



the Bluestem Banner

Spring 2005

Tallgrass Ontario

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To achieve the identification, conservation, management and restoration of tallgrass prairie, savanna and related ecological communities in Ontario

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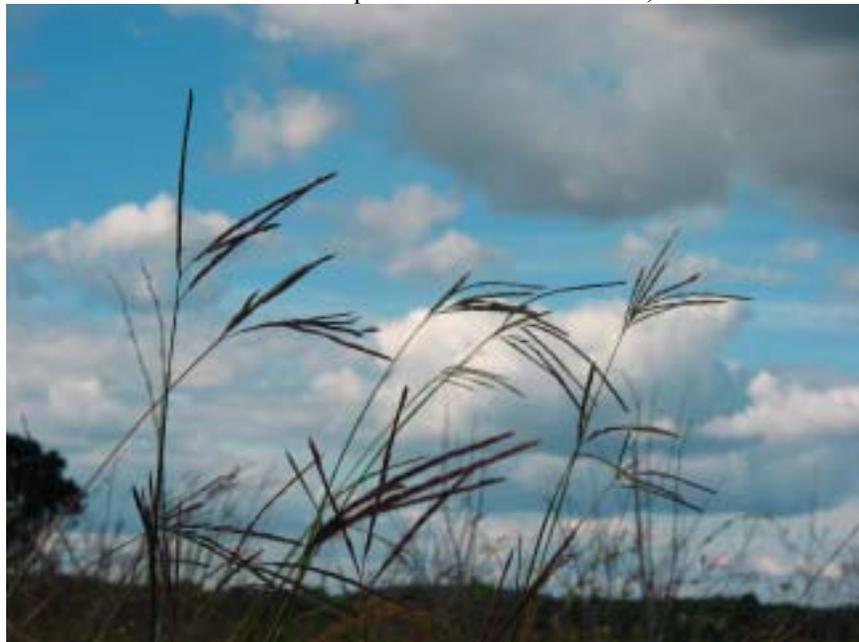
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Below is one of Allen's photos of the Avoca Prairie, Wisconsin



See this photograph in colour. Download the Bluestem Banner at
www.tallgrassontario.org

A New Buzz in the Prairie – by Mary Gartshore

One of life's comforting experiences is driving home along country roads on a warm summer night and hearing the songs of insects. The most familiar is the Sword-bearing Conehead (*Neoconocephalus ensiger*), a katydid with a pointed head and very long ovipositor. The maracas-like song fades in-and-out as one passes fields of rank vegetation. Our restored tallgrass prairie is full of these slender green or tan katydids. Last summer (2004) while swimming one evening in the dugout with our dogs, we could hear a loud buzz that I can only liken to the sound made by high-tension power lines on a foggy day. The sound seemed to come from the prairie but since I was without footwear decided not to look for it.



Figure 1. *Neoconocephalus robustus* on the left and the common Sword-bearing Conehead (*Neoconocephalus ensiger*) on the right. Notice *N. robustus* has no black on the tip of the 'cone' or fastigium.

Over the next few days we heard it a few times but far away at the very limit of our hearing and from an uncertain direction. On the night of September 13th, as I walked back from shutting the chickens away, I heard it again. Although dinner was ready, I was determined to track down this new sound. The dew was heavy and pretty soon I was soaked as I waded through Big Bluestem, Indian Grass and Showy Tick-trefoil. As I walked, the sound remained elusive, neither closer, nor farther away. After about 150 m I spotted a conehead with my flashlight. I put on my reading glasses and examined it closely and noticed that it

was stridulating, but the sound seemed to come from all around. I grabbed it and magically the sound stopped. It looked quite large so I bagged it and looked around for a more familiar conehead with which I could compare it. With both in hand I could see some differences (Figure 1 and 2).

I searched the internet and went through Vickery and Kevan (1985) and identified it as a Robust or Crepitating Conehead (*Neoconocephalus robustus*) known from a collection at Point Pelee National Park. On the internet I browsed a few sites and found it generally widespread in the United States where its habitat preference is described as tallgrass prairie on sand. I also learned that the loud buzz can be heard for up to 500 m. With a wingbeat frequency of 212 Hz per second during stridulation, it is classed among the fastest animals (Freitas 1999).



