



Nature Views

- a forum for environmental discussion - published by Nature Saskatchewan

Issue 180

Winter 2014

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Woo-HOOT! Burrowing Owl Numbers Are Up!

Kaytlyn Burrows, Habitat Stewardship Coordinator, Nature Saskatchewan

Another summer in Saskatchewan is in the books and the time has come to prepare for the winter months and holiday season that is just around the corner. As much as I wish I could escape to the warm climate of Texas and Mexico like Burrowing Owls do, there is work to be done here! The Stewards of Saskatchewan (SOS) staff are hard at work securing funding for next year, for what we hope will be another successful field season.

It may have been a chilly start to the summer this year, but that did not seem to deter Burrowing Owls from finding a suitable nest and raising a family. Sightings of Burrowing Owls from our participants and the public have increased this year. The 2014 census follow-up is ongoing and data is still being compiled, but I am happy to report Operation Burrowing Owl (OBO) participants have sighted 28 pairs. This is a 33% increase from last year's reported 21 pairs! We have also had an increase in public sightings. The HOOT line was used 13 times to report Burrowing Owls.

The 2014 field season was a record setter! With the help of our diligent and hardworking summer staff, Marika Cameron, Beth Dolmage, and Emily Putz, we conducted a combined 150 visits with current and potential stewards! Of those visits, nine potential OBO participant and 17 current OBO participant visits were completed. OBO is pleased to welcome four new participants to the program this year! In total, OBO participants are conserving over 60,905 hectares (150,500 acres) of habitat.



Two Burrowing Owls spotted by SOS staff this summer. Photo by Kaytlyn Burrows.



SOS summer staff presenting at the Conservation Awareness Day in Eastend, SK on July 17, 2014. Photo by Kaytlyn Burrows.

the kids at the Cathedral Village Arts Festival Funville, presented at the Science Centre day camp, and chatted with members of Nature Saskatchewan at the Spring Meet. In the coming months, SOS staff will be attending the University of Regina's Volunteer Fair, and the Kids Gone Wild for Wildlife event in Saskatoon.

From all of us at Nature Saskatchewan, I would like to thank our summer staff Marika Cameron, Beth Dolmage, and Emily Putz. The field season was a success because of their hard work and positive attitudes. I would also like to thank Marika for volunteering her time to help complete the census follow-up.

As always, if you have any questions or comments about Operation Burrowing Owl, please do not hesitate to give me a call at (306) 780-9833, toll free on our HOOT line (Saskatchewan and Alberta only) at 1-800-667-4668, or email me at obo@naturesask.ca. I would love to hear from you!

The SOS staff hosted a Conservation Awareness Day in Eastend on July 17th, 2014 with 40 participants and members of the public in attendance, including the mayor! We enjoyed a delicious roast beef meal catered by the Eastend Memorial Hall Board Ladies while our summer staff gave a short presentation about our programs. Laura from Grasslands National Park gave an informative presentation about their Restoration and Resource Management programs, and Natalie from Nature Conservancy of Canada discussed Old Man on His Back Ranch. We are planning on hosting another Conservation Awareness Day in November.

SOS staff also assisted the Prairie Conservation Action Plan (PCAP) with their program Taking Action for Prairie, embraced our creativity and did crafts with

From Your President

President Tara Sample is taking a bit of a step back for a little bit so she can adjust to the realities of parenting twins. So I hope you won't mind reading a bit more from yours truly....

There's nothing like travel in some other part of the world to give perspective on the place you call home. My "other part of the world" this summer was the highlands of Scotland. It was fellow board member, Joan Feather, who started it all. She happened to pick up a book by Sir John Lister-Kaye at a used book sale and decided to share. [It's a lovely read!] Lister-Kaye is a well-known nature writer and conservationist in the U.K. who also happens to run an outdoor field centre in the highlands of Scotland. The upshot is that six of us from Saskatoon signed up for a Wildlife Week at Aigas at the end of August.

Lister-Kaye's writing had described how much Scotland's natural landscape had been altered, but it wasn't until I was there and experiencing the place that I really understood what he was saying. There is very little of Scotland that has not been greatly changed by man's hand.

All over highland hillsides and valleys there are stone fences and structures. They speak to a time when small farms (crofts) dotted the landscape. It was largely subsistence farming, and often involved managing water using small dams, channels and canals. It was a much managed landscape. What remains now are fewer very large estates, a variety of towns and villages and lots of crumbling stone structures.

There is a miniscule amount of native Caledonian forest left in Scotland. Sporadic planted forests of fast-growing, mostly non-native species are now giving way to more diverse and appropriate plantings – part of a national strategy to restore forest cover over a larger area. [Roughly 17% of Scotland is forest currently; it has been as little as 5%.]

Bracken has replaced forest on the open hillsides. A large fern that spreads easily, bracken grows in dense layers that crowd out pretty well everything else. Its fronds contain toxic compounds. Nothing eats it and it is everywhere.

Wild rhododendron is also a problem. A mix of Spanish and North American species brought to Scotland during Victorian times to grace yards and gardens, the result is a plant that produces millions of seeds and is perfectly suited to the climate. One area in the western highlands has gone so far as to take on a major eradication project which included rappelling down a steep river gorge to haul out and burn "rhodies".

We enjoyed some lovely (singing!) garden birds at Aigas, and hordes of migrating shore and water birds along the shallow tidal flats in river estuaries. We even managed to spot one red-breasted goose and one common crane, both rarities. A day's outing in Glen Strathconon produced sight of one family of Golden Eagles – one of only three families such known to our Aigas hosts. We also found one sea eagle off the west coast and spotted a number of Red Kites. Both of these raptors were persecuted to extinction in Scotland almost a century ago, largely by gamekeepers, and have been reintroduced in recent years with considerable effort and some success.

As for mammals, most common were red deer, which are closely related to our elk. They are a valued food source, and hunting red deer is both popular and important to the rural economy. Otters can be spotted in the rivers if you know when and where to look. At Aigas, visitors were invited to sit in specially constructed (and relatively comfortable) wildlife blinds to watch badgers and martens lured out in the evening by tasty treats. There are also beaver at Aigas, which is significant; before their release at Aigas in 2006, no beaver had lived in the Scottish highlands for 450 years! Their purpose at Aigas is simply to demonstrate that beavers are good for Scotland's natural heritage.

But what, you might ask, does all this have to say about appreciating home?

Well, I couldn't help but think of our own prairies and how our landscape has been changed over time since immigrants from Europe first came and settled. Many and then fewer people living on the land, forest clearing, water management, hunting, persecution of raptors, garden plants gone wild (Baby's Breath!)... What might be different is simply the scale of it. We have significantly fewer people in much more space, and we've had less time on the land in relative terms.

The Scottish government and a variety of organizations are working at restoring habitat and species in a significant way. The public has the right of access to walk hills and valleys everywhere – and they do. It seems to me that though there may be less that is "wild", there is more of nature that is watched and cared for in the highlands of Scotland.

Donna Bruce, Past President

Welcome to New Nature Saskatchewan Members

Scott Corley	John Miller
Christopher Hay	Bernice Mueller
David J. Sutherland	Matthew Zantingh
Stacie Noble-Wiebe	

NATURE VIEWS

Nature Views provides a forum for discussion, a means for the dissemination of information about environmental issues to the people of Saskatchewan and promotes the aims and objectives of Nature Saskatchewan. Nature Saskatchewan is also known as the Saskatchewan Natural History Society.

Nature Views is published four times a year by Nature Saskatchewan. Receiving the newsletter is a benefit from membership in Nature Saskatchewan. Views expressed in Nature Views are not necessarily those of Nature Saskatchewan.

Submissions and comments are invited. **Send materials to this Nature Views editor:** Rob Warnock, 3603 White Bay, Regina, Saskatchewan S4S 7C9. Phone: (306) 586-2492. **Materials can be sent by email to:** warnockr@accesscomm.ca

Layout: Angela Dohms
Proof reading: Angela Dohms and Rob Warnock
Final proof approval: Rob Warnock

Submission deadlines:
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 Fall issue: **July 15** Winter issue: **October 15**

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 1/2 p. (7" X 10") \$200.00
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 1/8 p. (3.5 X 5") \$ 65.00
 1/16 p. (3.5" X 2.25") \$ 40.00
 Classified ads 50 cents/word
 Non-governmental organizations will receive a 10 percent discount on their ads in Nature Views. These rates DO NOT include GST or PST.

The **editors reserve the right to edit articles** for clarity and space limitations. Materials preferably submitted in RTF format or as a text file with images submitted separately in .jpg or .tif format. More detailed submission guidelines are available on the Nature Saskatchewan website (www.naturesask.ca). All material printed in Nature Views may only be reprinted with permission from the author.

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From Your Editors

We hope everyone has been enjoying the mostly nice fall weather and had a great Thanksgiving.

This issue is jam packed with Nature Saskatchewan news including reports on the Fall Meet, Rare Plant Rescue, Operation Burrowing Owl, Shrubs for Shrikes, Plovers on Shore, Last Mountain Bird Observatory and Turtle Lake Nature Sanctuary. From our President report discusses inspiring and effective conservation efforts in Scotland and how we can learn from the Scots. There are also interesting articles on the the rediscovery of rare plants in Saskatchewan, new Nature Conservancy Canada properties, lichens in White Butte Wildlife Area and a large number of other notices and articles worth checking out including new reports on birds and the environment in North America. It is really good news that the number of Burrowing Owls increased this year.

We congratulate Nature Saskatchewan member Dr. David Henry for receiving the J.B. Harkin Medal from the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society for lifetime achievement in conservation. Congratulations to both the Wolseley Nature Conservation Society on the opening of their new Nature Trail and the Meadow Lake Junior Forest Wardens Woodlanders for their highly successful hosting of the National Camp last July in Meadow Lake Provincial Park.

We welcome new members to Nature Saskatchewan and we thank the Society's generous donors and volunteers.

Our deepest condolences go to families and friends of Nature Saskatchewan members who have passed away recently.

Don't forget to mark on your calendar for the Spring Meet in June 19-21, 2015 in Saltcoats (**Rob needs a ride**). Full details will appear in upcoming issues of Nature Views. Also, Nature Saskatchewan special publications and merchandise make great Christmas gifts. The latest Flora of Saskatchewan book, *Grasses*, is now available for purchase. Check out the ad in this issue.

Please consider participating in some of the upcoming events and activities such as Christmas Bird and Mammal Counts, Winter Birding Contest, Project FeederWatch, our Nature Watch programs and consider help those looking for information on Yellow Rails. We encourage all eligible graduate students to apply for the \$2,000 Margaret Skeel Graduate Scholarship (deadline June 1, 2015). Also, please consider nominating someone for a prestigious Nature Saskatchewan award or submitting a resolution for consideration at the Fall Meet in 2015.

We apologize for the unintentional error of printing the wrong version of last issue's front page article on bladed trail construction in Grasslands National Park. We have included the corrected text below.

We hope you have been enjoying recent issues of *Nature Views* and we welcome your feedback (bouquets or bricks), as it is your publication. Have a safe and wonderful fall and start to winter and don't forget to enjoy nature with family and friends!

Rob Warnock and Angela Dohms

Correction to Article Published in the Latest Nature Views

Due to error, an early version of the article by Branimir Gjetvaj titled "Bulldozers bring a trail of destruction to Grasslands National Park" was published in Nature Saskatchewan's newsletter Nature Views. The published article contains incorrect information about trail construction in the park.

Here is the correct text: "The 70 Mile Butte trail is in the initial stages of development; the berm still rims the trails edge and causes channeling of rainwater. Gravel substrate will not be used for this trail. Instead, Parks Canada is planning to use a technique known as backsloping, which creates a natural appearance slope on the uphill side."

The published article also contains incorrect information about the number of park visitors. This information should have been published instead: "The annual visitation to the GNP is slowly increasing and currently stands at 6,000 – 7,000 visitors a year. Parks Canada is hoping to attract 20,000 visitors in both blocks by 2022."

We apologise for the confusion. The Editors.

Income Tax Receipts

Nature Saskatchewan issues an income tax receipt for each donation. This helps you to have your receipt handy when you need it. Your support is greatly appreciated! If you have made a donation and don't receive a tax receipt make sure you contact our office.

