



## *Spring Newsletter April, 2019*

**Hello and Happy Spring!** After such a brutally cold winter the Spring sunshine is such a relief. Environment Canada has predicted a 40% probability of above normal temperatures for Southern Saskatchewan and 60% chance of above normal temperatures for Northern Saskatchewan this Spring. According to a recent government report, Canada is, on average, experiencing warming at twice the rate of the rest of the world, with Northern Canada heating up at almost three times the global average. Environment Commissioner Julie Gelfand says Canada is not doing enough to combat climate change. We have never reached our targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This has to change. Each of us has to take responsibility for our carbon footprint. By submitting your Plantwatch data you are participating in citizen science. It's so important to record what is happening to our changing planet so we can better adapt to these changes.

Thank you to those who submitted blooming dates last year, your data collection is very important. Did you know Plantwatch data is being used to predict the timing of: Spring allergies, fly fishing season, garden planting and the end of Spring fire danger? This citizen science contributes to knowledge of how our changing climate affect plants and wildlife and can help with decision making.

Be sure to check out the newly updated NatureWatch site at [www.naturewatch.ca](http://www.naturewatch.ca), which includes PlantWatch, FrogWatch, IceWatch, WormWatch, MilkweedWatch, and new this year SnowTweets. There are many **PlantWatch Educator Materials**, such as the **PlantWatch Teacher's Guide** - a great guide for schools and youth groups. Nature Saskatchewan also has a detailed PlantWatch page at [www.naturesask.ca](http://www.naturesask.ca). There are many items that you can download on this page, including a brochure, poster, newsletters, data recording sheets, and descriptions of all of the 20 plants that are being watched in the Saskatchewan program.

Contact **Rebecca at 306-780-9481 (Regina) or 1-800-667-4668 (SK only)**, or at [rmagnus@naturesask.ca](mailto:rmagnus@naturesask.ca), for more information or to request any materials at no charge. Feel free to share this newsletter with others.

**Happy PlantWatching!**

**Thank-you PlantWatchers!**



Once again, a BIG thank-you to the PlantWatchers who submitted observations for the 2018 Spring season. During the 2018 spring season, five PlantWatchers submitted reports to me from: Christopher Lake, Danberry, Qu'Appelle, Yorkton, and White Fox. Combined, a total of approximately 76 blooming dates were observed and recorded by the dedicated PlantWatchers. The data you record for PlantWatch is very valuable, because the timing of plant growth is one of the most sensitive, immediate, and easily-observed responses to climate change.

The most watched plant in 2018 by the Saskatchewan PlantWatchers was the Aspen Poplar and Lilac with 11 combined first, mid-bloom., and leafing out dates. Dandelion came in second with 10 blooming dates and Choke Cherry and Saskatoon were third with 7 blooming dates each. The earliest blooming date recorded was for Dandelion on April 18<sup>th</sup>, observed in Yorkton by Vi Protz. Jeanne Walker of Christopher Lake observed the latest first blooming date of June 13<sup>th</sup> for Northern Bedstraw.

## Here's what some Plantwatchers have to say about the 2018 season!

- 🌱 **Joe Graumans of White Fox:** "We had an early Spring. All plants and trees started the new season relatively early. Last week of May and beginning of June were wet. We had a good summer. Timely showers produced excellent crops."
- 🌱 **Vi Protz:** "Late Spring this year. Lots of snow"
- 🌱 **David Weiman of Danbury:** "Late Spring. Little rain, growth stalled. Late May-early June rain has hel

## A Refresher on How to PlantWatch

- 1. Choose your plants** - be sure to select plants which you can easily observe every day or two during the blooming season (there is a complete list of plants on the **recording datasheet**).
- 2. Select your site** – try to choose plants that are growing in an easy-to-access, flat area.
- 3. Mark your site** - label or tag the shrub or patch of species to watch, so you know that you are observing the same plants on each visit. Try to visit the same spot(s) each year.
- 4. Start watching your plant closely in spring for swelling of buds** - record the date when your plant reaches first bloom. For most plants, the first bloom is when the first flowers open, but for some shrubs or trees, it is when flowers have opened in 3 different places. Go to [www.plantwatch.ca](http://www.plantwatch.ca) to help recognize when your plant has reached first bloom and mid-bloom. Mid- bloom generally is when 50% of the flowers are open in the observed plant(s).
- 5. Send your data observation sheet to the PlantWatch address**, or record your observations on the PlantWatch website at [www.plantwatch.ca](http://www.plantwatch.ca) . *\*Please let me know if you have entered your own data on the PlantWatch website\**





## Citizen science for all

Snowtweets is designed to engage the non-specialist in citizen science through "crowdsourcing".