Figure 2. *Neoconocephalus robustus* sitting on planted Thoroughwort (*Eupatorium altissimum*).

How did this katydid find our restored prairie? Had we missed it in the past (unlikely) and was it present on remnant sites around Long Point. I released it in our yard and it sang for two days before disappearing. No others were heard the rest of the summer. *Mary Gartshore is a biologist who co-owns Pterophylla Native Plants and Seeds with partner Peter Carson. The restored tallgrass prairie is 24 ha and established in the early 1990s.*

References :Freitas, R.A. 1999. Nanomedicine, Vol I: Basic Capabilities: Bumper Mechanics, Landes Bioscience, Georgetown, TX
Vickery, V.R. and D.K.M. Kevan. 1985. The Grasshoppers, Crickets and Related Insects of Canada and Adjacent Regions. Research Branch, Agriculture Canada, Publ. 1777, 918 pp.

Good and Bad News from the home front:

SOS 4 begins to analyze tallgrass data *by William Wilson*

As many of you know, Tallgrass Ontario has been conducting the Save Ontario Savannas program over the last 5 years in an effort to create a detailed snapshot of the condition of tallgrass habitat in the province. The latest and last stage of SOS, SOS 4, has now wrapped up its fieldwork and we are analyzing the resulting data. Among our final products will be a State of the Prairie report, some tallgrass species information sheets, and a few management guidelines and templates. These will be made available to you over the next few months.

In general, we are quite excited about being able to offer you and other tallgrass enthusiasts up-to-date information on the conservation and use of tallgrass habitat in Ontario. However, we are also conscious that our work has produced a fairly sobering view of the condition of tallgrass in our province.

First, the good news. The large majority of tallgrass habitat (measured by total hectares) is protected on publicly owned and maintained management lands. These include Ojibway Prairie Complex, Turkey Point Provincial Park (savanna), Alderville First Nation (savanna and prairie), and Walpole Island First Nation (savanna and prairie). In addition, these four sites are by far the largest contiguous sites in the province, i.e., they are also the four largest single fragments of tallgrass. The managers of these sites are dedicated to the further conservation of tallgrass habitat under their jurisdiction and need our support and volunteer efforts.



Eels Prairie Photo: Will Wilson



Kame Prairie (north). Photo: Will Wilson

Further positive news is that we also found several (well, only 3-4) new sites as we met with landowners and managers in our journey across the province (over 20,000 km of driving!), as well as a few new locations of unusual and uncommon tallgrass species. These are important discoveries as they give us a little bit more “cushion” and a bit more genetic variability; although they don’t begin to make up for the bad news reported later in this article. Most importantly, we have been working with folks at NHIC to discover more about the tallgrass in the northwestern part of our province, extending like a string of pearls from Thunder Bay to the Manitoba border. Finally, and most importantly, in our conversations with dedicated conservations landowners, many of them farmers and ranchers, we have uncovered some new, very successful management techniques that offer us options to keep our tallgrass patches healthy and flourishing.

Now, the bad news. At least 50% to 70% of the tallgrass patches recorded in our databases can no longer be considered tallgrass under ecological criteria. This is horrible and very dangerous. For some of these sites, the problem is a complete lack of any management at all over the last 10 – 15 years, in combination with the rampant planting of trees, particularly red pines, that seems to have occurred on any open land, regardless of the presence of tallgrass species! Shade kills tallgrass; even savannas only have occasional trees, i.e., < 30% – 35% canopy cover. *Please turn to page 4.*

Good and Bad News *continued from page 3*

Of course, this situation can be turned around fairly quickly with a little chainsaw action! What is important, though, is that the sites are not burned until the fuel load, i.e., the larger trees, is reduced; otherwise, the fire could burn too hot and start to sterilize the site, opening up the possibility of invasion by weedy species.

What is truly saddening, however, is the number of sites that have been lost due to the development of housing or, even more tragically, recreational facilities. These sites will be extremely difficult to resurrect now and we need to put a stop to the practice of destroying vital parts of our natural heritage simply because it is perceived as being “empty ground.”!

And More News from the SOS Front Lines in Quetico

— a personal note by *Fin MacDermid*

I spent most of last summer with my research assistant canoeing in Quetico where we were found and documented several tallgrass sites. The first few trips were challenging. Neither of us had ever done this before (just read about it) and the bugs were having their annual mammalian feeding frenzy. Blackflies and mosquitoes are tolerable - blackflies actually pollinate the delicious blueberry - but ticks are a whole different story. I wonder if anyone has ever studied ticks in the tallgrass because there is golden opportunity up in Quetico.