Conservation Director Report

Dean Cattell, Conservation Director, Nature Saskatchewan

After several reminders from Rob, I thought it would be a good idea to include a brief report for this edition of Nature Views. The decision to include a report was easy, the content of said report wasn't. I did not want to re-hash old information that may have been mentioned in previous articles or reports from the spring and fall meets, but then thought that there may be some that were not aware of these issues, so they will be briefly mentioned here.

In June of this year I became the Conservation Director at the AGM held in Fort Qu-Appelle. Lorne Scott has filled this role for several years and definitely leaves big shoes to fill. Much of my time has been spent becoming familiar with everything that Nature Saskatchewan is involved in and the issues across our province that may require a response from the Conservation Committee.

Items of interest that the Conservation committee provided input included the two resolutions passed at the fall meet. These resolutions deal with the wild boar problem that exists in several municipalities across the province and the problems that are associated with the use of neonicotinoids in the agriculture industry. Both of these resolutions can be found on our website. We also were involved with discussions regarding trail development in Grasslands National Park. Nature Saskatchewan is developing a response to the management staff of Grasslands. We will share the response with the membership.

News items that we need to be aware of include the announcement of a pilot wolf hunt program in the north eastern part of the province and the transfer of the operation of the Fish Hatchery from the Ministry of the Environment to our colleagues with the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation. Details on these two programs can be found in news releases on the Ministry of Environment website www.environment.gov.sk.ca/.

Another interesting piece on the Environment website is the change in how government is doing business in regards to the environment. Moving to a results based regulation system and the development of an Environmental code has generated a lot of discussion. From my perspective, there are a lot of benefits to move to such a system. I have been heavily involved with an organization called Leave No Trace Canada, which promotes ethical use of our natural areas through recreational activities. In 1985, Max Webster a Chief with US Forest Service said, "Wilderness management is 90% education and 10% regulation." This quote stuck with me and I used it quite often with my work as a Park Supervisor with the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport. Our governments' shift to a results based regulation system relies heavily on education and "best practices". I think that the educational programs of Nature Saskatchewan and other organizations across the province will be a critical piece in the education process as this system is brought into fruition. I would be hesitant, however, if the implementation of this system reduces the number of conservation officers that are employed in this province. Having worked as Conservation Officer for several years, I can attest to the dedication that these people bring to the province and having fewer of these people around is not a good thing, no matter what type of management system is in place. As Aldo Leopold noted in the Sand County Almanac, "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."

In closing, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to be the Conservation Director of Nature Saskatchewan. We have great staff providing excellent work, and a strong membership that volunteers thousands of hours to protecting our natural areas. Our committee currently has the following people: Lorne Scott, Rob Wilson, Ed Roger and myself. We are currently looking for a couple more people from the membership that may be interested in sitting on the committee. Please let me know if you may be interested.

Photos Wanted!

Gary Pedersen and Jeff Boone, City of Saskatoon, have asked our help in finding photos of urban wildlife for use in a series of brochures on "Living with Urban Wildlife." Specifically, they are looking for photos of foxes in the city. In the future they will also be looking for photos of skunks, badgers, raccoons and porcupines in the urban environment. If you have colour photos of these animals that you would be willing to share, please contact Gary Pedersen, Naturalized Area Supervisor, City of Saskatoon (gary.pedersen@saskatoon.ca). These brochures play an important role in raising awareness of urban wildlife.

Letter to the Editors

A segment of Nature Views is designated for Letters to the Editors. Feel free to voice your opinion and inform members and the Nature Saskatchewan directors about issues relevant to our Society. Letters to the Editors provides valuable comments about Nature Views' articles, programs and ensures we keep on track! Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

Fall Colours Abound at Fall Meet

Jordan Ignatiuk, Executive Director, Nature Saskatchewan



Fall Meet participants touring Nature Conservancy Big Valley Property near Craven. Photo by Fraser Hunter.

The Royal Saskatchewan Museum provided the backdrop Friday night to kick-off a successful fall meet. Finger food and refreshments preceded a program outlining Saturday's tours. Welcomes from Nature Regina and Lumsden Valley Community Association was followed by the Larry Morgotch Images of Nature - photo presentations by a dozen members. The evening concluded with a short presentation by Gary Howland on "An Integrated Concept Plan for the Fairy Hill Area".

Saturday morning, members boarded a bus at the Ramada Inn to travel to the Qu'Appelle Valley north of Regina. The first stop was along the south slope of the valley, east of Highway #6 where a proposed community development, Glenada Greens, is to be built. The next stop was at the NCC Fairy Hill South Property. Participants were free to explore a quarter section of the property adjacent to Hwy #6 before boarding the bus and heading to Lumsden for lunch. The tour continued to the next stop, NCC's Big Valley property after lunch. The property lies along the west shore of Valeport Marsh and stretches for over two miles. Again members were free to wander in a group or on their own.



Valeport Marsh viewed from Nature Conservancy Big Valley Property near Craven. Photo by Fraser Hunter.

A return to the Ramada Inn in the late afternoon provided a short break before the business meeting. Resolutions were approved for a ban on the use of neonicotinoids, tighter regulations around wild boar game farms and the eradication of feral boars escaped or released from game farms. A banquet followed with a program including presentations of awards. The Nature Saskatchewan Volunteer of the Year Award was shared by Keith Stevens and Wendy Paquin for their tremendous effort in organizing the Spring Meet and their leadership of the Fort Qu'Appelle local society. Trevor Herriot received the Conservation Award for his tireless efforts for the conservation of native prairie, thru his blog and co-chairmanship of the Public Pastures – Public Interest group. The Blue Jay editors chose Joseph Schmutz for the Cliff Shaw Award (see article in the March 2014 issue of *Blue Jay*). The evening concluded with a presentation on the Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area/Migratory Bird Sanctuary by Kerry Hecker, Protected Areas Manager for Canadian Wildlife Service. The talk provided a history of the protected area and the plans for the future.

2015 Spring Meet in Saltcoats

The Yellowhead Flyway Birding Trail Association (YFBTA) will be hosting the 2015 Spring Meet on behalf of Nature Saskatchewan. The meet will be held Friday, June 19 and Saturday, June 20. Nature Saskatchewan's Annual General Meeting will be held Sunday morning, June 21. The meet will be centered in Saltcoats.

Specific information regarding tours and program, registration deadlines and costs, accommodations (Bed and Breakfast, camping) and tourist opportunities in Saltcoats, will be provided on the YFBTA website in coming weeks and in the Spring Edition of *Nature Views* and in the monthly e-newsletters of Nature Saskatchewan (provided upon request).

Accommodation and tourist information for neighbouring communities (Bredenbury, Churchbridge, Langenburg, Melville and Yorkton) can be researched anytime. See below.

Saltcoats	www.townofsaltcoats.ca
Bredenbury	www.yellowpages.ca/webhosting.com
Churchbridge	chpkqix.sasktelhosting.com/ (click on "Town of Churchbridge", then click on "visiting here" tab)
Langenburg	langenburg.ca/visiting/tourism.html
Melville	www.tourismmelville.com
Yorkton	www.tourismyorkton

A note regarding computers. You don't have a computer? Is it uncomfortable or inconvenient for you to contact YFBTA by computer? If your answer is "yes" consider our president, Martin Phillips, as an initial contact regarding the Spring Meet (1-306-783-0825).

We want to answer your questions. We want to encourage your attendance. We promise to be friendly and helpful. You can contact our organizers anytime at yellowheadflywaybirding@gmail.com. YFBTA maintains a current website (www.yfbta.com). YFBTA is also listed on the Nature Saskatchewan's website (www.naturesask.ca). Click on the "Who we are" tab. Now click on the "Local societies" tab. Finally click on the Yellowhead Flyway Birding Trail Association tab.

Winter Birding Contest 2014/2015

Get Bird Active this winter! Go for walks around your area, drive throughout our beautiful province, check out bird hotlines and look for the winter rarities, or just look out your windows into your yard. Keep a Saskatchewan winter bird list of all your findings and then share your list with others. Enter your list in 26th Annual Nature Saskatchewan Winter Birding Contest. The contest runs from December 1st to February 28th. Send entries to Boyd Metzler, Box 126, Whitewood, SK. S0G 5C0 or by email to boyd.metzler@sasktel.net by March 15, 2015. For more information contact Boyd Metzler at 306-735-2380.

2015 Nature Calendar

Nick Saunders popular Saskatchewan Birds Calendar is now ready to order. The calendars measure 11"x17" and are made of high quality card stock. Each image is suitable for framing. If you would like to see a preview of each month, this can be arranged upon request.



Saskatchewan Birds 2015

The cost is \$20. Postage for one calendar within Canada is \$4.00. For multiple orders please email for shipping costs. Payment can be paid by cheque, cash, or with Paypal to nikovich@sasktel.net. Local buyers are welcome to pick them up in person.

Turning Leaves

Obituaries and Tributes

Readers are welcome to submit memorials for family and friends who were involved in Nature Saskatchewan or one of the Local Societies. Memorials should be brief and photos are permitted.

Count Yourself In for the 2014 Christmas Bird and Mammal Counts!

Rob Warnock, Co-editor, Nature Views, Nature Saskatchewan

In the winter of 2013-14, **over 700 observers** completed **85 Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs)** in Saskatchewan. During the count period, over 95,000 birds of 96 species were counted! Thank you to all participants. Christmas Bird Counts can be a great way to share time with fellow naturalists, both during and at a get-together after the count. We encourage all interested folks to participate in Christmas Bird Counts. This winter will be the 73rd annual CBC in Saskatchewan.

In Saskatchewan, an annual Christmas Mammal Count (CMC) is held alongside the CBC (since 1973) with this winter being the 42nd annual CMC. In 2013, 79 CMCs were completed with 2,147 individuals of 37 mammal species recorded during the count period.

Many of the CBC counts are submitted to Bird Studies Canada (BSC) and from there go into the continental Audubon database. This database is used daily by biologists to track bird distribution and abundance, and thus CBC counts submitted to BSC are contributing to bird conservation. The database is freely available to everyone. **Thank you to our CBC compilers for submitting to the Audubon database!**

Therefore, we encourage even more 2014 counts to go into the continental database because submission of counts to the continental database is now FREE! Let's make our volunteer hours (sometimes in frosty weather!) and citizen science count for more by submitting our Saskatchewan results into the continental data pool!

For More Information...

To learn where and when Christmas Bird Counts are held and who to contact to participate in your area of interest, please contact Alan Smith, the Saskatchewan Christmas Bird and Mammal Count Coordinator at alanrandi@sasktel.net, or Dick Cannings, CBC Coordinator for Bird Studies Canada, at dickcannings@shaw.ca.

CBC compilers, please submit your Christmas Bird Counts online, and also email or snail mail Christmas Bird and Mammal Counts to Alan Smith.

Nature Saskatchewan can help with online submission and any participant costs for counts where this is needed. We greatly appreciate the time, costs and effort donated by all participants!

Christmas Bird Counts – A Long Tradition

From the CBC page on the BSC website:

<http://www.bsc-eoc.org/volunteer/cbc/index.jsp?lang=EN&targetpg=index>

In 1900, American ornithologist Frank Chapman asked birders across North America to head out on Christmas Day to count the birds in their home towns and submit the results as the first "Christmas Bird Census." The Christmas Bird Count, as it is now called, is conducted in over 2000 localities across Canada, the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean. These bird observations have been amassed into a huge database that reflects the distribution and numbers of winter birds over time.

Christmas Bird Counts are conducted on any one day between December 14 and January 5 inclusive. They are carried out within a 24-km diameter circle that stays the same from year to year. Christmas counts are generally group efforts, though single-observer counts can and do happen. They are organized at the local level, usually by a birding club or naturalists organization.

As well as adding an exciting and fun event to the holiday season, the Christmas Bird Count provides important information for bird conservation. Data from the Count were used in assessment reports that added Western Screech-Owl, Rusty Blackbird, and Newfoundland Red Crossbill to the Species at Risk Act lists, and the general database was used extensively in the recent State of Canada's Birds report.

To participate, look for counts happening near where you live by selecting Find a Count Near You from the menu on the left at <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/volunteer/cbc/index.jsp?lang=EN&targetpg=index>. That will provide lists of all the counts happening in each province or territory, along with the name and contact information of the compiler (organizer).

