



Nature Views

- a forum for environmental discussion - published by Nature Saskatchewan

Issue 185

Spring 2016

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Questing Winged Wonders in Saskatchewan: Locating Chimney Swifts and Their Habitat

Barb Stewart, MCSI Steering Committee Member

Chimney Swifts are masters of aerial feats. Watching these insectivorous birds forage is a wonder-filled experience. Airspace is covered *quickly*, as Chimney Swifts change direction on the proverbial dime, while they hunt and gorge on up to 1,000 flying insects a day. It is easy to identify a Chimney Swift. Look for a sooty coloured bird with a cigar-shaped body and long, tapered wings which extend well past the short stubby tail feathers. Chimney Swifts have a distinctive chittering vocalization that also can alert birders to their presence. Sightings of Chimney Swifts will be limited to airborne flights or quick entry/exit events at nest or roost sites. With feet which are adapted for clinging onto vertical surfaces, Chimney Swifts will never be seen perching or resting on horizontal surfaces.



Adult Chimney Swift carrying twig for nest building; June 3, 2015, near St. George's Anglican Church, Goderich, ON. Photo by David Lavigne.

Traditionally, Chimney Swifts used hollow, large diameter trees in old growth forests. With the loss of those forests, Chimney Swifts shifted to using man-made structures in urban settings. Brick chimneys constructed in the pre-1960's era provide ideal habitat for Chimney Swifts. A candidate chimney must be open, unlined, and have a rough interior. Old churches and homes in historic sections of towns and cities are good places to start looking for Chimney Swifts. But why should we?

In Canada, Chimney Swifts are listed as Threatened (COSEWIC; 2007). As with many species of insectivores, populations of Chimney Swifts have declined significantly in recent years. Habitat loss and the reduction of sufficient quality/quantity of insect prey are thought to be major contributing factors. It is essential to understand the distribution and abundance of Chimney Swifts, and their biology, in order to implement conservation measures to halt or reverse the population decline.

Since 2007, the Manitoba Chimney Swift Initiative (MCSI) has grown from a grass roots organization, interested in constructing artificial habitat, to one that embraces monitoring, habitat stewardship, and outreach programs. An ever-growing group of citizen scientist volunteers are the backbone of MCSI activities. In 2015, Manitoba monitors participated in the spring National Roost Monitoring Program (NRMP) which is organized by biologists from Environment Canada (Quebec Region). Over 56 volunteers documented activity at 45 sites in 14 communities. Thereafter, monitoring data were collected to follow activity at Manitoba roost and nest sites throughout the summer.

MCSI has learned much about Chimney Swifts living at the periphery of the summer distribution and their biology differs from those birds living in the concentrated "hot-spot" areas to the east.¹ Chimney Swifts arrive in Manitoba mid- to late-May, often after peak numbers in Ontario and Quebec have been recorded. There are only two large roosts known in Manitoba (Dauphin and Winnipeg), compared to many in eastern provinces, and they have housed 150-225 Chimney Swifts instead of several hundred as in the east. At Manitoba nest sites, the percentage of successful nesting attempts, and the number of fledglings produced per successful nesting attempt, is significantly lower than elsewhere in the summer range. In Saskatchewan, Chimney Swifts also live "on the edge" and likely experience conditions similar to those found in Manitoba.

The more we look, the more we discover about Chimney Swifts. In 2015, a group from Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship found 3 chimneys in Melita, tantalizingly close to Saskatchewan, which were occupied by swifts. A group of volunteers also located high numbers of swifts in Souris. A quick perusal of eBird revealed that at least 5 Chimney Swifts were active in Estevan in southeastern Saskatchewan.

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From Your President

This has been a particularly difficult Message from the President to write. This has very much to do with this being the final issue of *Nature Views*. It is an end that I have wanted to do justice in marking.

For decades *Nature Views* and its predecessors have been the platform from which our society has shared news. Within these pages, we have lived the society's mission to engage and inspire people to appreciate, learn about and protect Saskatchewan's natural environment.

I will always have a personal fondness for *Nature Views*. Writing is not something that comes naturally to me. I owe the development of my own voice as naturalist not only to regular contributions to *Nature Views* as the Rare Plant Rescue coordinator, but also from reading the excellent contributions of our members.

On behalf of the society, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the success of *Nature Views* over the years and a special thank you to the current editors, Rob Warnock and Angela Dohms.

It is said that if nothing ever changed, there would not be butterflies. So while I am saddened to see *Nature Views* come to an end, I eagerly await the emergence of the new *Blue Jay*.

Tara Sample

Margaret Skeel Graduate Student Scholarship

In the fields of ecology, wildlife management, biology, environmental studies including social science applied to marketing conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

A \$2,000 scholarship will be awarded in 2016 to assist a graduate student attending a post-secondary institution in Saskatchewan. This scholarship must be applied to tuition and associated costs at the named institution.

The Margaret Skeel Graduate Student Scholarship is awarded to a student pursuing studies in a field that complements the goals of Nature Saskatchewan. Nature Saskatchewan promotes appreciation and understanding of our natural environment, and supports research to protect and conserve natural ecosystems and their biodiversity. We work for sustainable use of Saskatchewan's natural heritage, ensuring survival of all native species and representative natural areas, as well as maintenance of healthy and diverse wildlife populations throughout the province. We aim to educate and to stimulate research to increase knowledge of all aspects of the natural world. Research that will contribute to resolving current conservation problems have a special priority.

Application Guidelines

- an updated resume and a cover letter
- a full description of your present and/or proposed research
- a transcript of the undergraduate and graduate courses thus far completed and of those currently enrolled in
- an indication of what other source(s) of funding you hope to rely on to complete your studies
- letters of reference are optional but recommended

If you have any questions, please contact our office by e-mail at info@naresask.ca or phone 306-780-9273 (in Regina) or 1-800-667-4668 (SK only).

Application Deadline: June 1, 2016

Please submit your completed application to the Scholarship Committee:

E-mail: info@naresask.ca

Mail: Nature Saskatchewan, 206-1860 Lorne Street, Regina, SK S4P 2L7

Phone: 306-780-9273 (in Regina) or 1-800-667-4668 (SK only).

"Humanity in Harmony with Nature"

SAVE THE DATE!

Yellowhead Flyway Birding Trail Association Spring Symposium - April 23, 2016

Saltcoats Community Hall

Three terrific speakers: Colin La Roque, David Halstead and Don Weidl.

Banquet supper is included.

There will be an outdoor activity as well.

More information available in March with Registration forms at www.YFBTA.com or check us out on Facebook. Always a fun and informative event!

NATURE VIEWS

Nature Views (soon to be part of *Blue Jay*) 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 was previously 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. Please send all future submissions and comments to either of the following:

Blue Jay: Annie McLeod, Editor, e-mail: bluejay@naresask.ca or info@naresask.ca or to the Nature Saskatchewan Office address below.

Nature Saskatchewan E-newsletter: Ellen Bouvier, Communications Manager, e-mail: ebouvier@naresask.ca or info@naresask.ca or to the Nature Saskatchewan Office address below.

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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.

From Your Editors

Happy New Year everyone, and we hope you had a wonderful holiday season. For those of you waiting patiently for some of the details of the Spring Meet, they are here. Or if you're looking forward to an event or field trip to get out and enjoy the already spring-like weather, be sure to check out the upcoming events and field trips. The Last Mountain Bird Observatory opens in May, and I'm certain they are looking forward to another season of fun and education.

We also thank the numerous sponsors, donors, and volunteers we have this year. It is very encouraging to see so many people devoted to Nature Saskatchewan and the programs we offer. We also welcome our new members, and hope to see that number grow this year!