Unfortunately, I also recall the first time my field assistant and I were putting canoes in the water to go and map tallgrass in Quetico. I distinctly remember the sinking feeling I felt when I stared at the empty canoe landing where our field gear, cameras, and food once sat. We had to make two trips down a sketchy logging road to get all our gear in because of my tiny car and the extra week of bannock and whiskey rations we had brought along. When we arrived back with our second load of packs we discovered that our gear had vanished into thin air. After reporting our gear stolen to the OPP (over the phone because there were no cruisers in the Atikokan area anymore) we returned to the campground for supper and several beers. Fortunately, we eventually got our gear back from the kindly warden, who had thought someone had forgotten it!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Tallgrass Ontario for their generous assistance in funding my summer thesis project. Without their help I would not have been able to accomplish

what I did. It's also nice to think that the work I did will actually contribute to a larger cause. I learned a lot this summer, about tallgrass and about life in general. I know how to identify grasses and to never, ever, leave my gear alone at a canoe landing!

Fin MacDermid is a fourth year thesis student at Lakehead University.



Other members of the SOS team are pictured above: Julie Rosenthal, University of Greenwich, London, England; Steve Hill, University of Toronto; and Will Wilson, Lakehead University, doing one of many TV interviews at the Ojibway Prairie Complex

Road Kill I: Through the Prairie and Across the River?

Tallgrass Ontario reviewed the presentation of the study just released by Sam Schwartz Consultants outlining the proposed options for the Highway 401 Windsor Bypass and its impact on the Ojibway Prairie Complex.

Two proposed options would see the truck route located within the boundaries of the Ojibway Prairie and Spring Garden complex. These natural areas were described as “vacant woodland and parkland” in the presentation. This grossly understates their true value. Consider the following:

- The Ojibway Prairie Complex contains one of the largest and most significant black oak savannas in Ontario and Canada. Oak savanna and tallgrass prairie are some of the most endangered ecosystems on the planet.
- The complex is home to well over 100 provincially and nationally recognized species at risk, some not found elsewhere in Canada.
- Oak savannas are old, mature ecosystems that cannot be recreated elsewhere.
- A portion of the Spring Garden ANSI was recently purchased by the City of Windsor at considerable cost and effort by local and federal agencies and groups. We understand that plans to complete this important acquisition are underway, and trust that this current transportation proposal will not jeopardize that process.
- The national and international significance of the Ojibway Prairie Complex as a prairie and savanna ecosystem was clearly recognized when the city of Windsor and others hosted the North American Prairie Conference in 1992. Other national and provincial conferences have been held in Windsor, celebrating the fine work that the city has done in protecting and managing this complex.
- The Ojibway Nature Centre and the public trails scattered throughout the lands provide an outstanding educational/recreational opportunity.

- The complex is Windsor’s largest and most significant natural area. Compared with other urban municipalities, Windsor has strikingly little natural area left, a planning shortcoming we hope does not continue.
- The proposed truck route would take away lands from this already fragmented natural area complex. In a part of Ontario where approximately 97% of the natural landscape has been already lost to development of various types, every additional piece of natural area lost is devastating. In addition to this direct loss of habitat, the ecosystems that remained would be harmed by secondary effects of the road, which include issue such as noise and emissions, vibration and impacts on wildlife movement.

One of the stated goals is to choose routes that are “least environmentally intrusive” and yet Option 3, the so-called preferred option, is the most environmentally intrusive of all the options as it impacts Windsor’s most environmentally important and sensitive area.



Chris Daniel, SOS IV, at Ojibway. Photo: W. Wilson.

(This article is an extract from a letter sent by Tallgrass Ontario to Mayor Eddie Francis of Windsor on February 10th, 2005.. Please turn to page 6 to find out how you can help save Ojibway Prairie. Details of the Schwartz Report are available on the city web site at <http://www.citywindsor.ca/001428.asp>)

Road Kill II: Spring Garden ANSI – just more vacant land? by Alan McKinnon

The Schwartz Report proposes a grade level truck highway going through the Spring Garden ANSI behind Todd Lane. The report refers to this area as “vacant land”. Considering the funding and resources the City of Windsor has invested in the Spring Garden Complex over the last 25 years, the City is fully aware that the area identified is not simply “vacant land”.