Christmas Bird Count co-ordination and data analysis were formerly funded through mandatory participant fees, but starting in 2012-13, these will be funded through donations. We hope you will continue to support the Christmas Bird Count by donations to Bird Studies Canada. Thank you for sustaining this critically important program!

If you can't find a count near you and are interested in starting one in your local area, please contact Al Smith in Saskatchewan (contact information above) or National Christmas Bird Count Coordinator Dick Cannings at:

Dick Cannings, 705 Sunglo Drive, Penticton, BC, V2A 8X7
250-493-3393 or dcannings@birdscanada.org

Last Mountain Bird Observatory – Fall 2014

A.R. Smith, Bander-in-charge, Last Mountain Bird Observatory, E-mail: alanrandi@sasktel.net

25th consecutive fall of coverage (22nd of standardized coverage).

Migration Monitoring:

First day of coverage: 6 August.

Last day of coverage: 7 October.

Total days of coverage: 63 of a possible 66.

Percent of days with adequate coverage: 95%.

Number of staff: 4 (Marla Anderson, Ryan Dudragne, Jordan Rustad, Alan Smith).

Number of volunteers: 21 (Ryan Chambers, Adam Crosby, Shelly Fisher, Kyron Giroux, Ilsa Griebel, Kerry Hecker, Ron Jensen, Lori Parker, Jasmine Rustad, Lloyd Saul, Nick Saunders, Lori Sielski, Graham Thomson, Fernando Torres, Guy Wapple, Rob Wapple, Don Weidl, and 3 other anonymous volunteers).

Number of person-days effort: 170 including 131 staff and 39 volunteer (131 and 20 last year).

Number of visitors: 212.

Observation effort: census, casual and incidental observations.

Trapping effort: 13 12mx30mm mist nets for 3656 net hours; 700 birds/1000 net hours (1992-2013 average: 640).

Number of species observed: ~110.

Number of species captured: 76 (1992-2013 average: 72).

New birds captured (includes birds released without banding): 2560 (1992-2013 average: 2727). Eleven banded birds of 7 species returned from previous years.

Direct Foreign Recapture: A hatch-year male Yellow Warbler banded at LMBO on 9 August was mist-netted by Jared Clarke at his MAPS banding station in Regina the next day. It traveled 112km.

Species Peak: 28 August, 31 species.

Banding peak: 28 August, 238 birds.

Top 10 New Captures:

Yellow Warbler	380	Alder Flycatcher	129
Tennessee Warbler	363	Magnolia Warbler	105
American Redstart	227	Least Flycatcher	77
Ovenbird	196	Blackpoll Warbler	76
Yellow-Rumped Warbler	134	Chipping Sparrow	67

Comments:

The fall of 2014 was one of contrasts: August was well above normal for captures; September was well below, while October was a near washout with only 2 of 7 days suitable for banding due to high winds. The end result, however, was a slightly better than average season. After last season's record high of 1856 Yellow-rumps, numbers plunged to the second lowest ever at 134 birds. On the other hand the 196 Ovenbirds captured smashed the previous high of 116 birds captured in 2005, this held true for Magnolia Warbler with 105 captures compared to the previous high of 74 in 2003. A record low was recorded for Ruby-crowned Kinglet at only 7 birds. Our first Cooper's Hawks were captured on 27 August, and 1 and 14 September; this raises our all-time fall total to 114 captured species. A Broad-winged Hawk on 22 September was only our fourth capture.

Special thanks to **Environment Canada** for the use of their facilities at Lasher House.

Disclaimer: these are preliminary results and may be subject to revision.

Join Project FeederWatch

Reprinted from Bird Studies Canada October 10, 2014 E-newsletter

The 28th season of Project FeederWatch begins on November 8! Please join our team of thousands of volunteers across North America, and turn your bird feeding hobby into research for bird conservation. Your counts will help scientists monitor changes in winter feeder-bird populations. You choose how much time you want to spend. New participants receive a kit with a handbook, a bird identification poster, a calendar, and an instruction booklet. Results are published in BirdWatch Canada and Winter Bird Highlights – the FeederWatch magazine. You can also explore maps and charts online at <http://feederwatch.org/explore/> to see what others are reporting during the count.

Anyone with an interest in birds and nature is invited to join Project FeederWatch and become a Citizen Scientist. To learn more or to sign up, visit our website at <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/volunteer/pfw/index.jsp?lang=EN&targetpg=index> or call 1-888-448-2473. Your \$35 donation defrays the cost of the materials and data analysis (free for members of Bird Studies Canada). Project FeederWatch is a joint program of Bird Studies Canada and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Get Involved in Citizen Science

Lacey Weekes, Conservation and Education Manager, Nature Saskatchewan

I had the pleasure to attend a citizen science conference in Calgary in September called Exploring Public Participation in Scientific Research Under Western Skies. I had the opportunity to present a poster on Saskatchewan PlantWatch. The conference was filled with many interesting speakers from all over North America detailing their citizen science programs. Dr. Stuart Lynn from the Alder Planetarium in Chicago, explained how to build an online platform for citizen science. Their website Zooniverse.org has several citizen science projects on subjects ranging from astronomy, to climatology, to biology, to humanities. I highly recommend his website. My favourite project is Snapshot Serengeti. Serengeti National Park in Tanzania needs your help to classify the millions of photos taken on the hundreds of camera traps throughout the park. Citizen science can be used as a tool to attract visitors to national parks. Bill Hunt from Parks Canada discussed Banff National Park's citizen science project. They utilize volunteers to check trail cams throughout the park. This frees up time for parks staff and gives visitors an opportunity to truly contribute to park research. Check out Grassland National Park website for volunteer opportunities such as the Black-footed Ferret monitoring. The city of Calgary uses citizen science to help develop a biodiversity policy. Local Action for Biodiversity calls upon citizen scientists to report road kills within the city. This information can then be used to better design the city of Calgary to be more wildlife friendly. Participating in our NatureWatch program is another great way to become a citizen scientist. Recording the timing of plants, frogs, worms and ice helps to identify ecological changes to our environment. For more information on our NatureWatch programs please visit our website www.naturesask.ca or www.naturewatch.ca.



Lacey Weekes discussing the PlantWatch poster presentation at Under Western Skies conference. Photo by Elizabeth Beaubien.

A Shout-out from Shrubs for Shrikes

Ashley Fortney, Habitat Stewardship Coordinator, Nature Saskatchewan

The Shrubs for Shrikes census is nearly complete, with over 92% of participants reached, the numbers are looking good! There was a nearly 40% increase in adult Loggerhead Shrikes this year with 151 adults reported so far, compared to 108 total adults reported in the 2013 census. Also, the number of young reported through the census was twice as high as last year with 66 chicks seen throughout the summer. This considerable increase is very encouraging. On top of the increase in the number of birds reported during the census, there were an additional 64 adults and 46 young reported to the HOOT line from non-participants! A big thank you to Beth Dolmage for helping to complete the Shrubs for Shrikes census phone calling.



Caterpillar impaled on barbed wire by a Loggerhead Shrike. Photo by Emily Putz.

Summer assistants, Emily and Marika, had a great summer visiting with landowners and completing grid road searches for Loggerhead Shrikes and other Species at Risk. A whopping 86 pairs of Loggerhead Shrikes and 65 young were spotted during road searches and property visits this summer. Further, the Rare Plant Rescue crew reported an additional 38 adult and 2 juvenile shrikes. In total, Stewards of Saskatchewan staff were able to visit with 23 current participants and discussed our Shrubs for Shrikes program with 54 potential participants (individuals with land where nesting Loggerhead Shrikes were seen). So far, Shrubs for Shrikes has gained 30 new participants, an all-time high, and we are still hearing from interested individuals! With the addition of our new participants this year, Shrubs for Shrikes now has 162 landowners conserving over 10,300 hectares (25,500 acres) of habitat for Loggerhead Shrikes.

If you would like more information about Shrubs for Shrikes, or would like to report a Species at Risk sighting, please call 306-780-9832 or toll-free from Alberta and Saskatchewan at 1-800-668-HOOT (4664), or send me an email at outreach@naturesask.ca.

Plovers on Shore...or a Little Under Water?

Ashley Fortney, Habitat Stewardship Coordinator, Nature Saskatchewan

Stewards of Saskatchewan staff had a great time this spring helping out with the annual Piping Plover survey of Lake Diefenbaker, organized by Corie White of the Water Security Agency. Being a thorough survey of such a large area, it was organized in great detail and much effort was put into ensuring minimal disturbance to the birds during the assessments. It was very exciting to discover new Piping Plover nests and see the adults up close. Particularly interesting was observing the vigilance of the parents watching over their nests, head-bobbing as we approached, and attempting to lure us away with their broken-wing displays.



Piping Plover nest with four eggs. Photo by Emily Putz.

With only a few individuals left regarding our Plovers on Shore census follow-up, it is safe to say that this year is no Piping Plover boom. Only five participants reported having seen Piping Plovers this year with 7 pairs, 3 singles, and 2 young being reported across 6 sites; however with some participants still not having been reached, we are hopeful that we can add more to this total. In addition to the census of Plovers on Shore participants, there were two calls made to the HOOT Line to report 2 adults and 2 Piping Plover chicks. The Rare Plant Rescue crew reported an additional 3 adult Plovers as well, bringing the total number of reported birds to 26.

Unfortunately, Piping Plovers can be difficult to identify and are often mistaken for their slightly larger cousin, the Killdeer. Plovers also nest in areas that are not often visited during most landowners' daily, or even seasonal, activities. For these reasons, among others, the reporting of Piping Plovers is consistently low compared to our other target species. However, the next International Piping Plover Census is only a couple of years away and should give a good basis to judge Piping Plover population numbers in the province. It will also provide Plovers on Shore with an opportunity to increase its number of participants by, most likely, providing an influx of Plover sightings which will direct our efforts regarding gaining new stewards.



Piping Plover broken wing display. Photo by Emily Putz.

We visited with 12 current and potential Plovers on Shore participants this summer, and we are very happy to have 2 new participants joining the program. These new participants, adding ~2.8 km (1.75 miles) of shoreline conserved, bring the Plovers on Shore numbers to 44 participants, conserving nearly 120 km (~74 miles) of shoreline across 124 sites. This fall, we will be working with landowners to create Beneficial Management Practices plans for their operations, as well as providing funding for a Habitat Enhancement project on land that is designated as critical habitat for this endangered species.

If you would like more information about Plovers on Shore, or would like to report a Species at Risk sighting, please call 306-780-9832 or 1-800-668-HOOT (4664) toll-free from Alberta and Saskatchewan, or send me an email at outreach@naturesask.ca.

Are you Moving? Please let us Know!

If you are planning on moving and wish to continue receiving *Nature Views* and *Blue Jay*, PLEASE notify the Nature Saskatchewan office in Regina at 306-780-9273 or 1-800-667-4668 (in SK only) during regular business hours Monday to Friday or anytime by fax at 306-780-9263 or e-mail at info@naturesask.ca. It is a waste of money and resources when you don't as it costs Nature Saskatchewan for all returned mail. Thank you.

A Summer of Searching for Rare Plants

Beth Dolmage, Habitat Stewardship Assistant, Nature Saskatchewan

When I tell friends or family about my job, I generally receive looks of confusion. ‘You... search for plants?’ they’ll politely enquire; ‘what are you looking for?’ is what follows, with the unspoken question of, ‘why?’. I understand why they would be puzzled. Plants are just sort of... there, on the landscape. Sometimes they are in the form of trees, sometimes flowers, and sometimes they are rolling by you in your car, in the seemingly endless patchwork fields stretching to the horizon. They are underfoot and overhead, and often undervalued and overlooked. Take a typical breakfast, for example. We can all forget that our coffee consists of plant material – the coffee beans, the sugar cane, the grass or grain that fed the cow that produced the cream. The cotton shirt you put on this morning, the wooden table you may be reading this article at. It can be easy to overlook plants, and my job is to search out what most people forget about.



Kristen Martin (left) and Beth Dolmage (right) doing a census search for Dwarf Woollyheads in southwestern Saskatchewan. Photo by Sarah Vinge-Mazer.