On a different note, Rob and Angela must say goodbye to *Nature Views*, which has reached the end of its run. We look forward to seeing it emerge as the new *Blue Jay*, but it's still difficult to find the right words for the editorial of the last issue of this publication that is dear to our hearts. We thank you for all your support over the years, and for your contributions that made *Nature Views* the publication it is today.

Angela Dohms and Rob Warnock

Last notes from your Editors

My first issue as co-editor of Nature Views was Issue 139 (Fall 2004). It is hard to believe that I have been co-editor of Nature Views for 47 issues or almost 12 years! First, I want to thank my co-editors Randy Olson, Kim Dohms and Angela Dohms; past and current Nature Saskatchewan staff and Board members; and all the Nature Views contributors for making my 'job' easier and interesting. Second, I want to thank Nature Saskatchewan members for their encouragement, support and constructive criticism that helped me to become a long-lasting and better editor. Finally, thank you to Nature Saskatchewan for the unexpected volunteer award to Angela and me for our work on Nature Views. It has been a real pleasure to serve Nature Saskatchewan members in this role.

Rob Warnock

My first issue as co-editor of Nature Views was Issue 156 (Winter 2008). 29 issues, and almost 8 years later, I write part of the editorial for the last time. First, thank you Rob for being my co-editor on these last 29 issues, sorting through all the submissions, and (when needed) sending me additional material. Second, I want to extend a thank you to the members of the Nature Saskatchewan community for all your input, support, and enthusiasm over the years for each issue of *Nature Views*. Third, as Rob mentions above, thank you to Nature Saskatchewan for bestowing upon us, in the Fall of 2012, a Long-Term Service Award. Finally, it has been a delight to meet so many of you over the years, and my honour to have been part of *Nature Views*.

Angela Dohms

THANK YOU

As Kerry Hecker and Lowell Strauss step down from their role as editors of the *Blue Jay*, we would like to sincerely thank them for their service to Nature Saskatchewan over the years. Their dedication in maintaining an integral piece of our story and the devoted efforts consistently put forth in every issue since they began through to their departure is greatly valued and appreciated. We send them best wishes in their future endeavors and are grateful for their time as editors for the *Blue Jay*.

With their resignation, the torch is passed to Annie McLeod.

Working in communications for SaskEnergy, with a background in journalism and a penchant for birding with her husband and a passion for nature in Saskatchewan, we are proud to welcome Annie as our new editor of the *Blue Jay*.

New submissions will still follow previous protocol and can be sent to bluejay@naturesask.ca or info@naturesask.ca.

With the departure of the editors of *Blue Jay*, we would also like to take the time to thank the editors of *Nature Views*. For their devotion to the ideals and standards of Nature Saskatchewan and their hard work in pursuing a valuable publication for the membership, we offer Rob Warnock and Angela Dohms our gratitude for their time and commitment over the years.

If you have any questions, concerns or requests for more information, please don't hesitate to contact our office at info@naturesask.ca or alternatively at 1-800-667-4668 / (306) 780-9273.

Correction

In the last issue of Nature Views in my article Naturehood Comes to Saskatchewan on page 6 there is an error. In the article, the website for the Naturehood App should have been **Naturehood.co** not Naturehood.com. We apologize for this error.
The Editors.

Questing Winged Wonders in Saskatchewan: Locating Chimney Swifts and Their Habitat

cont'd from Front Page

MCSI invites interested Saskatchewan birders to put Chimney Swifts on their radar for 2016. As we enter the 10th year of monitoring these elusive birds, MCSI hopes to broaden our understanding of prairie Chimney Swifts. Information gleaned from observations made in Saskatchewan will add significantly to that understanding. Getting acquainted with your Chimney Swifts this year will also be useful for continuing with the Saskatchewan Breeding Bird Atlas activities which start in 2017.

To begin, either find the birds first then search for nearby habitat, or try to identify potential habitat then verify its use. Look *up* for Chimney Swifts foraging near riparian areas, over horticultural garden areas, and cemeteries etc. Swifts can often be mixed in with groups of Purple Martins. To determine a chimney's suitability for swifts, count the number of bricks on two adjacent faces. A smaller chimney of at least 2.5 X 2.5 bricks is often used for a nest site. Chimneys which are ~4 X 4 bricks, or larger, provide attractive spaces for bigger groups of Chimney Swifts to roost or rest for the night.

In addition to location, it is important to consider timing for finding swifts – both time of the year and time of the day. The spring arrival of Chimney Swifts depends on weather conditions and insect availability. In Manitoba, typical arrival dates range from May 10-30. At roost sites generally, Chimney Swifts enter ½ hour before to ½ hour after sunset to rest for the night; birds leave the site within ½ hour of sunrise the next morning. It is a thrilling experience to see the funneling of swifts as they swirl about a chimney opening before “draining” inside. At Manitoba nest sites, daytime activity will be intense from late May through mid-June as breeding adults build their twig nest on the interior face of the chimney, several feet below the rim. The activity pattern (frequency and sequence of entry/exit events) shifts with stages of nesting as incubation, hatching and feeding, then ultimately fledging occurs. Decoding behavioural clues is part of the fun of Chimney Swift sleuthing. In Manitoba, pre-migratory movements can start by early August with southern migration being complete by mid- to late August. Similar to spring migration, fall migration is influenced by weather and prey availability.

Report your Saskatchewan Chimney Swift observations to Melissa Ranalli and Rebecca Magnus at Nature Saskatchewan.² If you are interested in joining the national effort, the 2016 NRMP dates have been set for Wed. May 25, Sun. May 29, Thurs. June 2, and Mon. June 6. Beyond the NRMP, any opportunistic sightings or monitoring data from dedicated sessions would be useful to hear about!

These are early days for implementing a provincial Chimney Swift monitoring program in Saskatchewan, so the organizational framework will be developed over time. For the campaign liftoff in 2016, count yourself in the group of citizen scientists who keep their eyes to the sky. Chimney Swifts are winged wonders waiting to be “discovered” in Saskatchewan. Good luck on your questing!

Barb Stewart
MCSI Steering Committee Member
Monitoring questions/general inquiries can be directed to:
mbchimneyswift@gmail.com

Tim Poole
MCSI Habitat Stewardship and Outreach Coordinator
mcsi.outreach@gmail.com

¹MCSI has an active website to report our provincial findings: <http://www.mbchimneyswift.ca/>. We publish complete Manitoba databases, for the NRMP (plus national maps) and the MCSI Roost and Nest Site Monitoring Program, in the Results section. Links to photo-rich factsheets, habitat stewardship documents, publications on breeding success in Manitoba etc. are found in the Resources section. For seasonal updates, check out our BlogSpot at: <http://swift-notes.blogspot.ca/>.

² Nature Saskatchewan
206-1860 Lorne Street, Regina, SK S4P 2L7
(306) 780 9270 or 1 800 667 4668 (SK only)
Melissa Ranalli, Species at Risk Manager, mranalli@naturesask.ca
Rebecca Magnus, Habitat Stewardship Coordinator; Acting Species at Risk Manager as of April, 2016 for 12-18 months, rmagnus@naturesask.ca

Nature Saskatchewan Welcomes These New Members:

Gerald Andersen	Neal Holt
Logan Balkwill	Justin Kline
Jennifer Carpenter	Charlotte Wasylik
Joshua Erikson	Cindy and Randy Weekes
Gabriel Foley	

The Maurice Street Nature Sanctuary

Doug Phillips, Maurice Street Nature Sanctuary Steward

Saskatchewan contains one of the most modified landscapes in North America! This fact makes me thankful for programs such as the Nature Saskatchewan Sanctuary Program. Through this program an attempt is made to conserve remaining natural habitats in our province.

