

Forked Three-awned Grass

Aristida basiramea



Status: **Endangered**

Threats:

- ◆ Habitat loss due to cottage development
- ◆ Forestry practices; planting of conifers, especially Scot's Pine, may out-compete Forked Three-awned Grass in some areas
- ◆ Invasive species
- ◆ Sand extraction
- ◆ ATV use



Description:

- ◆ Annual grass; grows 30 to 50 cm tall
- ◆ Branched at the base and grows in tufts or dense clumps
- ◆ Stems are wiry and often rough; leaves are 5 to 15 cm long and less than 1 mm wide
- ◆ “Awns” referred to in its name are bristle-like structures attached to the bract (specialized leaf) that encloses the flower of the grass
- ◆ Flowers are inconspicuous
- ◆ Difficult to identify

Biology:

- ◆ Inconspicuous flowers appear in August and continue into October
- ◆ Seeds are dispersed by wind and animals
- ◆ Highly intolerant of shading and competition from other plants

Habitat:

- ◆ Northern edge of its range; likely never common in Ontario
- ◆ Found in dry, open acidic sand barrens
- ◆ Also found in open, sandy fields, grasslands, roadsides and disturbed areas
- ◆ Found on Beausoleil Island and a few other sites in southern Georgian Bay

Species at Risk
STEWARDS' GUIDE SERIES

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Ontario's Endangered Species Act

Forked Three-awned Grass on Your Property? Here's What You Can Do:

◆ **Do not disturb.** Promote the conservation or the establishment of rare plants on your property by:

- ◆ **Designating sensitive areas.** Identify the areas where the species grows and allow for a protection zone with about a 20 m buffer around it. Fertilizing, spraying of herbicide, bringing in of fill dirt and gravel, seeding of lawn species, and planting of trees should not occur in its habitat.
- ◆ **Avoid trampling Forked Three-awned Grass colonies.** However, Forked Three-awned Grass requires some disturbance, so it is important to achieve a balance of habitat usage and protection for the grass.
- ◆ **Mow carefully.** Mowing in the habitat of the species should be done only before June 15th (before germination and before live plants are present) or after October 15th (after plants have died) to ensure that individuals are protected.

◆ **Protect roadside habitat.** Since live plants of Forked Three-awned Grass may be present on roadside shoulders, it is recommended that grading of roadside shoulders in the vicinity of Forked Three-awned Grass only be done before June 15 or after October 1.

◆ **See a Forked Three-awned Grass?** Submit your sighting to the Natural Heritage Information Centre at nhic.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/nhic/species/species_report.cfm. Photographs with specific locations or mapping coordinates are always helpful.

◆ **Contact the Ministry of Natural Resources.** If you find a Forked Three-awned Grass on your property, you may be eligible for stewardship programs that support the protection and recovery of species at risk and their habitats. Contact the MNR for more information.

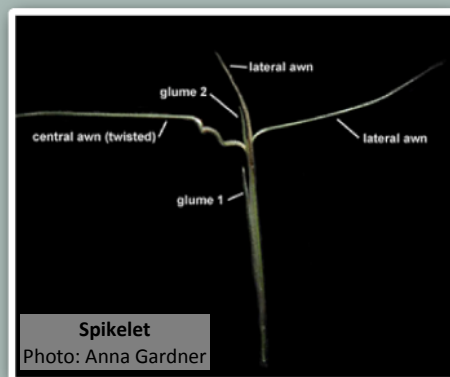
◆ **Learn More.** Check out the Species at Risk section on the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources website at www.mnr.gov.on.ca.



Photo: James Kamstra



Photo: James Kamstra



Ontario's *Endangered Species Act, 2007* came into force on June 30, 2008, making Ontario a North American leader in the protection of species at risk and their habitats.

Compared to Ontario's previous Act, written in 1971, the new ESA 2007 provides:

- ◆ Science-based assessment of species' status
- ◆ Automatic protection of a species and its habitat once it's listed as endangered or threatened
- ◆ Broader protection for species at risk and their habitats
- ◆ Greater support for volunteer stewardship efforts of private landowners, resource users, and conservation organizations
- ◆ A commitment to recovery of species through recovery planning
- ◆ Greater accountability, including government reporting requirements

Ontario is home to more than 30,000 species, most of which have stable populations.

However, more than 180 species in Ontario, 34 of which are found in Parry Sound-Muskoka, are currently considered "at risk" because of threats like:

- ◆ Habitat loss
- ◆ Global changes in insect populations
- ◆ Pollution
- ◆ Invasive species
- ◆ Climate change
- ◆ Over-harvesting
- ◆ Road mortality



Learn more about Species at Risk on the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources website at www.mnr.gov.on.ca.