At Nature Saskatchewan, our Rare Plant Rescue program focuses on the rarest plants found on a rapidly disappearing landscape – our native prairie. Our prairie faces fragmentation, climate change, and encroachment by human expansion. When we search for rare plant species, we are always working with landowners and managers to conserve that plant’s habitat. By voluntarily agreeing to conserve the native prairie on which the plant species is found, landowners are also providing habitat to other species, including species at risk. The cooperation of our 78 stewards is why our Rare Plant Rescue is currently preserving over 103,000 acres, or 420km² – roughly the size of Barbados! Pretty amazing, especially considering our program only focuses on 16 plant species.

When we find one of our focal species, we check to see how many plants there are, what other species occur nearby, take lots of pictures, and note the health of the population. If we are heading back to a previous occurrence to monitor how the plants are doing, we’ll note the changes in population size, the area the occurrence covers, and how healthy the plants appear in comparison to our last check in. We work with partner organizations, such as the Saskatchewan Conservation Data Centre (SKCDC) and Canadian Wildlife Service to keep track of these changes. This accumulation of data helps us understand how plant populations change on a larger scale, for instance, chronologically. Our searches for a rare plant in one area this summer were greatly helped by the SKCDC’s historical data – and working together, we found one of our plant species at risk again using data that was over a decade old.

This summer we spent our time searching for six different plant species at risk. Our searches led us across the southern part of our province, and every field trip was memorable. We spent a week fighting off ticks (my personal record was 130 in one day), battling the rain, and wandering around sloughs in the Coteau. We were searching for Slender Mouse-ear-cress, an elusive plant in the mustard family. It can be unsatisfying looking for a biennial plant such as Slender Mouse-ear-cress, but we saw a plethora of other plant and animal species while searching, which helped. We found one (only one!) Slender Mouse-ear-cress plant while monitoring this summer, so here’s hoping that next summer they are easier to find.

A 12-day stretch in southwestern Saskatchewan brought us face to flower with the smallest of the plants we looked for – Dwarf Woollyheads, a tiny green plant that we had to crawl around on hands and knees to see. This field trip was far more successful – we found nine different occurrences of it! We also had the chance to climb the steep cliffs and hills of the Frenchman River Valley and were unsuccessful in finding my personal nemesis, Tiny Cryptanthe. This hairy little

plant grows in river valleys, so to spend all day climbing up and down hills without seeing it can be frustrating. Our trip to southwestern Saskatchewan ended with a really nice evening at a Conservation Awareness Day, where we had local landowners and special guests interact at a delicious dinner.

Lunch breaks spent watching pelicans and eagles after a successful (and very hot) morning of searching are one of the many reasons why I love my job. While wandering the sedate sandy slopes of Lake Diefenbaker, we discovered more rare plants of a certain species than ever before. Smooth Goosefoot is a threatened species, and we spent one memorable day counting thousands of plants in a very small area! We also found new occurrences of an endangered plant – Small-flowered Sand-verbena. This pretty plant loves open sand, and it was a nice change monitoring along the edge of Lake Diefenbaker. We found 11 new locations and monitored 14 previously found occurrences of this endangered species.

Our last week of field work was spent in Estevan, where we monitored Buffalograss, a threatened grass species found only in the very southeastern part of our province. This too was a very successful trip. We monitored over 35 known occurrences of the grass, and happened upon nine new occurrences, not to mention several other provincially rare plants. We found the wildlife pretty exciting too – turtles, frogs, nighthawks, and one memorable scare from a skunk in our campsite!

At the end of a long day of searching, one of our favourite things to do, besides going for ice cream (Birsay, by the way, has one of the most generous ice cream portions in the province), is to visit our stewards. Whether it was chatting about family trees in the Mendham area, learning the merits of moving a Mennonite-built house across provinces, posing for pictures with new gate signs for our program participants, or discussing species at risk and Rare Plant Rescue, our visits are fond memories, and we want to send a big thank you to all of our generous hosts. These landowners are contributing voluntarily to preserving some of the most delicate plants and vulnerable areas of land in Saskatchewan.

Our work would be impossible without our Rare Plant Rescue participants, and it would also be impossible without help from our staff members. While the two of us (Kristen Martin and I) worked side by side the whole summer, we had several great staff members and volunteers help us out. Marika Cameron and Emily Putz joined us while we searched the Coteau, and Brooke Hudson volunteered her time to monitor Buffalograss with us. It was wonderful to have new people work with us, and to hear about and learn from their previous field experiences. It was also nice to teach them about some of the plant species at risk we search for. A huge thank you goes out to these hard working ladies!

Plants exist in every aspect of our lives, and here in Saskatchewan, our ability to grow exceptional crops is arguably one of the most important parts of our livelihood. We should also take pride in our small stretches of native prairie that remain home to our Prairie Lily, Antelope, and Burrowing Owls. The balance between our ability to produce food and fuel, and the urge to preserve native prairie is one sided at the moment, but this flux in our prairie landscape relies on our stewards to become the pivot in these scales. We could not preserve these precious areas of land without our voluntary participants, and it is due to them that we still have a chance to swing those scales.

I hope the next time you look through your kitchen, closet, backyard, local green space, or garden you remember that plants are both vital to our everyday lives, and the foundation to our prairies. If you have a question about a plant you’ve found, or if you want to learn more about what we do here at Rare Plant Rescue, give us a call. You can reach us at 1-306-780-9417, or by email at rpr@naturesask.ca. We’ll be here, sipping our coffee, talking about plants.



The only Slender-mouse-ear Cress (*Transberingia bursifolia*) plant we saw this summer! Photo by Beth Dolmage.

NPSS AGM - Save the Date

Plan now to attend the upcoming Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan annual general meeting and conference on February 6-7, 2015 at TCU Place in Saskatoon. 2015 will be our 20th anniversary and we’re pulling out all the stops! We have an exciting lineup of speakers, including a keynote speaker from “Working Dogs for Conservation”, a non-profit organization in Montana that uses detector dogs to search for rare and invasive plants. We will hear about these amazing dogs and the fascinating work that they’ve done on numerous interesting projects around the world in the last decade. We’ll also have other interesting speakers, as well as a few other surprises that you’ll just have to see for yourself. Registration will open soon, so keep checking our website (www.npss.sk.ca) for further details.

See you there!

Share your Knowledge!

Nature Saskatchewan, on behalf of local nature societies around the province, is compiling a speakers list that can assist locals in finding speakers for local programs. If you would be willing to share your knowledge of nature topics— anything from grasslands to landscaping with native plants, predator/prey interactions to bees, bats or other native species— please consider offering your services. Any speaking engagement would be by mutual agreement as to date and time, and would be greatly appreciated by an enthusiastic local audience.

Contact Ellen Bouvier, Nature Saskatchewan Communications Manager (ebouvier@naturesask.ca).

Stewards of Saskatchewan are on the Rise

Ashley Fortney, Habitat Stewardship Coordinator, Nature Saskatchewan



Swift Fox kits with mother. Photo by Emily Putz.

The Stewards of Saskatchewan banner program for all Species at Risk tripled its number of participants over the summer! We received overwhelming support after visiting with 35 current and potential participants, and we are proud of the attitude that Saskatchewan landowners hold towards nature and wildlife. We are grateful to our 27 new participants who are conserving habitat for many Species at Risk,

including Sprague's Pipits, Ferruginous Hawks, Short-eared Owls, Bobolinks, Northern Leopard Frogs, Common Nighthawks, Monarchs, Tiger Salamanders, and Barn Swallows. Our new participants bring the total number of Saskatchewan stewards conserving habitat for non-target Species at Risk (i.e., not the Burrowing Owl, Loggerhead Shrike, Piping Plover or rare plants) to 36 landowners and land managers, conserving approximately 5,150 hectares (over 12,700 acres).

We continue to ask Saskatchewanians to keep an eye out for a number of species that are listed as at risk by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) or protected under the Species at Risk Act (SARA). Our participants, as well as the public, did a commendable job of reporting Species at Risk this summer. HOOT Line calls resulted in sightings of American Badgers, Barn Swallows, Bobolinks, Horned Grebes, Northern Leopard Frogs, Monarchs, Sprague's Pipits, and even Whooping Cranes! SOS staff also made some notable sightings adding Baird's Sparrows, Long-billed Curlews, Ferruginous Hawks, Common Nighthawks, Short-eared Owls, and even sightings of a Swift Fox family, and a Gray Tree Frog to the list of species reported this summer! We currently do not send out an annual census for the Stewards of Saskatchewan program for all Species at Risk but we are considering the best way to effectively capture population data for the numerous species for which our participants are conserving habitat, and may implement this in the future.



Northern Leopard Frog. Photo by Ashley Fortney.

If you would like more information about the Stewards of Saskatchewan banner program, or would like to report a Species at Risk sighting, please call 306-780-9832 or 1-800-668-HOOT (4664) toll-free from Alberta and Saskatchewan, or send me an email at outreach@naturesask.ca.

Turtle Lake Nature Sanctuary Update

Darlene Roth, Turtle Lake Nature Sanctuary Steward



Visitors at Turtle Lake Nature Sanctuary gate sign. Photo by Darlene Roth.

How fast can a summer go by, many will say, they go by faster every year? Another wet year has given the sanctuary time to grow and that it did. The grasses went crazy with growth and the lawn mowers never saw much rest, much less the pushers. Thanks, Linda Bartsch for taking time out of your busy schedule to help out with the grass cutting. She did enjoy the paths with that ever so curious look over the shoulder from time to time to see what the trails looked like trimmed. Georgie and Glen Taylor were there on call for any runs that had to be done with the mowers it is a great feeling that people care about our sanctuary. Thanks Marvin and Brenda Brose for keeping the fence line free of fallen trees and other behind the scene maintenance duties. Marvin, Muriel Carlson and I are working on wording for our new sanctuary signs.

Bears were not a big concern during the summer but with fall approaching there were definite signs on the ground they were around. Never let your bear guard down. Berries were plentiful this year in the sanctuary. Bears, birds and mankind shared the bounty of such great wild fruits as strawberries and raspberries. Mushrooms, to many to mention, were in abundance as well.

There was one sighting of a Turkey Vulture this summer. Bald Eagles as well. Many species of ducklings travelled the shore line with their mothers, bringing enjoyment to all that took time to watch them swim and dive for minnows and bugs. The American pelicans amazed many bird watchers/fisherman with their graceful effortless flight pattern. No other bird sightings were reported to me personally.

New signs are still a work in progress. The stands for the signs will be put up before the snow falls or before the end of October. Maybe I should say the stands will go up before there is too much snow on the ground!

If your favourite colours are orange, red and or yellow, I may have found you on one of our walking paths this fall enjoying the colour splendour that fall brings. It seems every year one can say the same thing about fall. Until one actually gets outdoors and experiences the beauty of nature in the simplest degree, we can only say we want to see you on in the sanctuary trails come winter spring summer and fall. I watch nature shows and many Canadians do not realize we have this golden opportunity to view some of the best views in the world. Get out, get active, get serious! On your next want to visit a nature sanctuary...make it Turtle Lake Nature Sanctuary.

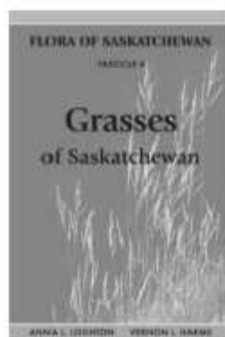
Books about Nature in Saskatchewan

EcoFriendly Sask, with input from many including SNS, has compiled a list of books about nature in Saskatchewan. It's a work in progress but a good start. If you have books to suggest, please let them know. Meanwhile, check this out! www.ecofriendlysask.ca/2014/09/saskatchewan-nature-books.html.

Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve

The Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve has announced the opening of the Redberry Lake Discovery Trail, the latest attraction at this important natural area. A self-guided trail brochure enables visitors to enjoy the wonders of the Biosphere Reserve. For more information go to www.redberrylake.ca.

Now available from the Nature Saskatchewan book store



Grasses of Saskatchewan
\$29.95

Or...



Buy all 4 for only \$80

Order online at www.naturesask.ca/store/en/publications or call the Nature Saskatchewan office at 306-780-9273 or 1-800-667-4668

Junior Forest Wardens National Camp 2014 a Success!