Nature Saskatchewan has seven unique areas, designated as sanctuaries, scattered across our province. These are “places of retreat for renewal and restoration of the spirit and where one may gain strength and courage to go back to the ‘asphalt jungle’ which has steadily, and perhaps tragically, grown up around us” (quote provided during dedication service for the Maurice Street Sanctuary).

The Maurice Street Sanctuary is in the Tobin Lake Lowland area of the Boreal Transition Eco-region. It is a micro-sample of a magnificent emerald green collar referred to as the Boreal Forest which encircles the northern regions of our planet. In area the sanctuary is over 400 acres with a portion under the flood waters of Tobin Lake. It is the largest of seven Nature Saskatchewan sanctuaries and the oldest designated sanctuary.

The area is heavily forested by Jack Pine, White Spruce, Tamarack and birch with large areas of crispy grey Reindeer Moss and soft spongy green Sphagnum Moss. The area supported trapping (a trap remains to this day, suspended at approximately four feet from a Jack Pine). This area, probably in the 1910 decade, has been logged.

Its western border is mostly formed by the mighty Saskatchewan River (the 401 of the 1600's, an explorers' highway travelled by Thompson, Hearne, la Verendrye and others). To reach this sanctuary travel east on Highway 55 towards Carrot River, turn north (left) at Range Road number 2240. Follow this road for about 11 km, turn east at a sign post and follow trail to the mud hole (just past a habitation). Leave vehicle and walk to sanctuary (approx. 1 km). This last part of the trail may, depending upon moisture conditions, prove to be somewhat challenging.

My father-in-law, Mr. Peter Hornseth, established a second homestead on the quarter adjacent to the sanctuary. According to regulation he cleared approximately 40 acres. He built a rustic log cabin and a log horse barn—the latter burned down in 1995 perhaps victim of a careless smoker.

For over 17 years the partners Hornseth and Jacklin had a saw mill down on the flood plain of the Saskatchewan River. During the winter, lumber was cut with the power of a steam engine, which was used in the summer to break land and power a planer. The lumber was piled on the high ground near the cabin and was sold from there. I can recall the stories of the huge White Spruce, straight and tall, cut for lumber. This would be just below the present sanctuary. There is an impressive spruce forest in that area today. In my shop is a chopping block from that era—over 68 cm in diameter and 213 cm in circumference.

The story of the founding of the Maurice Street Sanctuary is interesting. These acres provided a favourite area to pick berries, enjoy nature, have picnics and at Christmas, cut that special tree—either a White Spruce, or better yet, a Balsam Fir. The land remained in that state until 1967.

A good friend, Dr. Stan Riome, and I would spend time birding and exploring in the area. We always stopped to look down at the river at the ‘look off’—a magnificent view! What a great place to have a simple cabin—could we buy it from the province? The answer of course was “NO” (unless it was developed). Why not try to get this beautiful piece of Crown Land protected for the benefit of all? We weren't going to accept “no” but what were our options?

We approached our good friend and fellow Rotarian, Frank Radloff, former mayor of Nipawin who happened to be the MLA for our area. We invited him to the property for an extensive tour. He was very impressed (although while driving about the area his compact motor home got caught in some branches and needed a saw and a ladder to get him mobile again). Stan and I were certain that our presentation was a failure—but not so.

The area was leased from the Department of Agriculture in early 1967 by the Saskatchewan Natural History Society. It was to be set aside as a wildlife sanctuary in memory of Mr. Maurice Street (this, in response to wishes of his friends in the Nipawin area). Later that same year the land was transferred to the Department of Natural Resources to be designated as a game preserve (this move rendered the land eligible for protection under the Provincial Wildlife Act).

The history of the sanctuary is not complete without a word about Maurice George Street (1910-1966). He was born in Wiltshire, England. His records of bird life in the Nipawin area date from 1922. He collected the eggs of over 100 birds, found nests of 142 species, identified over 245 different kinds of birds and banded 13,214 birds. He extended the range of 12 species, according to the American Ornithologists' Union check list, all within the Nipawin area.

He wrote and published over 38 papers in the “Blue Jay”, the official publication of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society at the time. Maurice collaborated with Dr. C. Stuart Houston in the writing of a book, “The Birds of the Saskatchewan River, Carlton to Cumberland”. The “Wilson Bulletin”, published by the Wilson Ornithological Society in Kalamazoo, Michigan frankly stated, “Can such a record be equalled?”

There are two excellent articles by the Honorable Justice David Wright in the “Blue Jay”, in tribute to Maurice Street. They can be found in the “Blue Jay” – Sept. 1957, vol. xv, no. 3 and Sept. 1992 50(3).

A quote from Maurice says it all, “If you like watching birds it doesn't matter where you go, or what time of day it is, or whether it's raining or the sun is shining, there is always something of interest.”

Much credit is due to Dr. Riome and his family for promoting the establishment of the Maurice Street Sanctuary and for the designing and construction of the sign welcoming visitors to it.

In 2001 Jeannie Walker created an avifauna inventory for the sanctuary. In 2003 Bernard de Vries created a lichen inventory. The Sanctuary is noted for its rare Ram's Head Lady's Slipper, the Large Yellow Lady's Slipper and many ‘not so rare’ plants such as the Hoary Puccoon, Giant Hyssop, Labrador Tea (both make great tea), the Mountain Maple and probably so many more yet to be discovered (400 acres of mainly undisturbed sanctuary land provides plenty of space for exploration).

Doug Pegg and I are delighted to welcome Rick Douslin, a local recently retired provincial resource officer. The three of us have agreed to act as stewards for the Maurice Street Sanctuary in 2016.

Currently the sanctuary is leased, until 2028 from the Government of Saskatchewan. The stewards strongly advise that initiatives be taken to have the land transferred to Nature Saskatchewan in order that the flora and fauna be conserved in perpetuity.

PLEASE NOTE—Information regarding M.S.S. inventories or other information (maps, pictures etc.) regarding this sanctuary is available from Nature Saskatchewan.

Attention Parents and Keen Teen Birders!

Long Point Bird Observatory's Doug Tarry Natural History Fund: Young Ornithologists' Workshop (Saturday August 6 to Sunday August 14, 2016)
Application Deadline: 30 April 2016

The Long Point Bird Observatory is looking for keen teen birders to apply for the 2016 Doug Tarry Natural History Fund - Young Ornithologist Workshop to be held from Saturday August 6 to Sunday August 14, 2016. Participants will receive hands-on training in field ornithology including bird banding, monitoring, field identification, birding trips, preparing museum specimens, guest lectures, and more! Six of Canada's most promising ornithologists between the ages of 13-17 will be selected to attend, and will receive the Doug Tarry Bird Study Award to cover all on-site expenses. For those traveling long distances, special grants may also be available to help offset air travel costs. Applications are due April 30, 2016. For more information and an application form, contact us at lpbo@birdscanada.org, or visit <http://www.birdscanada.org/longpoint/index.jsp?targetpg=lpboyow&lang=EN>.

Breeding Bird Survey: 50 Years and Still Counting

Reprinted from Bird Studies Canada February 12, 2016 E-newsletter

The Breeding Bird Survey (BBS, <http://www.ec.gc.ca/reom-mbs/default.asp?lang=En&n=416B57CA-1>) has reached an important milestone: 50 years of standardized data collection. In 1966, when the BBS was launched in the United States and Canada, the concept of using Citizen Scientists to monitor bird populations at a continental scale was ground-breaking. Within two years, volunteers were surveying BBS routes along secondary roads throughout Canada's diverse landscapes. In 2015, over 350 volunteers ran more than 500 Canadian routes. The number of birds counted is also staggering: about 350,000 individuals of some 340 species are tallied each year in Canada!

