

Several tallgrass species, such as northern bobwhite, are in danger of disappearing from Canada while others, such as the greater prairie chicken and the karner blue (butterfly), are already gone.

### CONSERVATION EFFORTS

A Recovery Plan for southern Ontario's tallgrass communities has been prepared. The overall goal of the plan is to recover, reconstruct and conserve a network of tallgrass communities across Ontario, and to recover and protect the plant and animal life associated with it.

The specific goals and objectives are wide-ranging and include improving communication and information-sharing, cataloguing information on all remnant sites, encouraging habitat creation and expansion of existing remnants, and raising public awareness.

### TALLGRASS ONTARIO

Tallgrass Ontario, a not-for-profit organization, evolved out of the Recovery Plan. Tallgrass Ontario's role is to implement the Recovery Plan. The organization has representatives from government, conservation groups and other interested organizations and individuals. New members are always welcome.



Great Spangled Fritillary, Rosemary Scott



Indian Grass, Cathy Quinlan



Seed Collecting, P. Allen Woodliffe

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about the Recovery Plan for Ontario's tallgrass communities, Tallgrass Ontario, or about how you can help, please contact:

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Burnie the Badger

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# Tallgrass Prairie & Savanna



in Ontario

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Cover Photo: Ojibway Prairie, P. Allen Woodliffe.

Tallgrass prairies and savannas are natural grassland habitats that contain a great diversity of grasses, wildflowers and animal life. Tallgrass is one of the most endangered plant communities on earth, more threatened than tropical rainforest.

Tallgrass was once found throughout the central U.S., southern Ontario and Manitoba. It covered an estimated 90 million hectares, roughly the size of British Columbia. Today, only 1.5 million hectares (about 1%) remains, equivalent to half the size of Vancouver Island.

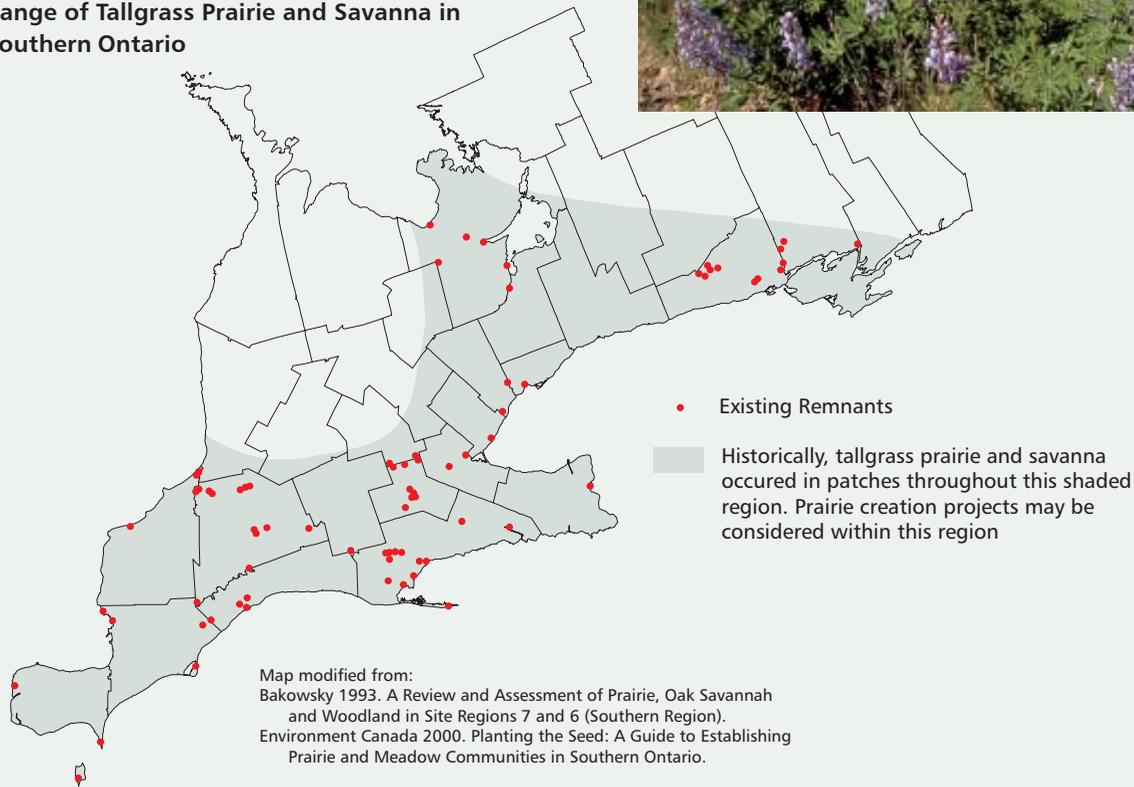
The tallgrass prairie has some of the most fertile soils on the earth and is now, roughly, the Corn Belt.  
*Lauren Brown, 1979.*

In southern Ontario, tallgrass covered approximately 100,000 hectares but now less than 3% remains. Over the past 200 years, most of this grassland has been converted to farmland or covered by urban development.



Lupines in High Park, Toronto. Gera Dillon

### Range of Tallgrass Prairie and Savanna in Southern Ontario



Ojibway Prairie in Windsor. Paul Pratt



Henslow's Sparrow, Paris Canada/J.R. Graham

### TALLGRASS...

- is one of the most endangered ecosystems in Canada;
- is a **globally imperiled ecosystem**;
- provides habitat for a large number of wildlife species, including many that are officially designated as rare at the global, national or provincial level; and
- holds tremendous potential for Ontario's agricultural, pharmaceutical, ecotourism, and construction and fuel products industries.

### WILDLIFE VALUE

Tallgrass habitats are home to a great many species of plants and animals. Over 200 species of plants are found in Ontario's prairies and savannas including slender blazing-star, butterfly milkweed, pale purple coneflower, big bluestem and Indian grass.

*Prairie* is the French word used by early traders and explorers to describe the vast open country dominated by tall grasses that were encountered on their westward journeys. The word *savanna* is taken from the Carib Indian word referring to grassland with a scattering of open-grown trees.

Birds such as bobolink, savanna sparrow and northern bobwhite (quail) shelter in the tall grasses and feed on the rich insect life. Butterflies, damselflies, ants, leafhoppers and ladybeetles are just some of the insects found in large numbers in tallgrass sites. Badgers, meadow voles and fox snakes are also adapted to life among the dense grasses.