Neil Marsh, Meadow Lake Junior Forest Wardens

Junior Forest Wardens from Alberta and Saskatchewan met in the Meadow Lake Provincial Park for a week of education and outdoor fun! This event was a “first” in several ways:

- First JFW National Camp to be held in Saskatchewan
- First event of its kind to be held in the Meadow Lake Provincial Park
- Largest turnout in many years (over 700 people in attendance!)

National Camps are held every 3-4 years at various locations. JFW members look forward to these events for years, and the memories created last a lifetime. It is a “total immersion” experience with all the excitement and camaraderie that only a large event like this can create.



Cardboard box paddling. Photo by Neil Marsh.

A National Camp is a year in the making, and thousands of volunteer hours go into the planning of it. Some of the larger tasks include:

- Site planning: How to fit 200 families and their trailers or tents, a stage and seating area, a camp kitchen, several large “marquis tents”, parking and instructional areas into a limited amount of space.
- Finding, hauling and distributing scads of tables, chairs, outhouses, water tanks, firewood, tents, radios, lumber, plywood and other materials (much of it loaned, free of charge, by local supporters - Thank you Meadow Lake!)
- Recruiting nearly 100 instructors and performers, arranging for their particular needs, and scheduling 250 different instructional sessions over 5 days of programming to keep 700 people busy
- Locating, hauling and staffing a fully equipped camp kitchen, capable of feeding 110 people 3 meals a day
- Arranging transportation to off-site programs: white water canoeing, horseback riding, hikes and tours
- Organizing a team of volunteers to provide first aid, security, logistics, child care and other services
- Registration & administration, providing advance information to the members, building a website, session signup, keeping track of fees and expenses
- Fundraising (Total cost, about \$50,000 and I'm glad to say we broke even)
- Packing it all up again after the camp is over!

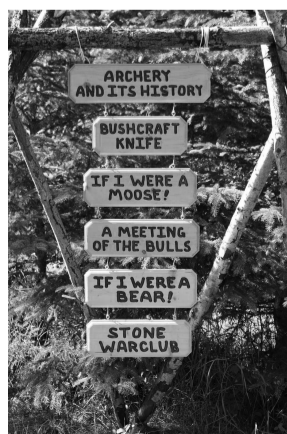
SO, what do people do while camped for a week with 200 other families? Here is a short sample of some of the many activities:

- Learn to make rawhide drums, wooden chairs & tables, bark carvings, soapstone carvings, leather gloves, leather hats, hunting knives, penny whistles, copper art, hammock weaving, birchbark baskets, rocket stoves, boomerangs, bat houses and many, many other things
- Learn skills like canoeing, kayaking, archery, axe throwing, cooking, playing music, walking a tightrope, moose calling, fishing, fish filleting, and much more
- Learn about sustainable agriculture, local geology and ecology, forest fire fighting, wildlife management, emergency management, back-country trip planning, life as a wilderness guide, and more!
- Enjoy the evening programs, professional entertainers such as Paul & Mary, The Silverhammers and Saskatchewan's own Freddie & Sheila Pelletier, and well as the amateur talent of many JFW members and of course the Opening and Closing ceremonies
- Spend time around the campfire with like-minded people. A Junior Forest Warden friend is a friend for life!

Nature Saskatchewan had a presence too! We were pleased to welcome Donna Bruce to our camp Wednesday evening, and Vinessa Currie-Foster provided several days of excellent canoe instruction.

This camp was every bit as successful as we hoped, and JFW members are now launching into their clubs' programs with fresh ideas and renewed enthusiasm.

Our fondest hope is that, in three years time, dozens of Saskatchewan Junior Forest warden clubs will be in operation and sending members to the next National Camp. Nature Saskatchewan members: you can help make that happen, and you can be very much a part of the fun!



Interesting signage at the National Camp. Photo by Neil Marsh.

Wolseley Nature Conservation Society Nature Trail

Beth Dolmage, Habitat Stewardship Assistant, Nature Saskatchewan



Beth Dolmage (bottom left) and Kristen Martin (top right, second in) with the Wolseley Natural Conservation Society and Dr. Isman Elementary School Grade 6 students at the trail welcome sign. Photo by Mrs. Clarke.

The Nature Saskatchewan Rare Plant Rescue (RPR) team had a chance to head out to Wolseley recently, on invitation from the town's Nature Conservation Society. Richard Solberg invited Kristen Martin and Beth Dolmage out to help identify the plants on and around the nature trail he recently created. The Wolseley Nature trail begins on the east side of town, near the Co-op. Interpretive signs mark the trail, and it offers lovely views of the wetland and prairie on the edge of town.

The Grade 6 class from Dr. Isman Elementary School in Wolseley came out for the tour as well, and after admiring the hand painted Welcome sign, the RPR crew and company started out. On the tour, the RPR team pointed out local invasive species, as well as wetland plants, edibles, poisonous plants, and flowers. There was also a sighting of the elusive American Bittern – a very interesting heron-like bird with a unique call. Along this tour, the Grade 6 class collected various seeds and fruits, which were then discussed and dissected back in the classroom. We hope that the Grade 6 class had as much fun learning from us as we did from them! The RPR crew would like to thank the Wolseley Nature Conservation Society for inviting us out, and to congratulate them on their trail initiative.

Winged Warnings: Built For Survival, Birds Are In Trouble From Pole to Pole

An essay by Alanna Mitchell portraying what birds tell us about our own health and the health of the planet. Birds, especially birds of prey, have long been indicator species for what ails the world. Despite their many alluring superpowers, birds are jeopardized from pole to pole.



Story: <http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/news/2014/aug/wingedwarnings1essay>

Global map: <http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/news/2014/aug/wingedwarnings1map>

Snapshots of troubled species: <http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/news/2014/aug/wingedwarnings1vignettes>

Alanna Mitchell, an award-winning Toronto-based science journalist, book author and playwright, has birdwatched avidly on every continent. Her most recent book, *Sea Sick: The Global Ocean in Crisis*, won the prestigious Grantham Prize for excellence in environmental journalism.

Please note: This story is reported and edited by the team at Environmental Health News and republished by National Geographic. It is not available for republication.

Summary of stories in the series: <http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/news/2014/aug/wingedwarnings1summary>

Video on the series: <http://youtu.be/wA-NJaNeY68>

Environmental Health News is a foundation-funded news service which publishes its own enterprise journalism and provides daily access to worldwide environmental news.

Living Planet Report 2014

World Wildlife Fund

The *Living Planet Report* is the world's leading, science-based analysis on the health of our planet and the impact of human activity. Knowing we only have one planet, WWF believes that humanity can make better choices that translate into clear benefits for ecology, society and the economy today and in the long term.



This latest edition of the *Living Planet Report* is not for the faint-hearted. One key point that jumps out is that the Living Planet Index (LPI), which measures more than 10,000 representative populations of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish, has declined by 52 per cent since 1970.

Put another way, in less than two human generations, population sizes of vertebrate species have dropped by half. These are the living forms that constitute the fabric of the ecosystems which sustain life on Earth – and the barometer of what we are doing to our own planet, our only home. We ignore their decline at our peril.

We are using nature's gifts as if we had more than just one Earth at our disposal. By taking more from our ecosystems and natural processes than can be replenished, we are jeopardizing our very future. Nature conservation and sustainable development go hand-in-hand. They are not only about preserving biodiversity and wild places, but just as much about safeguarding the future of humanity – our well-being, economy, food security and social stability – indeed, our very survival.

In a world where so many people live in poverty, it may appear as though protecting nature is a luxury. But it is quite the opposite. For many of the world's poorest people, it is a lifeline. Importantly though, we are all in this together. We all need nutritious food, fresh water and clean air – wherever in the world we live.

Things look so worrying that it may seem difficult to feel positive about the future. Difficult, certainly, but not impossible – because it is in ourselves, who have caused the problem, that we can find the solution. Now we must work to ensure that the upcoming generation can seize the opportunity that we have so far failed to grasp, to close this destructive chapter in our history, and build a future where people can live and prosper in harmony with nature.

We are all connected – and collectively, we have the potential to create the solutions that will safeguard the future of this, our one and only planet.

The Living Planet Report 2014 and related summaries are available online at: http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/all_publications/living_planet_report/.

Thirty-two Whooping Cranes Fledged on Wood Buffalo

Reprinted from American Bird Conservancy September 4, 2014 E-newsletter

Wood Buffalo National Park (WBNP) officials reported today (August 28, 2014) that 32 Whooping Crane chicks were observed during this year's Whooping Crane Fledging Survey. Wood Buffalo personnel took to the skies during August 9-12, 2014 and completed their annual survey. During the 4 days the team counted 32 fledged young Whooping Cranes. <http://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/number-whooping-cranes-fledged-wood-buffalo-canada/>

Texas Buys Conservation Land with Oil Spill Money – Whooping Cranes to Benefit <http://www.texastribune.org/2014/08/21/texas-announces-land-conservation-purchase-bp-doll/>

Nature Saskatchewan Member David Henry Receives Conservation Award for Lifetime Achievement in Saskatchewan!

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) presented David Henry the J.B. Harkin Medal at Nature Saskatchewan's Fall Meet Banquet on September 20th at the Ramada Hotel in Regina.

The J.B. Harkin Medal is named after the founder of Canada's national parks system. CPAWS presented the medal to Dr. David Henry in recognition of his lifetime contribution to national parks, protected areas, and nature conservation. David has made significant contributions to the establishment of parks and the protection of wilderness at the Saskatchewan and national level, in both a volunteer and a staff capacity. We are proud to have Dr. David Henry as a long term member of Nature Saskatchewan!

To read the full news release please go to: cpaws.org/news/david-henry-to-receive-conservation-award-for-lifetime-achievements-in-sask.

Friends of Wascana Marsh

Ramona Clarke

It's a great time to reflect on the year's achievements of Friends of Wascana Marsh. With extraordinary efforts from tireless volunteers and partnerships with like-minded organizations, we have had a very successful year. It began with the 9th Annual Wings Over Wascana Nature Festival at the end of May. This year, a change in format brought the festival activities directly into the Wascana Marsh (Wascana Centre's Habitat Conservation Area). Activities included pond critter dipping, bird watching, turtle watching, a display of the NatureHood App for smart phones, planting native grasses, learning about invasive plant species, and goat grazing with over 90 goats! The response was fantastic. Close to 1,000 people explored the marsh area in the two days. We also partnered with PCAP Speaker Series to provide a presentation by the Saskatchewan Burrowing Owl Interpretive Centre – enjoyed by close to 100 attendees.



The goat grazing project included a session in July as well to control the invasive growth of Caragana and thistles in the marsh. This project has proven to be a very effective way of controlling these invasive plants. As well, it helps to promote public awareness to the importance of the marsh area and the consequences of invasive species.

Over the past couple of years, the high water in the Wascana Marsh has increased the abundance of the purple loosestrife in the area. Working with the Wascana Centre naturalist, two sessions of pulling the prolific plant were organized. We are continuing to act with Wascana Centre to develop other ways to control its spread.

With the winter months approaching, we have already started focusing on next year's festival. After a year hiatus, we are planning our entertaining and fun fundraising banquet for May. And the 10th Annual Wings Over Wascana Nature Festival has been tentatively set for May 29 & 30, 2015. We are always happy to welcome anyone who would like to participate with the festival committees.

If you are interested in becoming involved in an organization that is concerned about preserving a unique prairie marsh environment in Regina, consider becoming a member of Friends of Wascana Marsh or consider becoming a member of our board. Check us out at www.wascanamarsh.ca or contact us at friendsofwascanamarsh@gmail.com

Nature Saskatchewan's New Promotional Video

Ellen Bouvier, Communications Manager, Nature Saskatchewan

We took advantage of the great weather and put the finishing touches on a promotional video for Nature Saskatchewan and we are very pleased to say that it is finally finished. All summer long we have been working with a graduate film student from the University of Regina to produce such a video. Our hope is that it will help us spread our name and what we do far and wide. Some of you may have already seen it on our social media channels, but for those of you who haven't you can find it here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=myXiUys1gak. We should also remind you that to help circulate our new video we have a contest on Facebook for a great prize, so make sure to like and share our video!

Thanks to everyone who helped with the making of the video and thank you to Xin Shen for all of your patience and guidance.