To the 1459 volunteers who have collected and submitted data for a grand total of 16,629 BBS routes in Canada over the past 50 years: thank you! Your efforts have contributed greatly to our understanding of birds in Canada. And a special shout out to Jim Wilson and David Christie in New Brunswick for completing 50 years of BBS service – outstanding!

Upcoming Changes to the *Blue Jay*

To our devoted membership and long-time supporters.

We are excited to share some details about changes being made to our journal, *Blue Jay*, in the coming months.

The *Blue Jay* started in 1942 as a way to connect people who were interested in nature and provide a way to share observations and stories with other naturalists. Over the years, it evolved to include scientific and research articles along with sightings, interesting stories, poetry and photos. It is a widely respected natural history journal, and we have every intention of continuing to earn that respect. But with increasing print and postage costs, and no accompanying increases in membership fees for over twenty years, Nature Saskatchewan can no longer afford the luxury of two print publications (*Blue Jay* and *Nature Views*).

Commencing in spring 2016, *Nature Views* will be combined with the *Blue Jay* to provide our members with one *Blue Jay* publication. This quarterly *Blue Jay* will provide the best of what the *Blue Jay* and *Nature Views* currently offer, updated with a newer design and format.

We will continue to print and mail *Blue Jay* as a black and white journal with colour cover, for those who prefer that format. We will also offer an electronic version in full colour as an alternative. Once our website is equipped (tentatively July 2016), members will be able to view *Blue Jay* by simply logging in, using a personalized id and password.

Proposed Changes to Membership Fees

Recognizing the continually increasing costs of doing business, the Board of Directors will be putting forward a proposal to change the Society's membership structure and fees at the Annual General Meeting in Wolseley, June 19, 2016. Any change in membership fees must be approved by the membership. The following are the proposed changes prepared by the Board of Directors for consideration at our AGM:

1. All memberships will be based on the calendar year (i.e. January 1st to December 31st).
2. Memberships will be payable yearly; 3 and 5 year memberships will be phased out.
3. The membership fee structure will be based on the choice to be an "electronic" subscriber or a "print" subscriber. Higher fees for "print" subscribers reflect the additional cost of printing and postage.
4. Student and Senior memberships will be offered at a discounted fee for the print version.
5. Institutional and Foreign membership costs will increase.

Proposed fees are as follows:

Category	Electronic	Print
Individual	\$25/yr	\$40/yr
Family	\$30/yr	\$45/yr
Student	\$25/yr	\$35/yr
Senior	\$25/yr	\$35/yr
Organization/Institution	\$30/yr	\$60/yr
Foreign/Outside Canada	\$30/yr	\$60/yr

If the membership approves the proposed membership fee structure at the Annual General Meeting in June, annual membership fees will remain at the current rate until November 1, 2016. Annual memberships that come up for renewal in November or December 2016 will be granted a 14-month membership. Current 3 and 5 year memberships will be honoured until they expire. Renewal notices will be sent in November 2016, with our annual appeal. We hope to have our website updated by the end of 2016 to permit auto-renewals and renewal notices.

If you have any questions, concerns or requests for more information, please don't hesitate to contact our office at info@naturesask.ca or by calling 1-800-667-4668 / (306) 780-9273.

The Last Mountain Bird Observatory Opens in May

Lacey Weekes, Conservation and Education Manager, Nature Saskatchewan

People can visit the Last Mountain Bird Observatory (LMBO) every day in May, and during the months of August and September. Individuals and groups of all ages are welcome to visit between 9 am and 1 pm each day (net opening is weather dependent) and see many bird species up close, and observe catching, handling and banding techniques. Learn about species identification, bird migration, threats to bird populations, and bird conservation.

If you have a group that would like to visit for a morning of fun and educational activities, and learn through being involved with your hands, eyes and ears, then please call Lacey at 306-780-9481 or e-mail lweekes@naturesask.ca or info@naturesask.ca for more information or to book a date for a visit. Girl Guides, Scouts, School classrooms, and groups of all ages are encouraged to book a morning of fun and learning at the LMBO!

Spring Meet 2016 in Wolseley, Saskatchewan June 17, 18 & 19

Friday June 17th

Dinner on your own

6:00pm- Registration and refreshments at Wolseley Town Hall.

7:00pm- Welcome to Wolseley presented by TBA

7:15pm – Speakers:

Kelsey Marchand – Recent Margaret Skeel Graduate Student Scholarship award winner in 2015 will be delivering a presentation on her research and work, focused on turtles living in Wascana Marsh.

Marla Anderson – A previous Nature Saskatchewan summer student will present on Important Bird Areas around Saskatchewan with a special focus on her photography.

8:30pm – Explanation of logistics and tours to take place Saturday – presented by Richard Solberg (President, Wolseley Nature Conservation Society)

Saturday June 18th

Breakfast on your own

Itinerary

TOURS: details to follow with registration

Qu'Appelle Ecological Reserve

Marsh tour south of Wolseley

8:30am—departure for first leg of tours

11:30am—departure for lunch at Wolseley Nature Conservation Society Trails in town

1:30pm—departure for 2nd leg of tour

4:30pm—departure for return to Wolseley

5:30pm—Cocktails at Wolseley Town Hall

6:30pm—Dinner

7:30pm—Guest Speaker TBA

Sunday June 19th

Breakfast on your own

9:00am—Annual General Meeting at Wolseley Town Hall

Depart for home

Take time either before or after the AGM to explore the new Wolseley Nature Trails in town.

REGISTRATION FOR SPRING MEET IN NEXT ISSUE OF THE BLUE JAY

Accommodations:

Hotels/Motels:

The Wolseley Motel —306-698-2499 (<http://wolseleymotel.ca/>)

The Leland Hotel — (306) 698-2000

Grenfell

Indian Head

Bed & Breakfast:

Banbury Hotel — (306) 698-2333 (www.banburyhouse.com)

Camping:

Sleepy Hollow Campground — Randy at (306) 698-2984.

Opportunity for Local Societies and Affiliates to Share Their News and Events with Nature Saskatchewan

Nature Saskatchewan likes to promote our Local Societies and Affiliates. Therefore, we encourage submissions from Local Societies and Affiliates to both the new *Blue Jay* and the Nature Saskatchewan E-newsletter. Submissions can range from news items to upcoming events and field trips.

If your Local Society/Affiliate has a newsletter and want to share it with Nature Saskatchewan, please pass it on to us as well. Your newsletter may have material of interest to Nature Saskatchewan members. Recently, only 2 local societies/affiliates shared their newsletter with Rob Warnock for possible inclusion of their newsletter material in Nature Views.

Please send your submission and/or newsletter to Ellen Bouvier for the Nature Saskatchewan E-Newsletter (ebouvier@naturesask.ca) and Annie McLeod for *Blue Jay* (bluejay@naturesask.ca).

NPAW 16 - Save the Date!

Mark June 16 and 17, 2016 on your calendar and plan to join us for "Blues, Bats and Blue Grama," a Native Prairie Appreciation Week (NPAW) celebration taking place in Maple Creek, SK. More details will be available in the spring of 2016 so keep checking our website (<http://www.pcap-sk.org/native-prairie-appreciation-week/2016-native-prairie-appreciation-week/>)!

