

# Manitoba Species at Risk

## Tall-grass Prairie



MHHC

Tall-grass Prairie Range Map



\* Range map based on potential range.

The Tall-grass Prairie once stretched from southern Manitoba to Texas. Together with the Short-grass and Mixed-grass prairies, it was the continent's largest continuous ecosystem, and was home to thousands of species, including large herds of bison, elk, and antelope.

Today, the Tall-grass Prairie is reduced to less than 1% of its original area, making it one of the rarest and most endangered ecosystems in the world. The largest remaining Tall-grass Prairie habitat can be found in southern Manitoba near Vita, with other patches located in the southern Interlake region.



Provincially  
Endangered

### Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs)

- Retain large, un-fragmented blocks of Tall-grass Prairie
- Regularly use prescribed burns to break down dead and decaying vegetation, return nutrients to the soil
- Graze using a sustainable management plan
- Mow and hay at appropriate times
- Control invasive species through herbicide use, hand-clearing or other techniques like bio-control
- Restore Tall-grass Prairie using appropriate native seed stock

Co-benefiting Species: The BMPs listed for this species may also benefit Tall-grass Western Prairie Fringed Orchids, Monarch Butterflies, and Small White Lady-slipper, Poweshiek Skipperling, and a variety of other species.

# Manitoba Species at Risk

## More about the Tall-grass Prairie

### Description

Tall-grass Prairie takes its name from the dominant grasses in the region, namely big bluestem and switch grass. Across its range the herbaceous component of this habitat is composed of approximately 80% grasses (40-60 different species) and 20% forbs and flowers (around 300 species). Over 100 species of lichens and liverworts, as well as numerous woody trees and shrubs can also be found in Tall-grass Prairie and associated habitats across its range.

### Habitat

Plants of the Tall-grass Prairie have evolved to thrive in a very harsh environment. The key to their survival is that 75%-80% of the plant material is actually underground. This protects them from grazing, trampling, fire, and frost.

### Threats

All but a fraction of this grassland has been converted to cropland, urban development, and industrial sites, or has been encroached by woody growth and invasive species. Localized threats include over grazing and mismanagement of remaining prairie sites.

### Outlook

Restoration of Tall-grass Prairie is extremely challenging; therefore, protection and proper management of remnant patches is vital to ensure the long-term survival of this disappearing ecosystem.

### Producer Benefits

The Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) is a voluntary, confidential, self-assessment process, enabling farm managers to develop an action plan to address agri-environmental assets and risks in their operation. Completion of an EFP may qualify you for funding to implement BMPs on your land. For more information or to register, contact your local Manitoba Agriculture office.

Beyond the species benefits, BMPs can help your operation through:

- Access to on-farm programs and incentives
- Meet emerging market demands for sustainable sourcing
- Increased agricultural sustainability
- Greater resilience to events such as insect outbreaks, floods and droughts
- Better pest control and management
- Improved water quality, quantity and erosion control
- Improved pasture and forage

For more information regarding beneficial management practices on your land, please contact Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation or the organizations listed below.

## FUN FACT

Grasses of the Tall-grass Prairie can grow as tall as ten feet in height!

**Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation**

[www.mhhc.mb.ca](http://www.mhhc.mb.ca)

**Conservation Data Centre**

[www.manitoba.ca/sd/cdc](http://www.manitoba.ca/sd/cdc)

**Manitoba Agriculture**

[www.manitoba.ca/agriculture](http://www.manitoba.ca/agriculture)

This project was undertaken with the financial support of:  
Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier de :



Environment and  
Climate Change Canada

Environnement et  
Changement climatique Canada