Yellow Rails

Bird Studies Canada via Saskatoon Nature Society October 2014 Newsletter

Since 2011, staff from Bird Studies Canada's Saskatoon office have been conducting field research on the Yellow Rail. Their accomplishments have included banding a significant portion of Canada's banded Yellow Rails and developing survey methods for using autonomous recorders to collect count data.

This cryptic nocturnal bird is federally designated as a Species of Special Concern. Our team is now interested in broadening knowledge of where Yellow Rails can be found in the Prairie Provinces (and beyond) by supplementing their information with additional public observations. Our ambition is to develop a national repository of locations where the species can occur.

If you have heard (or seen) Yellow Rails in Canada recently, we would greatly appreciate your input. Please email our Senior Waterbird Scientist Dr. Kiel Drake at kdrake@birdscanada.org. Please include as many of the following details as possible: date and time of observation; location (ideally with latitude and longitude or UTM coordinates, so that researchers can find the location using a GPS); and your maximum count of Yellow Rails at that location.

The reports you submit will help us further develop an existing database of Yellow Rail locations, which will support future efforts aimed at making a comprehensive status assessment for the species.

Botanists Find Rare Plant Not Seen in Saskatchewan in Nearly 40 Years

Chet Neufeld, Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan (Press Release)



Short-flower Suncup (*Taraxia breviflora*). Photo by Glen Lee.

A team of professional and amateur botanists lead by the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan (NPSS) has just rediscovered an extremely rare wildflower not seen in Saskatchewan in nearly 40 years. The plant, Short-flower Suncup (*Taraxia breviflora*), is a small but hardy wildflower native to the dry prairies of southwest Saskatchewan. Known to have occurred at only 5 locations in the province, it was classified as a historic species by the Saskatchewan Conservation Data Centre (SKCDC) due to the length of time that had passed since it was last seen.

"It's a little like being Indiana Jones on the hunt for the lost treasure of the southwest" said Chet Neufeld, Executive Director of the NPSS. "You have these old clues to go from, so you have to be bit of a detective, putting the puzzle together without having all of the pieces."

The team first searched Tait's Lake, near Frontier, SK where the species was seen in 1957, but came up empty-handed. "The area was so large it was like looking for a needle in a haystack. It still might be there, but we just didn't have the time to search the whole area" said Neufeld. Nonetheless, the search did turn up a new population of the provincially-rare Yellow Evening Primrose (*Oenothera flava*).

Undaunted, the next day the team moved to a site in the East Block of Grasslands National Park where the species had last been seen in 1965. The area was unforgiving and remote: a 2 hour drive south of McCord, SK, most of it on a prairie trail that would be impassable in all but perfect weather, followed by a hike to within a few kilometers of the American border. The team searched all day and was about to give up when one of the searchers stumbled upon it - a single Short-flower Suncup. An intensive search of the immediate area turned up 13 plants in total, including one in bloom which helped to confirm its identity. Word soon spread to the scattered searchers, who quickly convened and were huddled around the small cluster of plants. "There was a lot of planning and hard work put into this project, so we were really excited when it all paid off," remarked Neufeld.

The species, while still extremely rare, will now be reclassified by the SKCDC from its historic ranking. Given that this population occurs in Grasslands National Park it is likely that it will remain undisturbed, but other potential populations may be at risk to threats like habitat destruction.

This year's successful search builds upon last year's achievement rediscovering another rare wildflower, Cut-leaved Alumroot (*Heuchera parvifolia* var. *dissecta*), in the Cypress Hills that hadn't been seen in Saskatchewan in over 30 years. "There are still a few plants designated as historic in Saskatchewan, so there is an opportunity for us to do similar searches in future years," said Neufeld.

State of the Birds Report Assesses Bird Health

Reprinted from Bird Studies Canada September 12, 2014 E-newsletter

North American bird populations are declining in several key habitats, according to The State of the Birds 2014 (<http://www.stateofthebirds.org/>). In addition to assessing population trends, the authors created a "Watch List" of 230 bird species that are currently endangered or at risk of becoming endangered without significant conservation help. Fortunately, the report also reveals that bird populations are recovering in areas where a strong conservation investment has been made.

The report was prepared by the U.S. Committee of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, a 23-member partnership of government agencies and organizations dedicated to advancing bird conservation. The scientists analyzed four decades of data from several continental-scale monitoring programs, including the North American Breeding Bird Survey and the Christmas Bird Count. Bird Studies Canada thanks all those who participate in our Citizen Science programs – your contributions make reports like this and the State of Canada's Birds (<http://stateofcanadasbirds.org/>) possible!

2014 James L. Baillie Memorial Fund Grants Available

About James Baillie

For nearly 50 years Jim Baillie worked as Assistant Curator in the Ornithology Department of the Royal Ontario Museum. Although not formally educated in ornithology, his knowledge of birds was unsurpassed. Jim Baillie had the ability to share his knowledge with thousands of people, amateurs and professionals alike, through newspaper columns, scientific publications and informal conversations with countless visitors to his museum office.

Baillie's enthusiasm and knowledge have inspired hundreds of naturalists to pursue bird study and conservation. Both the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund and the **Baillie Birdathon** have been named to honour this great Canadian naturalist, conservationist and educator.

About the Baillie Memorial Fund

The James L. Baillie Memorial Fund for Bird Research and Preservation was established by Bird Studies Canada in 1976. It is funded by the annual Baillie Birdathon and by private donations.

Originally, the focus of the Baillie Fund was on amateur ornithological research within Ontario. In 1983, the scope of the granting program was expanded to include projects by individuals and organizations that increase understanding, appreciation and conservation of Canadian birds in their natural environment. Additional information on the program goals and objectives is available in the **Baillie Fund Application Guidelines available at:**

<http://www.bsc-eoc.org/about/jlbmf/index.jsp?lang=EN&targetpg=appguide>.

The Baillie Fund is directed by a group of independent Trustees comprised of professional and amateur ornithologists from across Canada. The Trustees come from all walks of life, but share an enthusiasm for increasing the knowledge of Canada's birds as well as addressing concerns for their well being.

Over Three Decades of Baillie Fund Grants

Since 1978, the Baillie Fund has awarded nearly \$700,000 to 580 bird research and conservation projects across Canada. In 2014, the Fund awarded over \$20,000 in grants, ranging from \$500 to \$4,000 each, to 12 projects across Canada

Baillie Fund Grant Programs

The Baillie Fund currently has three granting programs:

- Regular Grants Program;
- Small Grants Program; and
- Baillie Student Award for Field Research.

Applications for the Regular Grants and Small Grants Programs are reviewed by the Baillie Fund Trustees. Applications for the Baillie Student Research Award are reviewed by the Student Awards Committee of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists (SCO).

The eligibility requirements, grant size, application deadline, application form, and review process is different for each grant program. Prospective applicants should read the Baillie Fund Application Guidelines to decide which grant program fits with your project. Key differences are summarized in the following table.

	Regular Grants	Small Grants	Student Research Award
Eligibility	Non-profit Organizations	Individuals or organizations	Graduate students
Size of Grants	\$1000 to \$5000	\$250 to \$1000	\$1000
Number of Grants	Up to 8	Up to 10	1
Total Amount Available Annually	Minimum of \$15,000	Up to \$5,000	\$1,000
Matching Funds Required	At least 1:1 match	None Required	None Required
Application Deadline	15 December	15 January	15 February
Grants Announced	March	March	March

For more information contact the Baillie Fund Secretary by e-mail acoughlan@birdscanada.org or phone 1-866-518-0212.

NCC Announces Important Habitat Protected in Saskatchewan

NCC press release via Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan August 2014 E-newsletter

1,750 acres of key habitats for endangered species now conserved.

Properties secured in Saskatchewan through the Government of Canada's Natural Areas Conservation Program partnership with the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) include the Buffalo Valley 2 property (160 acres/65 hectares) northeast of Swift Current (near Beechy), Edenwold Complex (636 acres/258 hectares), slightly east of Regina, Fairy Hill South 3 (161 acres/61 hectares), slightly north of Regina, the Mortlach property (124 acres/50 hectares), west of Moose Jaw and Upper Whitesand 2 (662 acres/268 hectares), northwest of Yorkton.

NCC's Saskatchewan Region recognizes the leadership and commitment of the Government of Canada through its contribution and support of conservation work from coast to coast. NCC conserves and protects lands in their natural state for the current and future benefit of people and wildlife. NCC works with nearby ranchers and land managers, many times leasing these lands for haying and livestock grazing. Public "foot access" is allowed on all NCC properties in Saskatchewan.

Click here to read the entire press release from NCC at <http://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/where-we-work/saskatchewan/news/canadian-environment-week-a.html>.

Zoo Researchers as Grassland Guardians: Calgary zoo scientists turn their attention to Grasslands National Park

Reprinted from Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan August 2014 E-newsletter

You won't find Black-footed Ferrets at the Calgary Zoo, but they are a big part of their conservation efforts. Working with Parks Canada, zoo researchers study and help reintroduce these ferrets into Grasslands National Park (GNP) in Saskatchewan. When they're out in the field finding ferrets, zoo scientists are also on the lookout for black-tailed prairie dogs. The two species are an incredible example of a predator-prey system that has been evolving since the Ice Age.

Click here (<http://www.calgaryzoo.com/animals/mammals/black-footed-ferret>) to learn more about this prairie species and to watch a video of Calgary zoo researchers releasing ferrets in Grassland National Park.

U of S Mentoring Project Students studying land use of native prairie in a case-study

Reprinted from Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan (SK PCAP) October 2014 E-newsletter

SK PCAP is participating in a Case-Study mentoring project with our Partners from the College of Agriculture at the University of Saskatchewan. Under the direction of professors Tom Yates and Angela Bedard-Haughn, a group of six students from the Renewable Resource Management 421 class will be evaluating a case-study on land use of native prairie in the RM of Monet. During the fall 2014 semester, students will be exploring whether land use has changed during a given time, how it has changed and the impact of changes on native prairie and consequently species at risk and other wildlife.

SK PCAP is excited to be involved in this initiative which will hopefully raise student awareness of native prairie in Saskatchewan and some of the issues that surround this natural resource. We will be following the progress of this case-study and will check in with students and professors to find out what they took away from this experience.

Meewasin Developing a Master Plan for Northeast Swale

The Northeast Swale is an important and unique landscape feature formed by an ancient river channel. Located north of Silverspring and Evergreen neighbourhoods in Saskatoon, it is the largest piece of unbroken city land with native prairie, riparian forest and wetlands. Meewasin intends to conserve the ecology of the area and support opportunities for nature appreciation and education.

Currently Meewasin is developing a Master Plan for the Northeast Swale. This work includes planning and designing the physical space, pathways and amenities within the Northeast Swale to support resource management, education and recreation uses.

Check out the draft Master plan at <http://meewasin.com/conservation/meewasin-swale/meewasin-swale-master-plan>.

Environment and 2014 Saskatchewan Throne Speech

(Source: 2014 Saskatchewan Throne Speech <http://www.gov.sk.ca/throne-speech-2014>)

In the coming months, the Government of Saskatchewan will adopt a new results-based regulatory model that will improve protection of the environment and promote innovative management tools, including the *Saskatchewan Environmental Code*. This approach will allow industry and communities to develop innovative solutions to meet environmental protection objectives while allowing the Ministry of Environment to dedicate more resources to activities that pose the greatest environmental risk.

This session, the Province will amend *The Wildlife Act* to increase penalties for illegal hunting.

The amendments include:

- Increasing the hunting suspension for serious violations from one to two years;
- Prohibiting those who have not paid a hunting fine from buying a licence; and,
- Prohibiting any Canadian resident suspended from hunting or fishing in another jurisdiction from purchasing a licence in Saskatchewan.

In addition, those convicted of three serious wildlife offences will be banned for life from hunting in Saskatchewan.

Government of Saskatchewan has undertaken an online drainage consultation that received nearly 500 submissions and will carry out further consultations with stakeholders in the coming months.

These consultations will lead to the development of new regulations governing drainage as part of the province's 25 Year Saskatchewan Water Security Plan. This is a priority issue for the Water Security Agency.

