

Endangered Species and Spaces

Home
Up
Table of Contents
Introduction
Classification Systems
Mammals
Birds
Amphibians and Reptiles
Freshwater Fishes
Invertebrates
Vascular Plants
Non-Vascular Plants
Exotic Species
Protected Areas
Summary-Conclusions
Appendix

Up	The Ponderosa Pine Zone	Native Grassland
Columbia Valley Wetlands	Plant Community References	

10.2 Native Grasslands

Grasslands currently occur in the southerly and eastern parts of the Basin as understory and openings in Ponderosa Pine and Interior Douglas-Fir biogeoclimatic zones, and to a lesser extent in the Montane Spruce and Englemann Spruce-Subalpine Fir zones. Although there are no defined Bunchgrass zones in the Basin, both the Interior Douglas-Fir and Ponderosa Pine zones have grassland phase variants in dry subzones of the Columbia Basin. These zones are the basis of our livestock (mainly cattle) industry, and are critical for grazing wildlife like elk and bighorn sheep. Much of the grassland and former grassland in the Columbia Basin, occurring in settled areas and valley bottoms, is private. The Ministry of Forests administers grazing licenses for forage and hay cutting on Crown land. Province-wide, and in the Columbia Basin, Crown land accounts for about 60% of livestock forage, and private land the other 40% (Harding, Lee E. and Allison Alder, 1999).

Because grasslands have short, relatively snow-free winters, they are also important environments for wildlife. However, they have also been heavily influenced by human activities and their destruction tends not to arouse the same emotional response as, for example, the logging of old-growth forests. Protection, therefore, is an ongoing challenge. Currently, less than 1% of B.C. grasslands have any protective status (Pitt and Hooper, 1994). Similarly, many of the species on the provincial red and blue lists are associated with grasslands. Unique grasslands have developed on the alkaline (basic) substrate in the Fairmont and Windermere areas. These grasslands are imperiled due to their proximity to areas under ongoing human development pressures (Heather Stewart - pers. comm.).

[[Home](#)] [[Up](#)] [[The Ponderosa Pine Zone](#)] [[Native Grassland](#)] [[Columbia Valley Wetlands](#)] [[Plant Community References](#)]