



Hairy prairie-clover

Dalea villosa

Any native Manitoba species likely to become endangered or at risk due to low or declining numbers in Manitoba if the factors affecting it don't improve. Threatened species are declared as such by regulation under the *Endangered Species Act*.

Hairy prairie-clover (*Dalea villosa*) is a provincially and nationally threatened wildflower, found in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and the central United States. It is an attractive, herbaceous perennial legume found in dry, sandhill prairies. Plants produce branching shoots that can be 20 to 50 centimetres long and grow along the ground, or upright. The leaves and stems are densely covered with hairs, giving them a distinct velvety texture and silvery-green colour. The leaves are made up of a number of small leaflets arranged down both sides of a leaf stalk, similar in appearance to leaves of garden pea plants. The leaves are alternately arranged on the stem and crowded closely together. Each leaf is 2 to 4 centimetres long, and consists of an odd number (between 11 and 21) of leaflets, clustered near the tip of the leaf stalk

Flowers are pale rose-purple, or rarely, white. They are grouped in dense, cylindrical spikes at the ends of branches or stems, on stalks up to 2.5 centimetres long. The flower spikes are 3 to 12 centimetres long and about 1 centimetre across, made up of many small flowers. The structure of these flowers is quite complex, with characteristics typical of other closely related legumes.

Habitat

Hairy prairie-clover is found in open prairie communities that are part of sandhill complexes. Soils are dry, rapidly draining sands to sandy loams. Plants are most often found on partially stabilized sandy soils, but can occasionally be found in open, sandy blowouts. A number of other grasses, forbs, and occasionally, shrubs and trees species may be present, but some amount of open sand is necessary for Hairy prairie-clover to persist. Typically, where these other species have stabilized the dune completely and trees and

shrubs have become well established, Hairy prairie-clover is no longer found.

Life History

Hairy prairie-clover is a perennial, with a woody tap root. Flowers appear from mid-July to mid-August. The plant produces small, hairy, egg-shaped pods, roughly 3 millimetres long, which mature between late August and late September. Seeds may be dispersed by small mammals or wind.

Distribution

Hairy prairie-clover is found in central North America, from Manitoba and Saskatchewan south to New Mexico and Texas, and from Colorado east to Michigan. Manitoba's Hairy prairie-clover plants are found in four general areas: southwestern Manitoba, in the Lauder and Routledge Sandhills; the Assiniboine Delta, including Spruce Woods Provincial Park, Canadian Forces Base Shilo and vicinity; the Portage Sandhills, south of Portage la Prairie; and an area near Austin. Sightings made near Boissevain, Napinka and Baldur over 30 years ago have not been repeated since then.

Status

Hairy prairie-clover is provincially rare in Manitoba. It is also rare in Saskatchewan, Montana, Iowa and Wyoming, but because it is believed to be relatively common in a number of other states, NatureServe considers it to be secure overall within its global range.

Hairy prairie-clover populations in Canada were likely never common, given the relatively small amount of sandhill habitat in the Canadian prairies, but present-day threats to this habitat have likely contributed to its increasing rarity. These could include sandhill



Manitoba's Species At Risk

Cool Facts

Only one variety of this species (*Dalea villosa* var. *villosa*) is known to occur in Canada.

Hairy prairie-clover has seed pods, flowers and leaves that resemble those of peas and other legumes, although they are smaller in size than many. Each flower is just four to six millimetres long by two millimetres across.

Hairy prairie-clover is one of several plant and animal species at risk in Canada that are found in remnant sandhill habitats, all of which face similar threats and have similar stewardship needs.

To date, surveys in Manitoba have found between 20,000 and 25,000 plants with more plants likely still to be discovered. Around two-thirds of these are found in the Assiniboine Delta, in and around Spruce Woods Provincial Park and CFB Shilo.

Recent surveys in Saskatchewan estimated that there were more than 200,000 plants in the Dundurn Sand Hills; only a few hundred plants had ever been documented in the area prior to this estimate.



stabilization due to the lack of natural disturbances like fire or grazing, invasive exotic species such as leafy spurge, overgrazing of its habitat, particularly if done to the point of destabilizing the sand, and habitat loss and degradation as a result of military, recreational and road maintenance activities. Hairy prairie-clover is listed as Threatened by regulation under Manitoba's *Endangered Species Act*. It is also listed as Threatened under Canada's *Species at Risk Act*.

Stewardship and recovery

The National Recovery Strategy for Hairy prairie-clover has an overall goal of maintaining the persistence of all naturally occurring populations in Canada. Developing and applying beneficial management practices for Hairy prairie-clover, increasing landowner, stakeholder and industry awareness of the species and its needs, and working with these groups to conserve the species and its habitat, are all key to the recovery of this plant.

To keep just the right amount of open sand in its habitat, Hairy prairie-clover can actually benefit from a certain amount of disturbance,

such as burning, grazing, hiking or even traffic from ATVs and military vehicles. However, too much disturbance can remove all vegetation from the surface and create open sand, which is not suitable for Hairy prairie-clover. Finding the right balance can be tricky.

Get involved in recovery

If you have Hairy prairie-clover on your property, congratulations. Your land management skills have helped to maintain a species that is a key indicator of the health of sandhill ecosystems.

Please consider contacting Manitoba Conservation at one of the numbers below if you would like more information about what you can do to conserve this and other native Manitoba plant and animal species, and the habitats they live in.

Manitoba Conservation Wildlife and Ecosystem Protection Branch

Box 24, 200 Saulteaux Crescent
Winnipeg MB R3J 3W3
204-945-7775

www.manitoba.ca/conservation/wildlife/

Manitoba Conservation Regional Offices

Western Region
Brandon
204-726-6441

Interlake Region
Gimli
204-642-6070

Partners in production of this fact sheet:
Manitoba Conservation, Wildlife and
Ecosystem Protection Branch
Environment Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service
Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation

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Extirpated Species

Any species once native to Manitoba that has disappeared through all of its Manitoba range. Extirpated species are declared as such by regulation under the Endangered Species Act.

Endangered Species

Any native Manitoba species threatened to disappear through all or most of its Manitoba range. Endangered species are declared as such by regulation under the Endangered Species Act.

Threatened Species

Any native Manitoba species likely to become endangered or at risk due to low or declining numbers in Manitoba if the factors affecting it don't improve. Threatened species are declared as such by regulation under the Endangered Species Act.

Vulnerable Species

Species not regulated under the Endangered Species Act but which could eventually be considered Endangered or Threatened if the factors affecting them do not improve.