Grasslands National Park Fence Marking for Sage Grouse

Grasslands National Park is conducting fence marking to increase the visibility of fence wires in the park to Greater Sage-grouse. Sage-grouse have trouble seeing fence wires, and will often run into them and get entangled. Studies in Montana have shown that marking fence wires reduces fence strikes by sage-grouse by 80%. We are trying to create a volunteer program, and have had 1 volunteer day so far (involving a couple school groups) will have another one during the last two weeks of October weather dependent. If you are interested in helping out or have any questions please contact: Jessica Bolton jessica.bolton@pc.gc.ca

The 2014 Canadian Lakes Loon Survey Season is Complete

Reprinted from Bird Studies Canada September 26, 2014 E-newsletter

The 34th season of the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey (<http://www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/clls/>) ended on September 15. More than 700 Citizen Scientists across the country monitored loons and their reproductive success. Bird Studies Canada gratefully acknowledges all volunteer surveyors for participating, and collecting important information. We thank the participants who have already submitted their observations. Volunteers who have yet to report can return their forms to us or enter data online.

For survey results to date, please see our 32-year report at <http://www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/clls/resources/CLLSsummary.pdf>, associated technical paper at <http://www.ace-eco.org/vol8/iss1/art1/>, and BirdWatch Canada article at <http://www.birdscanada.org/download/BWCwi13.pdf>. This program is supported by TD Friends of the Environment Foundation and the Kenneth M. Molson Foundation.

Many Thanks to These Nature Saskatchewan Volunteers

Important Bird Areas
Clara Anderson

Operation Burrowing Owl

"Thank you to Marika Cameron for her time in helping complete Operation Burrowing Owl's Annual Census"

Rare Plant Rescue

Brooke Howat – Rare plant monitoring

Preliminary Lichen Survey of White Butte Wildlife Lands Saskatchewan 2014

Bernard De Vries

INTRODUCTION

A total of 28 lichens in 22 genera are reported for White Butte Wildlife lands (a combination of White City & Pilot Butte).

This area was established in 1982 as part of the Saskatchewan Park System under jurisdiction of the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport, located north of White City and southeast of Pilot Butte at latitude 50° 47' & longitude 104° 37'.

The area encompasses 430 ha (1,063 acres) of gently rolling hills and shallow wet lands. The vegetation is mostly Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) on sandy hills, and Willow (*Salix* sp.) in low lying areas with some scattered shrubs.

White Butte Wildlife lands form the east shore of the former Late Glacial Lake Regina and several sand-dunes attest to this.

A small open sandy area north-east of the west entrance supports a characteristic dry grassland lichen association of *Diploschistes muscorum* (Cowpie lichen), *Cladonia pocillum* (Rosette pixie-cup), *Cetraria arenaria* (Sand-loving Iceland lichen), *Collema tenax* (Soil jelly lichen), *Xanthoparmelia chlorochroa* (Tumbleweed shield lichen) with scattered *Cetraria aculeata* (Spiny heath lichen), and *Placidium lacinulatum* (Brown stipple scale).

The White-Butte Wildlife Lands are part of the southern Aspen Parkland Ecoregion and belong to the Temperate Element (Pan-Temperate) distribution pattern (Brodo et al. 2001).

ANNOTATED LICHEN LIST

The lichens are alphabetically listed and nomenclature follows Esslinger (2011). Scientific names are followed by authority, synonym, common name, habitat, associations and comments. Common names are those of Brodo et al. (2001). Distribution follows Thomson (1984), and Brodo et al. (2001). Status is based on the Saskatchewan Conservation Data Centre-Regina (SCDC) fungi lists, but remains largely arbitrarily. (S1=rare; S2=endangered; S3=quite common; S4=common and S5=very common).

Amandinea punctata (Hoffm.) Coppins & Scheid., *Buellia punctata*. Tiny button lichen. On Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) with *Caloplaca holocarpa*, and on Pussy Willow (*Salix discolor*.) and logs along the main hiking trail. This is a very common species found in all provincial ecozones. S5

Caloplaca holocarpa (Hoffm. ex Ach.) A.E. Wade, Firedot lichen. Mainly on Aspen bark, but also on dead weathered wood with *Physcia aipolia* var. *aipolia* along the main hiking rail. This species has been recorded for all provincial ecozones. S4

Candelaria concolor (Dickson) Stein, Candleflame lichen. In rain-channels on deeply furrowed old Willow trunk in large mixed Willow clump along main trail. A common species throughout the province. S4

Candelariella vitellina (Hoffm.) Mq'Il. Arg., Common goldspeck lichen. On organic debris at base of Wolf Willow (*Elaeagnus commutata*) along a wildlife trail. More likely found on non calcareous rocks. Common throughout all provincial ecozones. S4

Cetraria aculeata (Schreber) Fr., *Coelocaulon aculeatum*, *Cornicularia aculeata* Spiny heath lichen. In dry open light sandy area northeast of the west entrance. Widely distributed throughout the southern grasslands. S2

Cetraria arenaria Kärnefelt, Sand-loving Iceland lichen. In dry open sandy area northeast of the west entrance. Mainly distributed throughout the southern grasslands between 49° and 50° latitudes. S2

Cladonia pocillum (Ach.) Grognot, Rosette pixie-cup. On sandy soil in open area. Northeast of the west entrance. A common species found throughout the provincial ecozones. S5

Cladonia rei Schaerer, Wand lichen. On light sandy/gravelly soil in open location. Northeast of the west entrance. Common species occurring in all provincial ecozones. S5

Collema tenax (Sw.) Ach., Soil jelly lichen. On sandy soil in open area. Northeast of the west entrance. A common species in all provincial ecozones. S5

Diploschistes muscorum (Scop.) R. Sant. Cowpie lichen. Dry sandy and light gravelly open area. northeast of the west entrance. In early growth parasitic on lichen species, especially *Cladonia pocillum* but upon maturity becomes independent on soil, mosses and woody debris. Well distributed throughout all provincial ecozones. S4

Evernia mesomorpha Nyl. Boreal oakmoss lichen. On dead weathered wood as litter in Aspen woods along main hiking trail. Only found once but is common in wooded places in all provincial ecozones S5

Flavopunctelia flaventior (Stirton) Hale, *Parmelia flaventior*, *Punctelia flaventior*. Speckled greenshield. On mature Pussy Willow (*Salix discolor*) in large Willows stand along main hiking trail with *Physcia adscendens*. Uncommon. Mainly a boreal and northern Aspen Parkland species. S4

Lecanora hagenii (Ach.) Ach., Hagen's rim-lichen. On old weathered, dead but standing Aspen at margin of open Aspen woods along main trail. Thought to be quite widespread throughout the province. S2

Melanelixia albertana (Ahti) O. Blanco et al., *Melanelia albertana*, *Parmelia albertana*. Powder-rimmed camouflage lichen. On old Aspen bark at margin of Aspen woods along main hiking trail. This species ranges throughout the southern boreal forest into the northern Aspen Parkland. This record is a southern extension into this ecoregion. S3

Melanohalea exasperatula (Nyl.) O. Blanco et al., *Melanelia exasperatula*, *Parmelia exasperatula*. Lustrous camouflage lichen. On rough Aspen bark at margin of Aspen woods along main trail. This species occurs scattered throughout the boreal forest and occasionally found in the northern Aspen Parkland ecozone, but occasionally extends into the southern Aspen Parkland. S4

Parmelia sulcata Taylor, Hammered shield lichen. On rough bark of mature Pussy Willow (*Salix discolor*) in low area along main hiking trail. A very common species in all provincial ecozones. S5

Phaeophyscia constipata (Norlin & Nyl.) Moberg, *Physcia constipata*. Pincushion shadow lichen. On soil among mosses in shaded Aspen woods along hiking trail. With *Caloplaca holocarpa*. Known from the south central grasslands and Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park. An uncommon species. S2

Phaeophyscia orbicularis (Necker) Moberg, *Physcia orbicularis* On rough Aspen bark at margin of open Aspen woods along main hiking trail. Scattered throughout the grasslands ranging into the Aspen Parkland ecoregion. S3

Physcia adscendens (Fr.) H. Olivier, Hooded rosette lichen. On branch of Basket Willow *Salix petiolaris* at fringe of low and moist depression along hiking trail. A common species throughout the province. S5

Physcia aipolia (Ehrh. ex Humb.) Fűrnr. Hoary rosette lichen. On Basket Willow branch at margin of moist depression of mixed Willows along main hiking trail. In association with *Xanthomendoza fallax*, *Amandinea punctata* and *Physcia adscendens*. A common species in all provincial ecozones. S5

Physcia stellaris (L.) Nyl., Star rosette lichen. On rough bark of mature Aspen. Margin of open Aspen woods along main hiking trail. Scattered throughout the Aspen Parkland ecoregion. S3

Placidium lacinulatum (Ach.) Breuss, *Catapyrenium lacinulatum*. Brown stipple scale. On sandy soil in open area northeast of the west entrance. Scattered in the southern grasslands. S2

Usnea hirta (L.) F.H. Wigg., *Usnea variolosa*. Bristly beard lichen. On hard weathered wood of dead fall Aspen. At margin of Aspen woods along main hiking trail. Although one specimen was found, it has been recorded for all provincial ecozones. S4

Usnea substerilis Motyka, Beard lichen. On old Aspen in Aspen woods along hiking trail. A boreal species and recorded for Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park. Occurs sporadically in the northern Aspen Parkland Ecoregion. S4

Xanthomendoza fallax (Hepp. ex Arnold) Søchting, Kärnefelt & S. Kondr., Syn. *Xanthoria fallax*. Hooded sunburst lichen. On mature Pussy willow (*Salix discolor*) in large Willow clump along main hiking trail. With some *Physcia adscendens* and *physcia aipolia* var. *aipolia*. Common in the southern Transitional Boreal Forest and Aspen Parkland Ecoregions. S3

Xantomendoza hasseana (Räsänen) Søchting, Kärnefelt & S. Kondr., *Xanthoria hasseana*. Poplar sunburst lichen. On bark of mature Aspen in open Aspen woods along main hiking trail. Found throughout the Transitional Boreal Forest and Aspen Parkland ecoregions. S3

Xanthoparmelia chlorochroa (Tuck.) Hale, *Parmelia chlorochroa*. Tumbleweed shield lichen. On sandy soil in open area. Northeast of the west entrance. A common species of the grasslands. S5

DISCUSSION

The small number of lichens recorded in this survey is not surprising, as the surveyed area was mainly concentrated at peripheral Aspen woodlands along major hiking trails and in a small open sandy area north-east of the west entrance supporting some typical common grassland species. The majority of lichens were epiphytic on Aspen, Willow and large shrubs. No rare lichens were found, although 5 could be considered uncommon (S2).

Open sandy areas between sand-dunes proved to be unstable to allow establishment of terrestrial lichens due to constant movement of the substratum.

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How is Climate Change Affecting Birds?

Nature Canada (<http://naturecanada.ca/initiatives/bird-conservation/climate-change-birds/>)

Climate change affects birds in different ways. It can alter distribution, abundance, behaviour, even genetic composition. It can also affect the timing of events like migration or breeding.

Climate change can affect birds directly, through changes in temperature or rainfall. It can also lead to increased pressure from competitors, predators, parasites, diseases and disturbances like fires or storms. And climate change can act in combination with other major threats like habitat loss and alien invasive species, making the overall impact worse.

Because birds are one of the best studied groups of organisms, we already have the data needed to demonstrate that birds are being affected by climate change. This is occurring in a variety of ways.

How climate change is affecting birds

Egg laying is occurring earlier

- One large-scale study showed that birds are laying eggs up at an average rate of 6.6 days earlier per decade.
- The Common Murre in North America has advanced its breeding date 24 days per decade.
- North American Tree Swallows are nesting up to 9 days earlier than 30 years ago, corresponding to an increase in average spring temperatures.

Migration times are shifting

- Birds are migrating earlier in the spring. A study of 63 years of data for 96 species of bird migrants in Canada showed that 27 species have altered their arrival dates significantly, with most arriving earlier, in conjunction with warming spring temperatures.
- Birds also seem to be delaying autumn departure: in a study of 13 North American passerines, 6 species were found to delay their departure dates in conjunction with global warming.
- Some birds in Europe are even failing to migrate all together.