Christmas Bird Count For Kids

Lacey Weekes Conservation and Education Manager Nature Saskatchewan

On Sunday January 3rd Nature Saskatchewan hosted its first Christmas Bird Count for Kids with Wascana Centre Authority in Regina. The group of 16 gathered at Wascana Centre for a day of birding fun. We started with a brief introduction to the four keys to identifying birds: size and shape, habitat, behavior, and color pattern, as well as proper use of binoculars. We made our way down the path around the lake stopping at the marina to count a few Rock Doves and House Sparrows.



Farha, the Peregrine Falcon with CBC4Kids participants. Photo by Lacey Weekes.

There wasn't much activity around the lake until we crossed Pine Island where there was open water. We counted 300 Canada Geese, 4 Snow Geese, 200 Mallards and one pair of Common Goldeneyes. As we made our way back to the centre we spotted a few Black-capped Chickadees in the spruce trees on the island. Our total count for the day was 8 species and 532 individuals. After lunch we were very lucky to have Larry Going with the Saskatchewan Falconers Association bring his friend Farha, a Peregrine Falcon. Falconry is the use of trained birds of prey to hunt wild quarry. Larry explained that Farha mostly hunts waterfowl and grouse and she gets to eat everything she catches just not in one sitting. Farha was definitely the highlight of the day. Everyone enjoyed getting up close and personal with this amazing bird. Thank you to Larry Going for introducing us to Farha and falconry in Saskatchewan. Thank you also to Margaret Skeel for leading our bird count. Thank you to everyone who came out, we had beautiful weather and great participation. See you again next year!

CMMN Welcomes Two New Member Stations

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

Two new locations have joined the cross-Canada array of sites contributing standardized migration count data to the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network (<http://www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/cmmn/>). The Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park Landbird Monitoring Station (<https://chipmigration.wordpress.com/>), located in southeastern Alberta, is a satellite operation of the Calgary Bird Banding Society. The McKellar Island Bird Observatory (<https://www.facebook.com/McKellar/>), located near the city of Thunder Bay in northwestern Ontario, is a project of the Save Our Songbirds organization.

Pilot work at the Cypress Hills location started in 2010. The McKellar Island site has operated since 2014. Over the next few years, these provisional member stations will work toward developing the organizational capacity and resources needed to operate as long-term monitoring stations.

Following Blackpoll Warbler Movements

Reprinted from December 11, 2014 Bird Studies Canada E-newsletter

A new paper published in Biology Letters features research using the Motus Wildlife Tracking System (<http://birdscanada.org/research/motus/>). The study, "Adult and hatch-year Blackpoll Warblers exhibit radically different regional-scale movements during post-fledging dispersal," (<http://rsbl.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/11/12/20150593>) follows small migratory songbirds as they disperse up to 500 km from their Nova Scotia breeding grounds, prior to migration.



Blackpoll Warbler. Photo by Avery Bartels.

Blackpoll Warblers are renowned for their non-stop transatlantic flights. In this study, adult birds crossed the Gulf of Maine and headed south, shortening their over-ocean migratory flight. Young birds circled north and south within Nova Scotia, likely exploring the landscape.

This study opens a new chapter in research following movements of small organisms, and demonstrates how a coordinated approach using the Motus system provides new opportunities for discovery in areas such as navigation and orientation, learning and memory, and conservation.

The Motus Wildlife Tracking System is a program of Bird Studies Canada, in partnership with collaborating researchers and organizations, and was undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada and a number of additional donors.

Native Prairie in the News

Reprinted from December 2015 Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan

Here are some headlines and highlights from news about SK PCAP, native prairie and other things of interest in December 2015:

Conservation Conversations outline ecosystems' importance

This piece from the Prairie Post highlights the work and inspiration that went into the creation of SK PCAP's Conservation Conversation video. Read more here: <http://www.prairiepost.com/news/sw-sask/item/9026-conservation-conversations-outline-ecosystems-importance.html>

Home on the Range

The Country Guide heads out to a sometimes forgotten part of Saskatchewan, where the rolling prairie grasslands are dotted with cattle grazing. Read their story here: <http://www.country-guide.ca/2015/12/02/home-on-the-range/47717/>

Identifying species at risk in Saskatchewan...

Species at risk are monitored and conserved through a variety of programs and partners, as this article from the Preeceville Progress explains (<http://www.preecevilleprogress.com/news/identifying-species-at-risk-in-saskatchewan-1.2104249>).

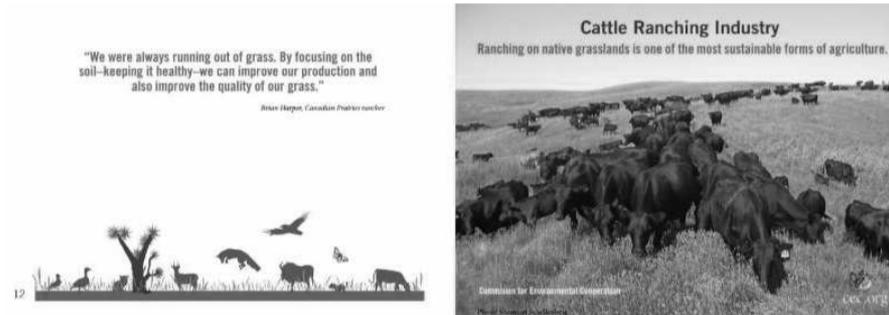
Saskatchewan waters still zebra mussel-free

Read about how some groups and government officials are working to prevent the devastating and invasive zebra mussel from invading Saskatchewan's waterways. Learn more in this Global News piece here: <http://globalnews.ca/news/2320790/saskatchewan-waters-still-zebra-mussel-free/>.

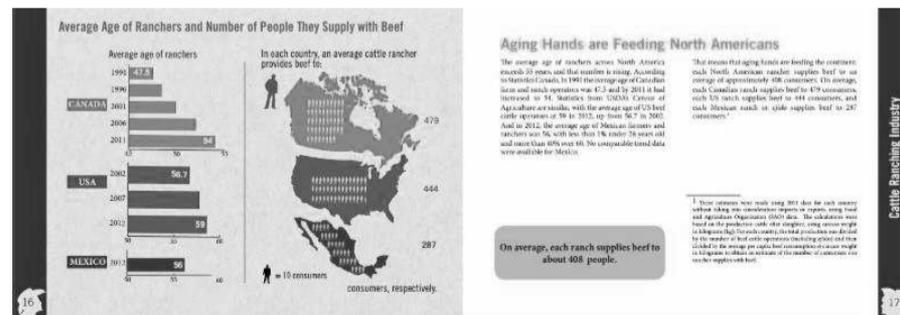
Commission for Environmental Cooperation Produces Unique Infographic on Grasslands and Ranching in North America

Reprinted from January 2016 Prairie Conservation Action Plan E-newsletter

Grassland conservation is directly tied with ranching and land use across North America, however few studies really look at the statistics of grassland conservation and the sectors that grasslands support. The Commission for Environmental Cooperation recently produced an infographic that looks at statistics for beef cattle and grasslands in Canada, the United States and Mexico.



While just a handful of ranchers are responsible for looking after the vast tracts of grasslands across North America, these ranchers are aging and according to recent statistics, relying on off-farm income to stabilize their operations.



This 21-page infographic can be reviewed in full here at <http://www3.cec.org/islandora/en/item/11634-north-american-ranching-industries-beef-cattle-trade-and-grasslands-status-and-en.pdf> and is worth the read!



2016 International Piping Plover Breeding Census Call for Volunteers!

Exact dates: TBD by the U.S. Geological Survey (expected to be the first two weeks of June 2016)

The International Piping Plover Census is the longest running shorebird census in North America to cover nearly the entire breeding and wintering range of a single species. This coming summer will mark the 6th such census, and Nature Saskatchewan will once again be coordinating the Saskatchewan portion. This census will be especially important as we hope to see a recovery of Piping Plover numbers from the 2011 census which had the fewest birds observed since 1991.