Contrary to what city and county leaders have been stating publicly, the long term impact of ten to twenty thousand diesel trucks a day on the Spring Garden ANSI/Natural Heritage site is not something that could be considered in the context of an Environmental Assessment.

Combined with the other Schwartz Plan elements: the proposed “tunnel” under the Ojibway Provincial Nature Reserve, the addition of international truck traffic to Ojibway Parkway and the undetermined fate of Black Oak Heritage Park (at Brighton Beach), a highway traversing the Spring Garden ANSI will begin a process that will have significant environmental impact on the entire Ojibway Complex.

The Ojibway Complex is the last natural area within city limits that is environmentally significant at a Provincial and National level. It has been identified as important not only to Canada’s natural heritage, but as an invaluable “scientific and genetic resource” for future generations.(Ojibway:Tallgrass Prairie, MNR, 1995)

The Spring Garden Natural Area was first designated an ANSI (Area of Natural and Scientific Interest) by the province in 1984. ERCA(Essex Region Conservation Authority) had designated it an ESA(Environmentally Significant Area) in 1983. ESA’s are defined as: “...the most important biological communities in Essex County.” (Ibid.)

The Spring Garden Complex Environmental Evaluation Report (SGEER), undertaken by the City in partnership with the Province (Ministry of Natural Resources) and the County (ERCA) in 1996, states:

“The total number of plant species recorded and the number of provincially rare and regionally rare

species are indicators of its’ diversity that, especially considering its’ size, is almost without equal.” (p.12). Among the reports recommendations were that the Spring Garden Complex should be retained, wherever possible, in its’ natural state and that no road should cross through the Spring Garden.

Over the past 25 years, millions of dollars from all levels of government have been spent to study Spring Garden and develop policy and planning that would preserve its natural features.

The Spring Garden Complex is one of only four sites in Canada that sustains a population of Massasauga Rattlesnakes, an endangered species. In 2001 alone, \$250,000 in federal funding was granted as part of the Canadian Species at Risk habitat protection program to protect Spring Garden.

In the City of Windsor’s Official Plan, the Spring Garden Planning Area consolidated the ESA and ANSI boundaries with the City’s own Candidate Natural Heritage Site (CNHS) designation. The City’s Official plan calls for a “community park/woodland/prairie” with “developmental constraints along the natural area periphery”. (City of Windsor Official Plan-Vol II-Spring Garden Planning Area-OPA#5-11/29/02) The portion of the Spring Garden that borders LaSalle along Todd Lane is to remain “natural area”.

The Spring Garden can be fully protected only after all privately owned lands within the complex are acquired by the City. A Provincial mandate to acquire the lands led to the City’s imposition of a “green levy” on Windsor property taxpayers to collect the funds needed for acquisition. Despite the provincial directive, in December 2004, the City cut the \$1,000,000 earmarked for ERCA’s acquisition budget for Spring Garden lands. (Windsor Star, Dec 9/10,2004)

Portions of the Spring Garden have already been expropriated from private owners using “parkland conveyance provisions” of the planning act. As well, purchases have been funded by government agencies (including Federal, Provincial, and ERCA) which “restrict the development and use of
(continued on page 8)

Road Kill III:**Tallgrass Prairie protection on the Oak Ridges Moraine** *by Barry King*

In Northumberland County, near Cobourg and just east of the Nature Conservancy of Canada's Burnley Carmel property, a small remnant of the Rice Lake Plains has survived within, and surrounding, an abandoned cemetery to the vanished farming community of Russ' Creek. The surviving species have been recognized in reports by Wasyl Bakowsky, of the Natural Heritage Information Centre (September, 2001), and, more recently by David White in his recent survey of the Salt Creek ANSI for the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. The conservation partnership - the Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative- has attracted interest to this area. Located in the core area of the Oak Ridges Moraine, this northerly remnant of Ontario's tallgrass prairie is a protected Key Natural Heritage Feature (KNHF) of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP) - or is it?