Bird behaviour and their environment are becoming mismatched

- Much of a bird's life cycle and behaviour is closely linked to cues from the environment, like changing seasons. A mismatch occurs when birds cannot shift their behaviour, such as breeding times, enough to coincide with changes in environment, such as when prey is available.
- Long-distance migrants are particularly at risk of a mismatch as it is harder for them to know what conditions might be like at the end of the migration route. For example, wood warblers in North America aren't migrating earlier from their neotropical wintering grounds, despite earlier springs in their northern breeding ranges – this risks a late arrival, after spring food sources on breeding grounds are gone.

Distributions are changing

Bird populations are expected to shift poleward, or to higher elevations, to stay with their ideal temperatures as the climate changes.

- A study of 35 North American warbler species found that the range of occurrence of seven of the species (Prothonotary Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Pine Warbler, Hooded Warbler, and Cape May Warbler) has shifted significantly north in the past 24 years, by an average of 65 miles. None of the birds shifted to the south.
- Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas data demonstrates that "southern" birds species such as Tufted Titmouse, Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher, Northern Mockingbird, and Red-bellied Woodpecker have increased in number and have expanded their range northwards in Ontario compared to 20 years ago.
- These climate-induced shifts are not always a solution to coping with a warming climate. Birds on the move could be stymied in their efforts to find new ranges by fragmentation, human development, or natural geological features like large bodies of water.

Ecological communities are disrupted

Global warming can change entire ecological communities. Food and nesting material that birds depend on may no longer be there. Birds may face new prey, parasites, competitors, and predators to which they are not adapted.

- In the northern Hudson Bay area, mosquitoes now reach peak numbers earlier in the spring. Thick-billed Murres breeding in the area have not adjusted their behaviour, and the combination of heat and mosquitoes is causing higher egg loss and greater adult mortality.
- Parts of northern Minnesota and southwestern Ontario may end up with 14 fewer species of warblers than are currently found there. This could lead to increased outbreaks of some forest pests like spruce budworms.

- 2005 saw unprecedented failures of colonies of seabirds on the Pacific coast of North America. Only 8% of the Cassin's Auklets nesting on Triangle Island were successful. This is because late northerly winds delayed coastal upwelling, which affected plankton growth and caused a decline in the fish species on which the seabirds depend.
- Tufted Puffins at Canadian sites have breeding success near zero when water is at its warmest, which could mean that Canada's largest breeding colony for this species, Scott Islands, becomes unsuitable for Tufted Puffins as water continues to warm.

Extinction risks are on the rise

Birds most at risk of extinction from climate change are those with restricted ranges, poor ability to move their range, small populations, or those already facing conservation challenges.

- Migratory birds are particularly vulnerable to climate change effects, because they depend on multiple habitats and sites.
- Arctic birds are particularly vulnerable – warming is occurring rapidly here, and at least 85 of the world's bird species breed in global Arctic regions. Vast areas of habitat, including tundra and sea ice, will be lost. Sea ice retreat could have severe consequences for Ivory Gulls, which forage along sea ice. Canadian Ivory Gulls have already declined in number by 90% over the past two decades.

Conclusions

- Climate change is now affecting bird species' behaviour, ranges and population dynamics.
- Some bird species are already experiencing negative impacts.
- In the future, climate change will put large numbers of birds at risk of extinction.
- Nature Canada's programs help birds mitigate and adapt to a changing climate.

As the best-studied group of living things (after humans) birds are a strong indicator of how climate change will affect other, less well studied, groups. Nature Canada works to preserve birds and their habitat so we can continue to learn more from these feathered creatures.

We protect Canada's Important Bird Areas

Community care of local bird habitat is essential. Nature Canada supports community-based bird conservation programs across Canada to promote local stewardship and restoration efforts. Since 1996, Nature Canada has supported more than 150 grassroots projects and invested close to \$450,000 in on-the-ground projects involving 100 Important Bird Areas.

We work to advance the safety of Canada's seabirds

Nature Canada fought vigorously to bring Bill C-15 into law to ensure shipping companies and their ships are held accountable if they illegally dump bilge oil in Canadian waters. The new law protects birds from chronic oil pollution at sea and could prevent the deaths of some 300,000 seabirds annually off the coast of Newfoundland alone.

We strive to protect the birds of the boreal

The Boreal forest region contains crucial breeding habitat for 80% of the waterfowl species of North America, 63% of the finch species, and 53% of warbler species. To protect the boreal for all birds, Nature Canada is a member of the Boreal Forest Conservation Framework, a made-in-Canada effort to balance conservation and development in Canada's Boreal region. We are working to ensure endangered birds are saved and common birds stay common.

We advocate for more protected areas for birds

As climate change progresses, many birds could be forced to shift their ranges out of traditional areas. Where will they go? Nature Canada is a strong advocate for the need to designate and protect new areas of habitat for birds as they attempt to adapt to our changing climate, not just relying on static networks of existing protected areas.

Sources

- WWF Australia. 2006. Bird Species and Climate Change: The Global Status Report Version 1.0.
- Price, J and P. Glick. 2002. The Birdwatcher's Guide to Global Warming. American Bird Conservancy and National Wildlife Federation.
- United Nations Environment Programme/Convention on Migratory Species. 2006. Bonn, Germany. Migratory Species and Climate Change: Impacts of a Changing Environment on Wild Animals.
- BirdLife International. 2004. State of the World's Birds 2004: Indicators for Our Changing World.
- American Bird Conservancy. Climate Change and Birds homepage.

Upcoming Events

Saskatoon Nature Society Field Trips

All are welcome to participate in field trips; bring your friends. Carpooling for out-of-town trips is arranged at the meeting place. There are no fees unless indicated; however, participants are expected to share gasoline costs and should make arrangements with the driver to do so. Phone the trip leader if you have any questions. Participants can return early if they wish. Members with CB or FRS radios should bring them on out-of-town trips. Check our website at www.saskatoonnaturesociety.sk.ca for last minute changes or cancellations and to download checklists. For information on city buses, phone 306-975-3100.

Saturday, November 22, 9:00 AM–3:00 PM

Spinney Hill Evergreen Forest

We will drive to Eagle Creek and continue into the Eagle Hills where we will look for winter songbirds and raptors in this stand of evergreen forest south of Spinney Hill. Bring a lunch.

Meet at the SW corner of the Lawson Heights Mall parking lot.

Leader: Marten Stoffel (306-934-3769)

Sunday, November 30, 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Pre-Grey Cup Birding at President Murray Park

We will look for kinglets, creepers and crossbills in the spruce trees.

Meet at the corner of Wiggins Ave. and Colony St. Bus: Route 50 Lakeview departs the downtown terminal at 1:31 PM and arrives at College and Munroe about 1:35. Walk 4 blocks south to the park and then walk to the SE corner.

Leader: Jan and Stan Shadick (306-652-5975)

Saturday, December 6, 9:00 AM – 4:30 PM

Gardiner Dam Birding

We will look for ducks, geese, gulls and eagles. Dress warmly and bring a lunch.

Meet at the Western Development Museum parking lot on Lorne Ave.

Leader: Frank Roy (306-374-8571).

Friday, December 26

Saskatoon Boxing Day Bird Count.

To participate, phone Michael Williams at 306-242-5383.

For information about joining other Christmas Bird Counts in the Saskatoon region, check the www.saskatoonnaturesociety.sk.ca website.

Prairie Conservation and Endangered Species Conference

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan - February 17, 18 & 19, 2016

The 11th Prairie Conservation and Endangered Species Conference will be held February 17, 18 & 19, 2016 in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and the theme is Prairie: It's a Happening Place! Stay tuned to this page <http://www.pcsc.ca/> for more information.

University of Saskatchewan Centre for Continuing Education - Educational Travel

South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Victoria Falls Ecotour with Melanie Elliott. February 1-21, 2015.

Join us on this educational tour to learn about the geography, wildlife, music and culture of the cradle of humankind.

Two spots available, Fee: \$5668 plus airfare. To register phone: 306-966-5539. For more information, call 306-966-5484.

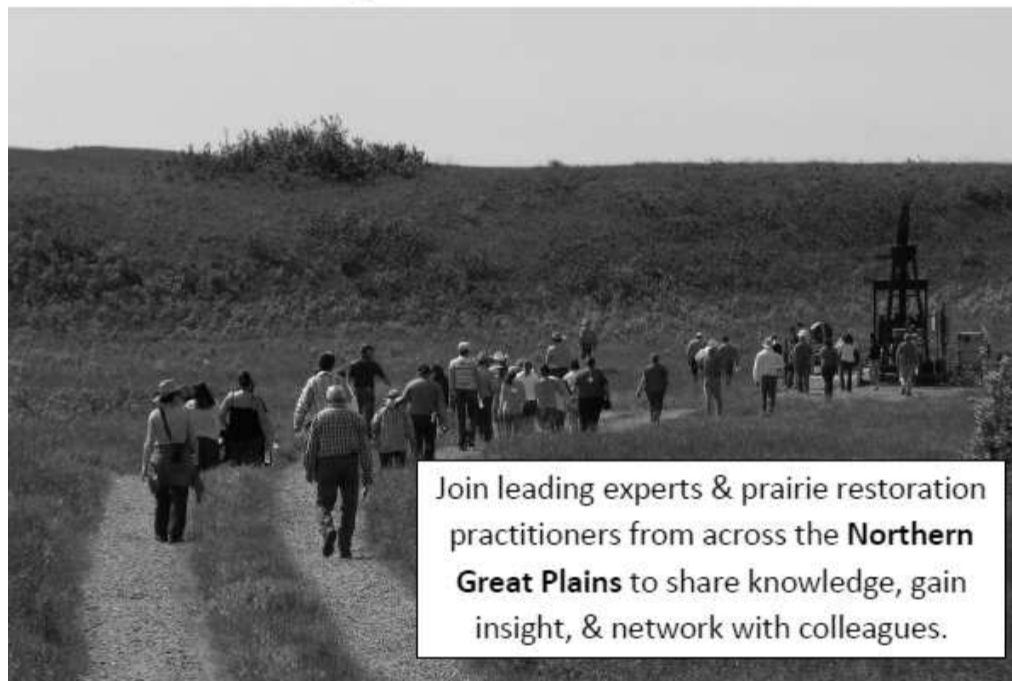
For itinerary see: www.ccde.usask.ca/edtours



Saskatchewan
Prairie Conservation
Action Plan

2015 Native Prairie Restoration & Reclamation Workshop

"Building Blocks of Restoration"



Join leading experts & prairie restoration practitioners from across the **Northern Great Plains** to share knowledge, gain insight, & network with colleagues.

Poster Presentations • Trade Show • Plenary Sessions

Visit: www.pcap-sk.org/upcoming-events-workshops/2015-nprrw to register, or for trade show, sponsorship & poster presentation opportunities

Early Bird/Student Rate \$200 (by December 22, 2014)

Regular Rate \$250 (after December 22)

Contact Tara (PCAP) at (306) 352-0472 for more information

Yes, I want to become a member of Nature Saskatchewan.

Please renew my membership

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/Town: _____

Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Occupation/ Interests: _____

Category	One Year	Three Year	Five Year
Individual	<input type="radio"/> \$ 25	<input type="radio"/> \$ 65	<input type="radio"/> \$ 95
Family	<input type="radio"/> \$ 30	<input type="radio"/> \$ 75	<input type="radio"/> \$115
Student	<input type="radio"/> \$ 15		
Senior >64	<input type="radio"/> \$ 20	<input type="radio"/> \$ 50	<input type="radio"/> \$ 75
Foreign	<input type="radio"/> \$ 30	<input type="radio"/> \$ 75	<input type="radio"/> \$ 115
Institutional	<input type="radio"/> \$ 30		
Life	<input type="radio"/> \$ 600		

Winter 2014 Nature Views

Membership Fee

\$ _____

I wish to make a tax-deductible donation to Nature Saskatchewan to support:

- Operation Burrowing Owl \$ _____
- Land Conservation Fund \$ _____
- Last Mountain Bird Observatory \$ _____
- Nature Legacy Fund \$ _____
- Margaret Skeel Graduate Student Scholarship Fund \$ _____
- General Society Programs \$ _____

TOTAL PAYMENT \$ _____

I would like to pay by:

- Cheque/money order
- Visa
- Mastercard

(Please make cheques payable to Nature Saskatchewan)

Income Tax receipts available for donations over \$10.00.

Card Number: _____

Card Name: _____

Signature: _____ Expiry Date: _____



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Nature Saskatchewan's Website
www.naturesask.ca