Piping Plover. Photo by Randy McCulloch.

We are looking for volunteers who have time to check for Piping Plovers on gravelly beaches, lake shorelines, or alkali wetlands at one or more locations in Saskatchewan. Surveyors will receive information on the Piping Plover, census instructions, a detailed map of the search basin(s), and a census form(s) to fill out. Expenses incurred for food, accommodation and/or gas will be offset by honoraria, pending funding. Piping Plover hats will also be provided to surveyors.

This is a great opportunity to contribute to the ongoing conservation of Piping Plovers while exploring a unique portion of Saskatchewan's great landscape. Your assistance is always greatly appreciated, and is needed in 2016 more than ever. Please consider being a part of this important project.

For more information about this census, or if you would like to participate, contact Alan Smith, the Saskatchewan Coordinator at (306) 868-4554 or by email at pipingplover@naturesask.ca.

A Piping Plover Purview*

*Adapted from "A Piping Plover Purview" by Jennifer Rumancik.

Biology

The Piping Plover looks like a small pale version of a Killdeer, but with a single neckband. It has a black-tipped orange bill, bright orange legs, and a black stripe across its forehead. Its white breast, abdomen, and rump as well as its sandy-grey coloured head, back, and wings allow it to camouflage nicely into its surroundings. It nests on gravelly shores of saline lakes and sandy shores of fresh water bodies, foraging on both terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates found along these beaches.

The Piping Plover arrives at its breeding ground in late April to early May. The male will establish a territory and try to attract a female with its elaborate aerial and ground displays. Aerial displays can be up to 30 minutes long and at heights of 35 meters. The displays involve persistent calling, complex flight patterns, and exaggerated slow wing beats. Ground displays involve chasing away other males as well as courting females with high marching steps and embellished upright postures.

Using its feet, the male will scrape a shallow nest-site in the sand or gravel and line it with pebbles, keeping the eggs off of the wet sand and allowing water to drain away from the nest. The female eventually selects one of the scrapes to lay her eggs in and both parents participate in incubation of the eggs, approximately 28 - 34 days. Clutches usually contain four buff-coloured, black speckled eggs, which blend extremely well into their environment. However, if a predator approaches, the plover will leave its nest and pretend it has a broken wing in an attempt to lure the predator away. If the eggs are destroyed, a female will re-nest once or twice in a season but will normally raise only one brood per year. Chicks

hatch in June and they begin flying in July. By early August, all Piping Plovers start migrating south to the Gulf of Mexico, the Atlantic Coast from Virginia to Florida and the northern Caribbean.

Threats

Threats to the Piping Plover include fluctuations in water level (for example, at Lake Diefenbaker some nests must be progressively moved back from the water's edge to prevent them from being flooded), human disturbance (people walking with their dogs, riding all-terrain vehicles, building houses, or attracting predators through left over garbage, etc.), livestock (creating ruts around the water's edge, which can trap young plovers causing eventual death), predation (crows, gulls, hawks, skunks, raccoons, foxes, and coyotes), vegetation encroachment, and inclement weather.

History

After very low populations were reported in 1945, the Piping Plover was listed as "Threatened" in 1978 by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC); and in 1985 the status was upgraded to "Endangered." In 2001 the population was divided into two subspecies - *circumcinctus* (inland) and *melodus* (Atlantic coast) - and both are listed as "Endangered." In 2013, the "Endangered" status was confirmed for both subspecies. The subspecies found in Saskatchewan (*cicumcinctus*) is protected under the federal *Migratory Birds Convention Act* prohibiting killing, harming, or collecting any adults, the young, or eggs. Provincially, it is protected under *The Wildlife Act* (part V), protecting it from being disturbed, harvested, captured, killed, exported, and its nests from disturbance and destruction. The Piping Plover was the first species to have critical habitat designated under the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA); and currently has critical habitat identified on 156 quarter sections within 31 basins in Saskatchewan. A national recovery plan was developed to help protect and manage nesting areas, and recovery teams were established in Canada and the U.S.

The long-term goal for the Prairie Canada population is to have at least 1,626 adult Piping Plovers, for each of three consecutive international censuses (i.e., over an 11-year period), including a minimum of 1,200 plovers in Saskatchewan. Efforts being taken in Saskatchewan include increasing public awareness, fencing off of critical habitat, creating alternate water points, deferring grazing to late summer, regulating water levels at reservoirs during June - July, and collecting information by banding birds and conducting surveys, including the International Piping Plover Census.

Census Significance

To study Piping Plover population trends, this international census was established in 1991 and has occurred every five years since then. Most jurisdictions that support Piping Plovers participate; these include Canada, the U.S., Mexico, the Bahamas, Cuba and Puerto Rico. The breeding census takes place during the first two weeks of June; the wintering census in late January and early February. All surveyors follow the same guidelines.

Saskatchewan's role is critical to the international effort as there are more plovers nesting and foraging along Saskatchewan's many water bodies than in any other jurisdiction. Its distribution covers southern and central regions of the province with the largest number of plovers being observed on Lake Diefenbaker, Chaplin, Big Quill, Willowbunch, Manito, and Old Wives lakes. Past censuses have shown Saskatchewan to support approximately one third of the entire Northern Great Plains population.

The census results allow recovery team members to monitor population trends, understand site use and habitat availability, identify potential threats, and assess the success of current recovery efforts and objectives set out in the Action Plan. Ultimately, endangered species often indicate that an ecosystem is in trouble. The Piping Plover is the target species of this census; however, it is not the only species that inhabits shorelines. Many prairie and arctic nesting birds and waterfowl, as well as arthropods, and other riparian species, are affected by disturbances to shorelines. Through proper management of these areas and by encouraging preventative measures, other shoreline species can benefit as well; thus, the census is not only important for the Piping Plover, but for all species.

2016 Nocturnal Owl Survey

It is almost time for the 2016 <http://www.birdscanada.org/longpoint/index.jsp?targetpg=lpboyow&lang=EN> Nocturnal Owl Survey through Bird Studies Canada. In Saskatchewan, non-standardized owl surveys were conducted along road routes from 1974 through 1999. The standardized Saskatchewan Nocturnal Owl Survey (SNOS) has been conducted annually since the spring of 2000. Since that time about 35 participants have surveyed almost 30 routes. Most routes have been surveyed in the Boreal Forest of the province with a few conducted in the Aspen Parkland. Saskatchewan is home to 11 species of owls at different times of the year, seven of these can be heard on nocturnal owl surveys: Long-eared, Barred, Great Gray, Boreal, Northern Saw-whet, Eastern Screech, and Great Horned owls.

If you are interested in participating in owl surveys, or would like more information, please contact: Alan R. Smith at alanrandi@sasktel.net.

Prairie Blogs

Start the New Year off catching up on some of our favourite Prairie Blogs! Read about the role that "**disturbance**" plays in this post (<http://prairieecologist.com/2015/12/16/prairie-word-of-the-day-disturbance/>) from December 16 by Chris Helzer, the Prairie Ecologist. You can also catch more of The Prairie Ecologist and view some of **Chris' stunning photography** in this post (<http://prairieecologist.com/2015/12/24/favorite-photos-of-2015/>) from December 24 that looks back on an entire year of prairie pictures!

Check out this unique challenge outlined in NCC's Land Lines blog (<http://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/blog/your-2015-nature-year-in.html#.Von4mfrLIU>). Review your **experiences with nature in 2015!** What species did you learn about? Where did you visit? What did you do to help the natural world this year?