The ORMCP gives these Key Natural Heritage Features a 30 metre vegetative protection zone, and requires that a Natural Heritage Evaluation be done in the event of an application for development or site alteration (within the minimum area of influence of 120 metres). None was forthcoming, however, when a new 16 foot wide 400 foot long road was clear-cut through this site by the municipality of Alnwick/Haldimand.. The Natural Heritage Evaluation requires the applicant to demonstrate that the project is needed and that there is no reasonable alternative.

The three Ministries involved are Environment, Natural Resources, and Municipal Affairs and Housing. Without going into too much detail, it appears that a Natural Heritage Evaluation is only triggered if an Environmental Assessment is first required. In this case, an EA is only required if soil is moved (e.g. bulldozed) or a hard surface is put down. When the MOE was informed of the new road construction, the municipality was given a deadline to complete an EA, but quickly withdrew their original plans to put down a gravel road here. By doing this, they were able to avoid the required EA and subsequently, the Natural Heritage Evaluation, as well. It then became possible to

clear-cut all of the Key Natural Heritage Features. The MOE explained that it had no expertise in the area of tallgrass savanna and advised contacting the MNR. When MNR and MMAH are queried further, they advise that the responsibility for implementing the policies of the ORMCP rests with the local municipality and advise that the municipality be contacted. The response from the municipality, if indeed there is a response, should be obvious.

In the above example, the municipality now mows the tallgrass prairie remnant, though it is within the ANSI and identified as protected in the municipality's Official Plan. Among the species contained within it's boundaries are Prairie Buttercup, Cylindrical Blazing Star, Beardtongue, Sky Blue Aster, Anemone, Wild Lupine, Butterfly Weed, Wood Lily, Wild Bergamot, Big Bluestem and Indian Grasses, Grey Dogwood and New Jersey Tea.



New Access Road to Russ' Ck. Cemetery
Dunbar Road entrance, May 15, 2004

The frightening conclusion in this scenario is that the guardian of the Moraine policies is the fox, and the Key Natural Heritage Features are the chickens. As well, all the municipalities on the Moraine can follow this same strategy. Once the Features are removed (i.e. wildlife habitat, woodlands, tallgrass savannah), would there be any

restrictions to prevent further development? This failing of the enforcement of the ORMCP must be addressed! In reference to the greenbelt protection plan, Minister Gerretsen has stated, "We will consider any amendment that will improve the legislation." Those who support the preservation of the KNHF of sand barrens, savannas and tallgrass prairies, should voice their concerns to:

The Honourable John Gerretsen,
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing,
777 Bay Street,
Toronto ON M5G 2E5,
Fax (416) 585-6470.

Emails may also be sent to:

Alnwick/Haldimand Township: Attention Mayor
William Finley and Council
alnwald@eagle.ca

The Honourable David Ramsay, Minister of Natural
Resources
6th floor, Room 6630, Whitney Block
99 Wellesley St. West
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1W3

John Tory, leader of the Ontario Conservative Party
john.tory@pc.ola.org

Marilyn Churley of the Ontario N.D.P.
marilyn_churley-MPP@ontla.ola.org

The Honourable Leona Dombrowsky,
Minister of the Environment
12th Floor, 135 St. Clair Avenue West
Toronto, Ontario
M4V 1P5

Road Kill II – Spring Gardens *continued from page 6*

the lands." (City of Windsor, Official Plan Vol II, 5-10)

The Schwartz Plan Option 4, the northern route that follows Huron Church to EC ROW, impacts fewer residences and businesses than the "Todd Lane" route. (599 vs 650..Schwartz Report Summary Part 1, p24-25) Option 4 would have NO IMPACT on any environmentally significant areas, and impact only lands and properties adjacent to an established international traffic route.

In the summary to his report, Schwartz states "...all 4 (bypass) options must be developed in greater detail and receive public exposure to identify issues, faults and improvements." Mayor Francis has declared "no more public meetings" regarding the Schwartz report or any of its' components, even though concepts such as the Spring Garden highway are completely new.

Option 3 has been presented as the only choice.

Both city and county councils, without any recorded vote, are said to be "unanimous" in their support of the highway through Spring Garden and Ojibway Provincial Nature Reserve. No public

input was sought by any elected official before their unanimous support was announced. The City has stated its intention of "fast tracking" the Environmental Assessment and the first phase of construction. The first phase of construction is the highway through the Spring Garden ANSI/Natural Heritage Site.

