



HEARTLAND RANCH PRESERVE



A REFUGE FOR WILD & DOMESTIC ANIMALS

The Southern Plains Land Trust’s “Heartland Ranch” preserve extends over 11,000 glorious acres in the wild prairie of southeastern Colorado. This is a land that’s full of surprises, with gently rolling grassland terrain, at least 6 prairie dog colonies that occupy about 750 acres, dramatic rock-covered mesas awash in fossils, lush and deep canyons, juniper woodlands, multiple perennial springs, and many miles of seasonal streams (West Mud Creek and Little Angry Creek) that feed into the Arkansas River to the north.

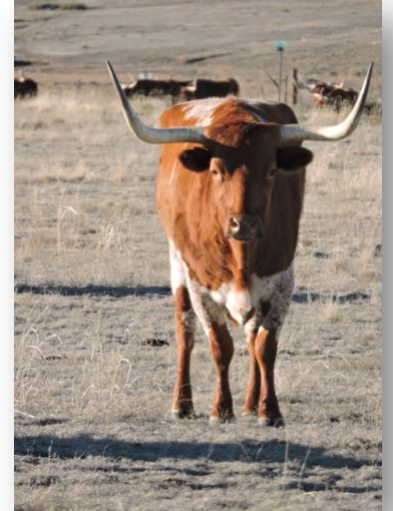
Abundant wild animals find refuge here. Coyote and bird song fills the air, and eagles grace the sky. Wildlife on the property includes elk (a rarity in the shortgrass prairie), mule deer, pronghorn, badger, coyote, swift fox, black-tailed prairie dog, black-tailed jackrabbit, desert cottontail, a wide variety of songbirds and raptors, diverse snakes, and many lizards. Year-round springs and seasonal creeks and ponds provide crucial habitat for wildlife, and we have sandpipers, ducks, herons, and plains leopard frogs using these fertile areas on the property.

We’ve also returned a missing resident to Heartland: bison. A herd of nearly 90 bison now resides on the preserve, transferred from property in Texas owned by The Summerlee Foundation. What an exciting addition they are! Also in residence is a herd of more than 50 longhorn cattle (brought up from Texas as well) and a dozen donkeys, taken in from neighbors who didn’t want them. SPLT has a full-time preserve manager whose main task is to meet the needs of all of these animals. Heartland provides a forever home to these creatures, where they will live out their natural lives.



VISITING HEARTLAND

SPLT invites guests to visit the preserve on a limited basis. We do not allow unrestricted public access, as this property is managed first and foremost for its wild and domestic animals. We conduct educational programming but are mindful to limit disturbance of all animals.



ACCOMMODATIONS

In the southern portion of Heartland, SPLT maintains its southeastern Colorado headquarters. There is a large yurt and cabins, which provide full accommodations for parties up to 10. The property is a 4-hour drive from Denver; we recommend at least one night stay due to the drive.

SPLT's staff takes the comfort of our visitors seriously. Tours include healthy, home-cooked meals, snacks, and beverages. Our tours are conducted on foot, in the ranch pickups, or, when the weather is warm, in our open-air safari vehicle. Expect to jump in the "caker" truck to visit the bison, longhorn, and donkeys up close as they are given hay and the grain "cake" they just love! We often have a campfire going at night to take the chill off, and you can step away from the fire to see one of the best night skies in North America.

During the day, you'll see prairie dogs on their towns and a bounty of songbirds and raptors. Cottontails and mule deer are often near the preserve headquarters and throughout the property. You're also likely to see pronghorn, coyotes, jackrabbits, and others in the course of your visit. If you come during spring or summer, expect to discover amphibians, reptiles, butterflies, and dragonflies as well.

BREATHE EASY

There's nothing quite like walking on land protected in its natural state and seeing diverse animals free to live out their lives. We work to protect them all. Let us introduce you to our Heartland Ranch preserve.



Photos © Rich Reading & Nicole Rosmarino.

For information, contact SPLT Director Nicole Rosmarino at splt@southernplains.org or 720-841-1757.