Join Project FeederWatch

Reprinted from October 2, 2015 Bird Studies Canada E-newsletter

The 29th season of Project FeederWatch (<http://birdscanada.org/volunteer/pfw/>) begins on November 14! 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 counting. 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 (<http://watch.birds.cornell.edu/PFW/ExploreData>) to see what others are reporting.



Black-capped Chickadee. Photo by Missy Mandel.

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 <http://birdscanada.org/volunteer/pfw/> or call 1-888-448-2473. Your \$35 donation defrays the cost of the materials and data analysis (participation is free for members of Bird Studies Canada). Project FeederWatch is a joint program of Bird Studies Canada and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Bird Studies Canada is pleased to welcome Armstrong Bird Food as a national sponsor of Project FeederWatch in Canada. Our new partnership aims to inspire more Canadians to discover the fun of FeederWatch and the importance of Citizen Science.

Sage Thoughts

Rob Wilson

Reprinted from November 2015 Yellowhead Birding Trail Association Newsletter

Would you like to have your child/children or grandchildren see a creature that may disappear from Saskatchewan's Crown Lands? You had best take a road trip before it is too late. Travel to the Shaunavon area to search for a Greater Sage Grouse.

I have found some information about Saskatchewan Sage Grouse. A document published in January of 2014 (reference provided below) states that Sage Grouse populations in Canada "have declined 98% in the past 25 – 45 years" (93-138 adults were observed). It stated that "this critical situation calls for immediate attention to prevent further decline and extinction" (Note: If Sage Grouse can no longer be found in Saskatchewan but continue to be found in the United States, they are said to be extirpated, as was once the case with the Black-footed Ferret, rather than extinct).

Further, "Canada's Greater Sage Grouse are rapidly declining due to high mortality rates and low reproductive success. Without significant intervention, the Greater Sage Grouse may go extinct in Canada in the next 2-5 years"

The report continues, "Habitat conservation, enhancement and stewardship should be the top priority for conserving the species" and that "as an interim measure population management scenarios could be considered in an attempt to offset losses in the wild population." A response to this report warns that if reverses in habitat quantity and quality are not achieved, a population management effort will be futile.

The report contains a model referred to as a "Vortex baseline model" which attempts to predict how long mitigation measures might be expected to defer an expected extirpation in Canada. Sadly, it concludes that "the Canadian population has a 100% probability of extinction within 30 years."

Information (where Sage Grouse may yet be seen) is provided in the reference document following: "Greater Sage-Grouse in Canada. Population and Habitat Viability Assessment Workshop" (workshop conducted January 14 – 17, 2014 at the Calgary Zoo).

I have requested current information from the Government of Saskatchewan on the status of Sage Grouse on Crown Lands in our province. I hope to be able to report in the 2016 Issue #1 Yellowhead Birding Trail Association Newsletter .

Prairie Grasslands are a Hive of Diversity When it Comes to Bees

Tara Mulhern Davidson

Reprinted with permission of both Saskatchewan Stockgrowers Association and Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan. The article originally appeared in the November 2015 issue of Beef Business Magazine.

There has certainly been a buzz surrounding bee populations across North America in recent years. With news of honey bee colony collapses and dwindling populations, pollinator conservation starts to hit close to home in Saskatchewan. What role, if any, do Saskatchewan's native prairie grasslands play in the conservation of these important pollinators?



Bee on a sunflower plant. Photo by Cory Sheffield.

Cory Sheffield, Research Scientist and Curator of Invertebrate Zoology at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, believes that Saskatchewan's native prairie plays a pivotal role. Sheffield studies bees and other pollinators and says that Saskatchewan's grasslands are important for sustaining the populations of those species. "The Prairie Ecozone is a hotspot for bee diversity in Canada," explains Sheffield. "Almost half of all of Canada's bee species live here. In fact, there are at least 387 different bee species that we know of here, which means that this area has among the greatest diversity for pollinators in the country."

Historically, settlers brought honey bees to North America for honey and wax production, though crop pollination has become the greatest benefit of this introduced species. "Society is able to place an economic and ecological value on bees. We have been able to appreciate the impacts of bees on crop pollination, and we understand that bees play a vital role in food production," explains Sheffield, who also supervises research students as an Adjunct Professor at the University of Regina. "A lot of our native bee species likely play an unrealized and very valuable role in crop pollination," Sheffield says. SK PCAP recently hosted a webinar that highlighted the role of native bees as crop pollinators using Haskap pollination as a case study. This presentation can be viewed at www.youtube.ca/user/skpcap.

Just as all native prairie is not created equally, bees and other pollinators are diverse in their specific needs. Some bees are dietary generalists and rely on a wide range of flowering species throughout the year, whereas others are dietary specialists and rely on a narrow range of plants, sometimes solely on a specific plant species. "The prairies have the highest proportion of these specialist bees; not only do grasslands support a high level of bee diversity but 23% of the bees here are dietary specialists that have specific food plant requirements," clarifies Sheffield. "If prairie grasslands weren't here, almost 25% of these species would not exist here, and the plant communities would thus be affected," he says, adding that bee species may specialize in collecting pollen from willows or goldenrod, for example, or *Helianthus* or *Campanula* plant species, all commonly found on native prairie.

"Our knowledge of bees is still growing," notes Sheffield and says developing monitoring protocols to survey bees is a priority, in addition to identifying all the species that are present in Saskatchewan. "As a researcher, I want to tie things together, look at the bigger picture as opposed to focusing on a specific species," he explains. "We don't measure the impacts of the decline in the number of pollinators on native prairie like we should," Sheffield also adds, noting that at least four or five species of bumble bee in Canada have gone from being very common to rapidly dwindling. "The pollinators and certain prairie plants may rely on one another for survival, so what threatens one, could have an impact on the other," suggests Sheffield.

The contributions that farmers and ranchers make to the ecosystem and habitat management is not lost on Sheffield and his colleagues. "Ranchers provide grazing which is an important component of prairie management," says Sheffield. He cites dung beetles as an example of another group of beneficial organisms that have not experienced a significant reduction in diversity on grasslands simply because of the roles that cattle have been performing with grazing. He adds that bees require flowering plant species, and that light-to-moderate grazing may help to support an adequate forb component on prairie grasslands. "Cattle also play a role in seed dispersal through their dung, which may help sustain certain plants that are required by bees," Sheffield says.

Canadian farmers and ranchers who are contributing to the conservation of pollinators are recognized annually through the Canadian Farmer-Rancher Pollinator Conservation Award. The award is an initiative of the Pollinator Partnership, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and the Canadian Forage and Grassland Association and is awarded to ranchers who make an effort to foster natural ecosystems and provide pollinator habitat. David Ainslie of Ontario was recently announced as the 2015 winner.

For more information on Cory Sheffield's research, visit <http://www.royalsaskmuseum.ca/blog>.

Artemis - One Young Owl's Journey to Recovery

Reprinted with permission of both Saskatchewan Stockgrowers Association and Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan. The article originally appeared in the January 2016 issue of Beef Business Magazine.

There are many species at risk that make their home on prairie grasslands including the endangered Burrowing Owl. The Burrowing Owl arrives on the prairies in early spring to breed and nest, then flies back to Texas and Mexico starting at the end of September until about mid-October. One can imagine that there are several possible obstacles that these small owls encounter in their journeys to and from Saskatchewan's grasslands. For one owl named Artemis, her journey would have reached a dead end were it not for the rescue efforts of Parks Canada-Grasslands National Park and the Saskatchewan Burrowing Owl Interpretive Centre (SBOIC).



