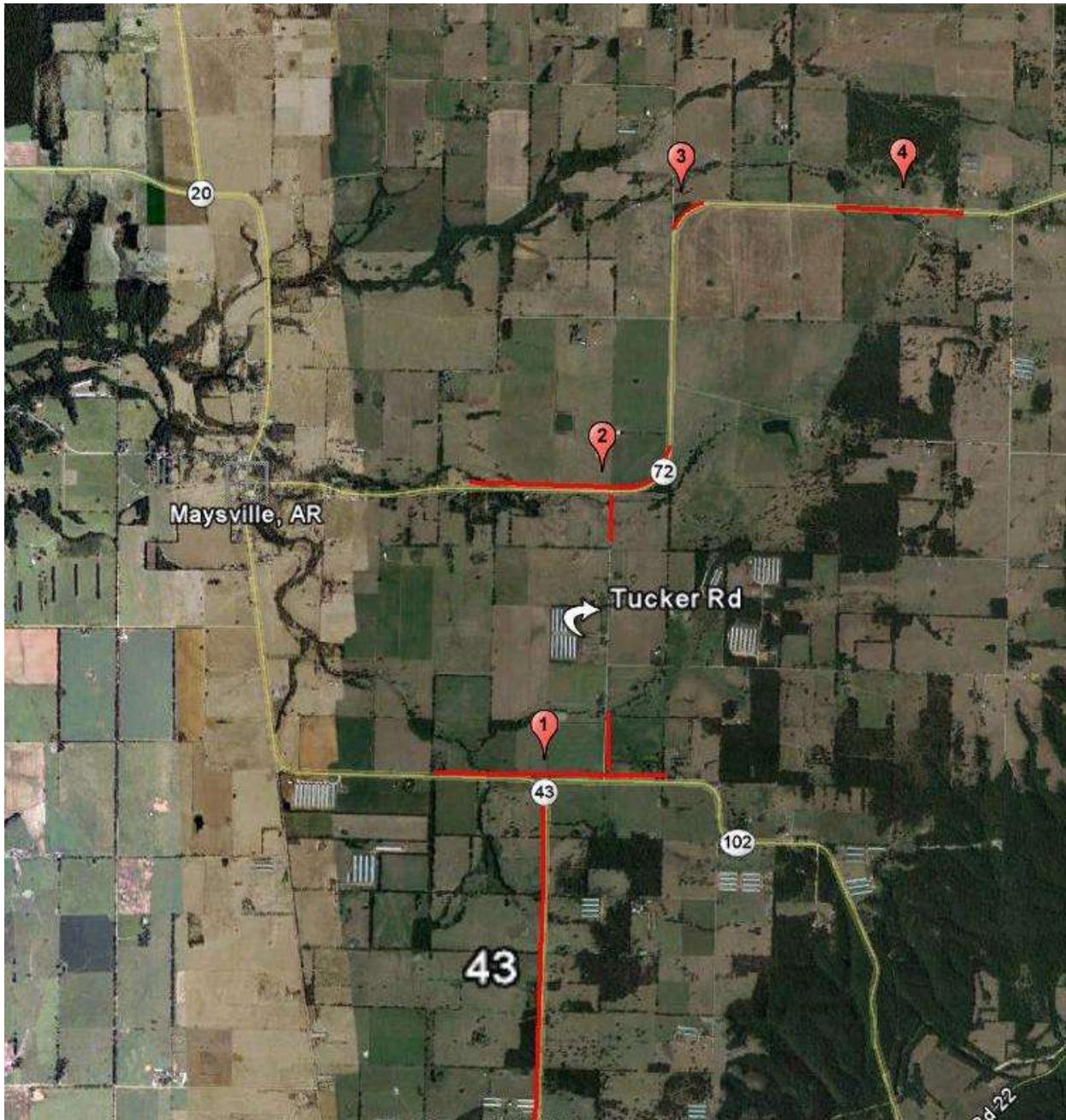
## BEATIE PRAIRIE BOTANICAL AREA in August 2011



We always enjoy birding around Maysville, especially in winter. For example, two Prairie Falcons flew over Mike Mlodinow and I on December 26, 2006. We were parked at the intersection of highways 102 and 43, southeast of Maysville in Benton County (see discussion of Area 1, below). On a different winter day there we found a flock of Harris's Sparrows in a thicket in the same place.