Under Provincial Policy Statements (issued under section 3 of the Planning Act): "...no development will be permitted within an ANSI and its' adjacent lands unless it has been demonstrated that no negative impacts on the natural features of the ecological functions for which the area is identified will occur." (Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 1996, Section 2.3)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION: Alan
McKinnon @ 519 250 1349 OR
alm@89xradio.com**

Or go to www.saveojibway.cogeco.ca. You can join Citizens Protecting Ojibway Wilderness (CPOW) and obtain a copy of their newsletter.

“VTEEE” changed to the “Species at Risk in Ontario” list.

The Species at Risk in Ontario list, also known as the SARO list, has several features of interest. The list gives the provincial status for 178 species. Some useful points to note:

- A page at the end of the list shows which species have differing status between COSEWIC and MNR.
- The term “Vulnerable” changes to “Special Concern”.
- 79 species on the list are provided with a new or revised status (23 Special Concern, 24 Threatened and 32 Endangered – not regulated).
- Endangered (not regulated) is a new category for endangered species which are eligible to added to regulation under the ESA.
- Under the current version of the PPS, species listed as Threatened or Endangered (regulated) on the SARO list receive policy protection for Threatened and Endangered habitats.
- Endangered (not regulated) species are currently recommended for PPS habitat protection if they are also designated as Endangered by COSEWIC (see Natural Heritage Reference Manual). This would apply to all Endangered (not regulated) species except the Wood Turtle.
- Definitions in the June 2004 draft policies under the PPS propose giving habitat protection to Endangered species including Endangered (not regulated) species.
- The list is current to April 27, 2004; it expected that it will be updated once a year.
- New species will be added or existing designations revised on the SARO list only after posting the proposed changes on the Environmental Registry.

Check out Species at Risk in Ontario list:
www.ontarioparks.com/saro-list.pdf

Prescribed Burn Schedule for Ontario

The following prescribed burns are scheduled to be conducted during 2005 (listed by MNR district, name, location, size and purpose). All prescribed burns in Ontario must follow the guidelines provided by the Prescribed Burn Planning Manual dated February 13, 1997. Please contact dave.heaman@mnr.gov.on.ca for more information

Rondeau PB, Rondeau Prov. Park, Township of Harwich, Kent County, 93 ha, Oak savanna, pine-oak savanna and oak woodland restoration. Tallgrass prairie maintenance.

Pelee Island PB, Township of Pelee, Essex County, 44.0 ha, Alvar savanna restoration/maintenance.

Ojibway Nature Reserve PB, City of Windsor, Essex County, 101 ha, Tallgrass prairie maintenance.

Pinery PB, Pinery Prov. Park, Town of Bosanquet, Lambton County, 97 ha, Oak savanna restoration. Fire Investigation training.

Aylmer Wildlife PB, Township of Malahide, Elgin County, 16 ha, Tallgrass prairie establishment. Wildlife habitat.

Moore PB, Moore Township, Elgin County, 17 ha, Tallgrass prairie restoration.

Tallgrass Ontario has been working hard to improve its website
www.tallgrassontario.org
 Please take some time to check it out and send your comments to info@tallgrassontario.org

Recovering Tallgrass Communities: the next steps – by Allen Woodliffe

Tallgrass Ontario is six years old! It was back in January of 1999 that this organization took shape, more or less as a result of the completion of *Tallgrass Communities: A Recovery Plan for Southern Ontario*. In this plan, authored by Lindsay Rodger and with input from numerous individuals who had been involved with many tallgrass prairie ‘things’ over the years, were eight main goals. The first goal was to ‘Improve communication, coordination and information-sharing among those involved in tallgrass community conservation’. One of the Objectives listed for that goal was to ‘Set up a Tallgrass Prairie and Savanna Association’.

The eight goals, 20 objectives and 65 actions that were listed in this first recovery plan were commendable and ambitious, and in hindsight a bit lofty for the five year time frame allotted for duration of The Plan. However it is good to aim high and the organization has achieved remarkable success in these few short years. The wide-ranging activities of members of Tallgrass Ontario as highlighted in the issues of *Bluestem Banner* as well as the updates brought to you at the regular tallgrass forums attest to this. But our task is not completed yet—not by a long shot!