## About the Snowtweets Project

The Snowtweets Project provides a way for people interested in snow measurements to quickly broadcast their own snow depth measurements to the web. This data is then picked up by a database and mapped in near real time. Snowtweets is especially interested in using web-based digital technologies to map snow depth data.

**There are 2 Ways to Send in your Data: (1) via a Twitter account, (2) via an anonymous form on the web page**

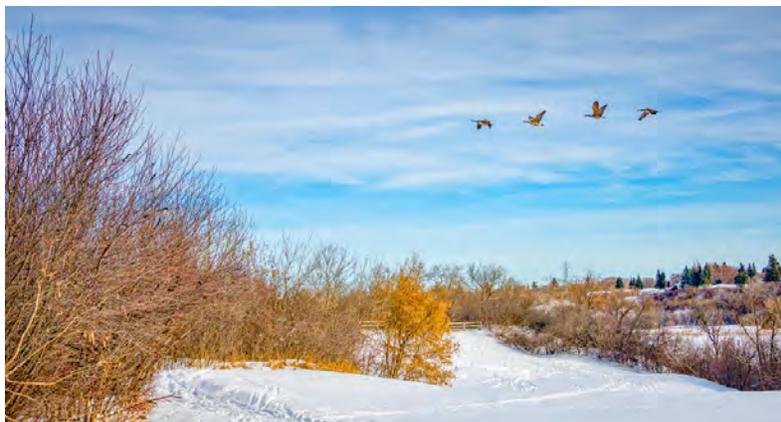
**(1) Twitter submissions:** the project uses the micro-blogging site Twitter as its data broadcasting scheme. If you have a Twitter account, submit your snow depth via a Tweet using the protocols described on the "info" link.

**(2) Anonymous snow depth submissions:** If you do not have a Twitter account, then do not worry. You can enter in data anonymously using the "Submit Measurement" link on the web site.

Visualization of data is a key aspect of the project. To view the snow depth measurements (or tweets), we have developed a visualization tool that lets you explore the reported snow depths around the globe.

The Snowtweets Project is being developed as we move along. We rely on user participation to measure snow depth (including zero snow depth) and then send the measurements in.

For more information about the Snowtweets Program go to <http://snowtweets.uwaterloo.ca/about.html>



## Spotlight on a PlantWatch Species:

### Wolf Willow (*Elaeagnus commutata*)

From: <https://www.naturewatch.ca/plantwatch/wolfwillow/>



**Bloom time:** May – June

**General:** This silvery shrub is usually under 2 m tall, with rusty coloured twigs.

**Leaves & Twigs:** Leaves are oval-shaped (3-8 cm long) and have a distinct silvery-green colour.

#### Flowers & Fruits

- Wolf willow flowers are small, yellow on the inside and silvery on the outside. They produce a strong musky-sweet smell.
- Berries are a dry silvery colour, with a relatively large, stony seed.

**Habitat:** Wolf willow prefers the moist edges of prairies, dry hillsides and open fields in aspen forests.

#### Distribution Map:

**This species is monitored in:**

- Alberta
- Quebec
- Saskatchewan



## From “Above the Fog” by Mike Garofalo

“We are the books in your hands,  
The sturdy chairs on your floors,  
The upright walls of your houses,  
The strong slanted roofs protecting your heads,  
The holders of food during your meals,  
The coffins for your rotting flesh,  
The doors to your worlds,  
The tissues cleaning up the crap off your arses,  
The boats for your fishers of men,  
The forests on your Mother Earth,  
The heat in your hearth,  
The sacred Rattles of the Winds,  
The cooling shade for your summers,  
The handles of your tools of life and death.

We are the Ancient Green Ones,  
Yggdrasil, Ashvattha, Etz Chaim,  
Arbotvitae, Axis Mundi of Many Names;  
Ten Thousand Forms yet One of Kind,  
The oldest living beings,  
The largest and tallest living beings.  
Yes, the Givers of the fruits and nuts in your hands.  
Yes, the Givers of the air that you breathe.  
Yes, the Trees, the Trees, the Trees!”

### Tree Profile: Aspen - So Much More Than a Tree

<https://www.nationalforests.org/blog/tree-profile-aspen-so-much-more-than-a-tree>

March 21, 2014

Category: [Trees](#)

by Hannah Ettema

It’s hard to decide what is most memorable about aspen: the vibrant yellow in the fall, the tall, tube-like clusters of white stands or the sound of the “quaking” leaves. Regardless of what comes to mind when you think of aspens, they hold the title of the most widespread tree in North America. From the Midwest, across Canada, north into Alaska and across the West through to Arizona and New Mexico, quaking aspens dot the edge of conifer forests in clusters or “clones.”





One aspen tree is actually only a small part of a larger organism. A stand or group of aspen trees is considered a singular organism with the main life force underground in the extensive root system. Before a single aspen trunk appears above the surface, the root system may lie dormant for many years until the conditions are just right, including sufficient sunlight. In a single stand, each tree is a genetic replicate of the other, hence the name a “clone” of aspens used to describe a stand.