I have been birding in the Maysville area since the late 1970s. These areas with remnants of the old Beatie have been very productive. I'm not saying this is directly connected to the retention of the prairie flora, but presence of the original flora may also indicate presence of unique insect and small mammal communities attractive to birds associated with prairies.

There is no public land, no natural area with public access, associated with the former Beatie Prairie near Maysville. However, there are a few scattered acres of private land that retain aspects of the former prairie. These are mostly low and marshy. Most have springs and spring runs and have never been regularly plowed. There is no public access to these properties. However, public roads adjacent to them include rights-of-way that in some cases have protected a rich flora associated with the original Beatie Prairie.



The accompanying map shows some of these areas with interesting prairie plants in July 2011. For convenience I have labeled these 1, 2, 3, 4. Also for convenience, I am referring to these places as the Beatie Prairie botanical area (BPBA). This designation has no legal meaning. As far as I know, it's what's left of original elements of the old prairie. There are no doubt additional spots that I don't know about. Let's find them and get them mapped.

Of course you can visit these areas any time, but in terms of the prairie flora, mid to late July and into early August is pretty interesting. The descriptions below are written after trips during that period in 2011.

**AREA 1.** This may be the botanically richest place overall. Highways 43 and 102 junction here. Tucker Road connects 102 with 72 to the north. This whole area appears to be one of the wettest around Maysville. There are important spring runs in the field southwest of the 43-102 junction, another northeast of the junction of 43- Tucker, and at least a third in a field northwest of the 43-102 junction. Ditches and low areas have water all or much of the year. Prairie mounds have been plowed down over almost all of the old Beatie, but some remain in this area, especially notable in the field southwest of the 43-102 intersection. This field also has retained hawthorns. Sawtooth sunflowers grow in profusion. The presence of natural water flows here is critical, since it has limited plowing over the years and it provides for a rich fauna and flora.

**AREA 2:** This mostly runs along highway 72 and includes part of Tucker Road. There is a big spring run that crosses Tucker near the intersection with 72. Private fields on both sides have retained prairie mounds. Parts of the fields are low and marshy. The prairie flora is rich along 72, and especially so in the curve on 72 east of the intersection with Tucker Road. Here there is a deep ditch that is wet from spring run even in the middle of July. Compass plant, rattlesnake master, buttonbush, blazing star, etc are abundant. This curve is part of a triangular plot. Trees and bushes have grown to cover most of the triangle. If this whole triangle is state property (I am unsure of the ownership), this vegetation could be removed, allowing expansion of the prairie flora.

**AREA 3:** This is a big curve on highway 72 at the intersection with Schoolhouse Road. In July 2011 it was an extensive patch of *Liatris* and other prairie flora on the curve's north side. This curve is part of a small triangular plot. Pine trees have been planted in most of the triangle. If this whole triangle is state property (I am unsure of the ownership), the pine trees could be removed, allowing the *Liatris* and other native plants to expand.

**AREA 4:** This runs along about 0.5 miles of highway 72, west of Benson Road. One of the home places here is marked with a sign, "Artesian Spring Ranch." The big spring run is quite visible on Google Earth, and there are several places where it runs under the highway. In July 2011, there was an excellent native flora visible on the southside of the highway; the deeper ditches on the north side had been mowed, so it's unclear what plants were there or even why it was mowed.

**A FEW ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON BPBA:** As you would expect, there are natives like compass plant and *Liatris* scattered pretty much over the area. For the 4 miles from the intersection of 43-102 south on 43 to Loux Road, ashy sunflower compass plant, sawtooth sunflower and others were in scattered places all along the way in late July 2011. On highway 72, it was the same for the 3 miles between Tucker Road and Pritchard Road. For a reason I didn't understand, deep ditch lines in some spots were mowed, but not mowed in others. In the more upland, dry places, big patches of plants like ashy sunflowers were mowed. Quite a few spots went unmowed, a good thing for wildflowers and their pollinators. It would be beneficial to take a closer look at the mowing regime to see how it might be altered to help preserve more of the native flora.

Looking at the former Beatie Prairie as a botanical area gives us some place to start in terms of approaching how in the future we might go about acquiring and protecting blocks of quality or restorable prairie habitat associated with the Beatie. The low wet ground that has protected some prairie elements may be the best opportunity to acquire property from willing sellers. Based upon what I

know about this now, the best chance for that might be in area 1 (map), where at least some of this property has been offered on the market in recent years.

–Joe Neal