One of statements in the initial recovery plan was to review the plan and corresponding implementation schedule after five years to measure progress and fine-tune our organization’s direction to ensure that recovery for tallgrass communities was on the right track. So beginning in 2004, we began our review, and in late 2004 members of the Board of Directors and the Tallgrass Recovery Advisory Committee (TRAC) initiated the creation of our next model of Recovery Strategy.

A Recovery Team from the Board and TRAC has been established: Jane Bowles, Peter Carson, Paul Pratt, Lindsay Rodger, Graham Buck, Will Wilson, Roxanne St Martin, Holly Bickerton, Ken Tuininga and Allen Woodliffe. Funding has been made available from the Ministry of Natural Resources Species At Risk fund, and a team of two, John Ambrose and Gerry Waldron, was selected from several possible candidates to prepare the next draft version of the Strategy.

There are four key parts to producing the next iteration of the recovery strategy. They are:

1. Evaluate the existing recovery plan;
2. Using the results of the evaluation, as well as Will Wilson’s work from SOS and existing research, we need to re-evaluate and restructure the existing plan so it reflects Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Canada requirements for a draft communities recovery strategy;
3. Address species specific strategies for nine species that are high priority via the federal Species At Risk Act schedule. These nine are: bird’s-foot violet, colicroot, dense blazingstar, Gattinger’s agalinis, Skinner’s agalinis, purple twayblade, slender bush clover, Virginia goat’s rue and willowleaf aster;
4. Produce a work plan that outlines the tasks and timeline for completion of final drafts of the community strategy and individual species strategies.



The first meeting at Hawthorne Valley Farm, Summer, 2004, with members of the Board and TRAC. Photo: Roxanne St Martin

In addition to the selection of the two authors of this next draft strategy, the recovery team recently met and evaluated the 1998 plan. The first draft of this new strategy will be done by early April, 2005, but there will be much more to do to get it completed. You too can have some input, so stay tuned!

Tallgrass Ontario Well Represented At The 19th North American Prairie Conference *by Allen Woodliffe*

August 8-12, 2004 was one of the highlights in the lives of some tallgrass prairie enthusiasts: the 19th North American Prairie Conference (NAPC) finally arrived! This event brought an assemblage of more than 600 practitioners, managers, restorationists, researchers and other prairie advocates who shared research results and camaraderie about their prairie passions. This conference was particularly significant in that the venue was 'home' to one of North America's, and tallgrass prairie's, most well-known conservationists: Aldo Leopold. The location was the picturesque campus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which overlooks Lake Mendota and whose mascot, appropriately, is the Badger!

These bi-annual conferences began in 1968 in Illinois, when it was then known as the Midwest Prairie Conference. Due to the recognition of tallgrass prairie occurring beyond its traditional Midwestern range and the interest in understanding and managing those tallgrass prairies by many folks far and wide, it became known as the North American Prairie Conference in 1978. Locations for the NAPC have included university campuses in eleven states and one province across the tallgrass prairie range, from Texas to North Dakota and from Nebraska to Ontario.

This year had the highest number of Ontario representatives ever, except for 1992 when it was held in Windsor. At least thirteen Ontario folks were present, mostly members of Tallgrass Ontario. It was the first NAPC for about half of these participants. Oral papers provided an Ontario flavour to the conference also, given by Andy Hamilton, Larry Lamb, Todd Farrell, Chris Daniel, and Dan Mackle.

Some of us Ontario folks had attended the NAPC at least 5 times in years gone by. It was therefore a highlight to reacquaint ourselves with other prairie

enthusiasts across the states that we only see at these events. In addition, there was a special showing of a recently released DVD entitled *America's Lost Landscape: The Tallgrass Prairie*, produced by Daryl Smith of the University of Northern Iowa. It describes the rapid transformation of most of the 240 million acres of tallgrass prairie to farmland in a single generation, as well as some of the efforts taking place today to save this precious ecosystem. A copy of this was acquired by two Ontario participants, and plans are to include it in TGO's library.