Older than the massive Sequoias or the biblical Bristlecone Pines, [the oldest known aspen clone has lived more than 80,000 years on Utah’s Fishlake National Forest](#). Not only is the clone the oldest living organism, weighing in at an estimated 6,600 tons, it is also the heaviest. Even if the trees of a stand are wiped out, it is very difficult to permanently extinguish an aspen’s root system due to the rapid rate in which it reproduces.





Among swaths of dark green conifers, the deciduous aspen stands thrive in a variety of environments. Aspens quickly colonize recently burned or bare areas to establish a stand of young trees given the proper conditions. They prefer moist soil but can survive near springs in desert conditions. Of the many variables for a healthy clone of aspens, the one that cannot waver is the need for abundant sunshine.

Aspens grow all the time—even in winter. Beneath the thin, white outer bark layer is a thin green photosynthetic layer that allows the tree to create sugars and grow when other deciduous trees would otherwise be dormant. During hard winters, the green, sugary layer provides necessary nutrients for deer and elk. Throughout the year, young aspens provide food for a variety of animals including moose, black bear, beaver, porcupine, ruffed grouse and rodents.





Although a soft wood, aspen is relatively strong and has been used in unique ways.

- Matches – aspen wood is not as flammable as other species
- Saunas – aspen wood does not splinter easily
- Chopsticks – aspen is flexible and strong for your next tasty eggroll.
- Ailments – historically used because aspen contains salicylates, chemicals similar to aspirin

Today, many places in the West have seen diebacks of aspen. In areas where grass is limited, deer and other ungulates are heavily feeding on young aspens, preventing the trees and clone from reaching maturity.



With support from Salt River Project, the National Forest Foundation helped provide fencing around 12 acres of key aspen stands on Arizona’s Kaibab National Forest to prevent elk from eating the trees. In Utah, the NFF brought together various stakeholders to form the Utah Forest Restoration Working Group. The collaborative created the “Guidelines for Aspen Restoration on the National Forests in Utah,” now used to standardize and implement restoration strategies for aspen across the state.



## PlantWatch Saskatchewan is a program of Nature Saskatchewan

206-1860 Lorne Street, Regina, SK S4P 2L7

Phone: 1-800-667-4668 or (306) 780-9481

Web: [www.naturesask.ca](http://www.naturesask.ca)

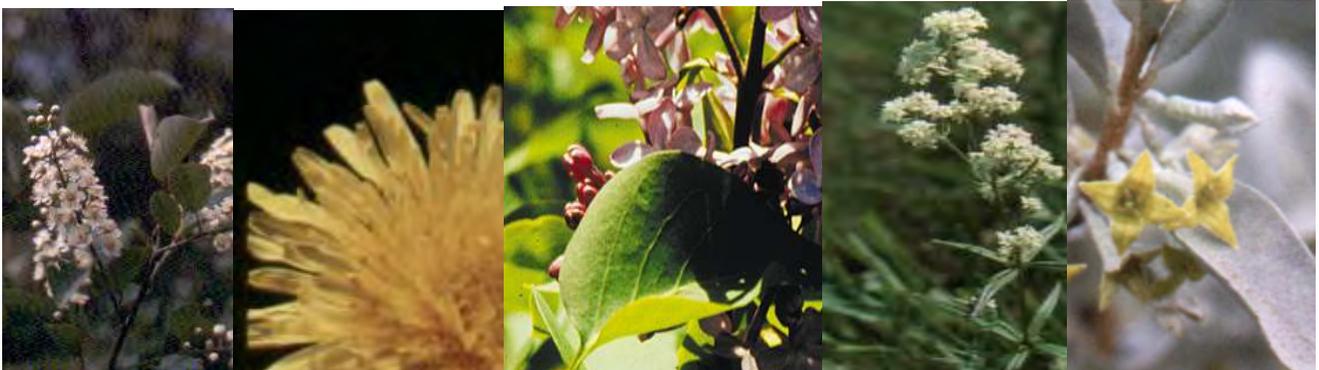
Lacey Weekes

E-mail: [lweekes@naturesask.ca](mailto:lweekes@naturesask.ca)

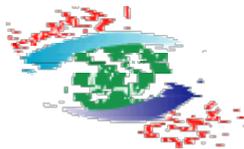


PlantWatch Saskatchewan Coordinator  
& Conservation and Education Manager, Nature Saskatchewan

Can you Name These PlantWatch Species...?(See answers at bottom of page)



Thank-you to the following supporters



FUNDING PROVIDED BY



PlantWatch Species pictures: Choke Cherry, Dandelion, Common Purple Lilac, Northern Bedstraw, Wolf Willow