**You can contact Tallgrass Ontario at
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As good as the 109 oral and 25 poster presentations were, one of the highlights of these conferences is obviously to see prairie up close. A day of field trips provided participants with a wide range of prairie exploration opportunities, from dry sandy prairies such as the 432 acre Spring Green Preserve and the 60,000 acre Fort McCoy Military Reserve, to hilltop prairies such as the 16 acre Black Earth Prairie, to lush wet mesic lowland prairies such as the 1885 acre Avoca Prairie-Savanna (photo on page 1), the 1300+ acres Kettle Moraine prairie-savanna complex and the 3500 acre Scuppernong Prairie. Several sites provided vantage points where there was no evidence of human development in any direction, just horizon to horizon natural area. Some sites had prescribed burns of over 1800 acres.

Wisconsin has some amazing prairie places. Cramming a few brief stops along the return trip did not even come close to satiating the desire to explore them. A return trip to this mid-western state just to search out more prairie remnants is definitely in the plans!

On the Move

Lindsay Rodger has moved from World Wildlife Fund Canada to Parks Canada, as Senior Recovery Manager. Contact her at Lindsay.Rodger@pc.gc.ca

Mary Orpen is moving on up to the 5th Floor. She is now Policy & Program Officer, Watershed Pilot, Water Resources Section, MNR. Contact her at mary.orpen@mnr.gov.on.ca

Graham Buck is the new Stewardship Assistant for the "Natural Connections" collaborative of the NWTF Canada, Brant-Oxford NWTF, Brant Rod and Gun Club, and Brant Resource Stewardship Network. Contact Graham at brantstewardship@sympatico.ca

*Conferences and Meetings*

Parks and Protected Areas and Species and Ecosystems at Risk: Research and Planning Challenges. Joint 2005 AGM. May 5-7th, 2005. Guelph, ON www.prfol.ca

Carolinian Woodland Recovery Workshop & AGM. A presentation of the draft Carolinian Woodland Recovery Strategy. May 6th, 2005. Check out www.carolinian.org

NANPS Annual Plant Sale. May 14, 2005 - Downsview Park, Toronto. www.nanps.org

Lambton Wildlife Inc. **Native Plant Sale**, May 7, 2005. Sarnia. www.lambtonwildlife.com

Wild Ginger Native Plant Nursery. **Open House**, May 21, 2005. Port Hope. www.wildginger.ca

Gateway to Nature Conference. June 3-5, 2005. 2005 conference and gathering of Ontario Nature and Nature Canada (formerly Canadian Nature Federation) at Nipissing, ON deannac@ontarionature.org.

Tallgrass Prairie on the Farm July 23, 2005 and August 24, 2005 Highgate, ON. www.carolinianplants.com

4th Ontario Tallgrass Prairie and Savanna Forum. Old Prairies and New Prairies. September 21 – 22, 2005. Brantford, ON www.tallgrassontario.org

Annual General Meeting – Tallgrass Ontario– March 19th, 2005

Old friends and new gathered in London this Spring for the 4th Annual General Meeting of Tallgrass Ontario. It was great to see the Tiedjes and Smiths of Lambton Wildlife Incorporated, as well as Ron Gould, Ken Browne, Cecil Morris and a host of other tallgrass aficionados in person.

Cathy Quinlan, President of Tallgrass Ontario, chaired the meeting and welcomed **Jane Bowles** and **Graham Buck** to the Board of Directors of Tallgrass Ontario. Jane is Adjunct Professor in Biology and Geography at the University of Western Ontario, Curator of the UWO Herbarium and Director of the Sherwood Fox Arboretum. For the past three years, she has worked with Walpole Island First Nation and Environment Canada on species at risk and habitat stewardship on Walpole Island. Graham has a BSc in agriculture from the University of Guelph and is currently stewardship assistant in Brant (see above). Previously, he worked

with the NCC, and clocked a four year term on the executive of the Kitchener Waterloo Field Naturalists. A warm thank you as well, to **Todd Farrell** who leaves the Board this year – a long time friend and contributor to Tallgrass Ontario.

Nikki May presented her research on Volunteer Monitoring of Forest and Savanna Restoration and has allowed us to put her thesis on our website www.tallgrassontario.org. **Julie Rosenthal** gave us an outline of some of the research findings from Save Ontario Savannas 4. Please see page 3 for more information about SOS. And don't forget to check out www.tallgrassontario.org. We have a brand new website full of great information and ideas. Please visit us in person! at our new field office at Ridgetown College, Mitton House, Ridgetown, Ontario. Call for an appointment at 519 674-1543 or email info@tallgrassontario.org.