Artemis is healing comfortably at the Saskatchewan Burrowing Owl Interpretive Centre. Photo courtesy of Lori Johnson.

This past September, two Parks Canada staff members were returning home after a long day of field work in the Grasslands National Park when they noticed a Burrowing Owl along the road. The young owl appeared to be flapping its wings abnormally, so they stopped to check. Parks staff determined that the owl wasn't simply feigning distress, the owl was injured and its left wing was drooping unusually. The staff members made the quick decision to try and gently catch and calm the bird, who then hitched a ride with them back to Val Marie. "Given the precarious situation that species is in population-wise, the decision to capture and treat this bird was an easy one," says Sherri Clifford, Manager of Resource Conservation at Grasslands National Park.

Fortunately for Artemis, the timing couldn't have been better. A phone call to the Calgary Zoo research house located in Val Marie revealed that there was a visiting veterinarian on site who could examine the owl right away. It was determined that Artemis had a broken humerus in her left wing. While the news wasn't great, the owl was kept comfortable and safe and she spent the evening in a pet carrier dining on a defrosted mouse which was helpfully supplied by Calgary Zoo staff.

The next day Clifford and Parks Canada staff got in touch with SBOIC to see what the next logical steps should be. "SBOIC was very helpful, they were willing to do anything to help the injured owl out," explains Clifford. The owl was soon headed to SBOIC in Moose Jaw.

"The first steps when we receive an injured owl are to take them to a vet and get them the care they need as soon as we can," says Lori Johnson, Owl Coordinator at SBOIC. "We use a local vet, Dr. Melanie Blager, who does some wildlife rehabilitation for other species in the area as well," explains Johnson. "After Dr. Blager viewed the owl and made sure she was stable, we took her up to the Western College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan for further examination," Johnson said. A closer look revealed that the bird's wing was broken in two places and had already started healing on its own, meaning that surgery was out of the question. Ultimately, Parks Canada and SBOIC were hoping to reintroduce Artemis to the wild following her recovery, but without the possibility of surgery, reintroduction is unlikely.

While working with owls is unique and rewarding, Johnson explains that there is a lot of paperwork involved. "We need permits to travel, house, breed or release the birds," says Johnson. The Saskatchewan Burrowing Owl Interpretive Centre is involved in raising and releasing burrowing owls, although arguably their most successful role is in outreach and educational programming. The centre hosts visitors throughout the spring and summer and spends time on the road travelling with the owls visiting schools across the province and providing awareness about prairie and species conservation.

Parks Canada and their staff also offer education and information to visitors, the public and surrounding land managers. "We advocate for the species beyond our boundaries," Clifford explains. Other organizations in the province that work to conserve Burrowing Owl habitat include Nature Saskatchewan, through their Operation Burrowing Owl Program. The program currently has 360 voluntary landowner participants and conserves almost 150,000 acres of habitat. "Nature Saskatchewan is very fortunate to have so many passionate landowners participating in our programs and keeping a look out for species at risk, including the Burrowing Owl," says Kaytlyn Burrows, Habitat Stewardship Coordinator with Nature Saskatchewan. "Without the voluntary efforts of landowners, land managers, and the general public, recovery of this unique prairie owl would not be possible," says Burrows.

Artemis can take short flights, which indicates she is healing, and according to Johnson, she's fitting in well with the other owls at the centre, including her roommate, Monkey. When asked how Artemis is doing these days, Johnson smiles and says "Artemis is doing well. She's a plucky little one."

Rare Plants and Ranchers - A Stewardship Solution

Chet Neufeld, Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan

Reprinted from Saskatchewan Conservation Action Plan January 2016 E-Newsletter

Rare Plants and Ranchers is a project of the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan (NPSS) and aims to build on Nature Saskatchewan's Rare Plant Rescue program by working with the 66 stewards and 66,719 acres involved to develop site specific beneficial management plans for plant species at risk (SAR) using an ecosystem-based, multi-species approach.



Small-flowered Sand-verbena (*Tripterocalyx micranthus*) is a rare plant that lives in disturbed sandy habitats. Photo courtesy of Chet Neufeld.

Here's how it works:

The NPSS visits participating landowners and conducts a landowner interview to determine historical and present day factors such as grazing and fire regimes, invasive species threats, management issues or any other pertinent information that would give context to the current SAR situation on the land. Following the interview, a site assessment is conducted to gather information on the current condition of the land through a series of range and riparian health assessments, photo plots, invasive species assessments, visits to SAR populations and anything else that could contribute relevant information toward the development of a management plan. Using the information collected, a site specific management plan is produced and given to the landowner.

These management plans contain all of the information collected through the oral interview and site assessment, and also list a series of recommendations to benefit SAR based upon the findings. All recommendations use the best available knowledge, follow Recovery Strategy recommendations, and are drafted in consultation with the landowners and SAR experts. Recommendations in the management plans are drafted using a holistic approach, taking the effects on the landowner's current operations and other SAR (including wildlife) into consideration.

Then what happens?

Ongoing logistical support and dollar for dollar cost sharing from NPSS helps the landowner implement the plan's recommendations. For 2016, the NPSS has a total of \$10,000 available to participating stewards to implement recommendations from the plan. After the recommendations have been implemented, ongoing monitoring will reassess the land and SAR populations to determine the effects of the recommendations on the SAR populations and habitat, and management practices would be adjusted accordingly (adaptive management).

What are the benefits?

- SAR and SAR habitat will benefit by reduced or eliminated threats, increased beneficial influences and more informed, engaged stewards.
- Landowners will benefit by having the latest information regarding their land and a customized, comprehensive management plan for SAR. They also have access to match funding and ongoing logistical support to help improve their operations to benefit SAR.
- Participating stewards get a free membership to the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan, which includes a quarterly newsletter.
- Data collected by our project will also update known occurrence data, contribute new SAR occurrence data and may address knowledge gaps such as identifying trends or factors that help explain the presence or absence of SAR in particular areas.
- Our work with the landowners may also help secure additional SAR habitat in that they will receive information on conservation easements along with their management plans and will be given logistical support in helping to establish an easement if they choose to do so.

How can I participate?

Contact Chet Neufeld at the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan Office at (306) 668-3940 or e-mail info@npss.sk.ca. The program is free and NPSS does all the work! Ideally, participants should have one of the following plant species at risk on your land:

- Buffalograss (*Bouteloua dactyloides*)
- Dwarf Woolly-heads (*Psilocarphus brevissimus*)
- Hairy Prairie-clover (*Dalea villosa* var. *villosa*)
- Slender Mouse-ear-cress (*Halimolobos virgata*)
- Small-flowered Sand-verbena (*Tripterocalyx micranthus*)
- Smooth Goosefoot (*Chenopodium subglabrum*)
- Tiny Cryptantha (*Cryptantha minima*)
- Western Spiderwort (*Tradescantia occidentalis*)

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Christmas Bird Count for Kids: Season Summary for Canada

Reprinted from Bird Studies Canada January 22, 2016 E-newsletter

A successful 2015-16 Christmas Bird Count for Kids (<http://birdscanada.org/volunteer/cbc4kids/>) season has wrapped up in Canada. There were 38 events across the country, including Yukon Territory's first "CBC4Kids." (Please also see the article on the Regina CBC4Kids event on page 6, the Editors.) With the help of binoculars, field guides, and volunteer bird leaders, eager young naturalists identified and counted their local birds, reporting a grand total of 98 species to eBird Canada (<http://www.ebird.ca/>)!

Congratulations and many thanks to everyone who ran CBC4Kids events, and to all the families and young birders who participated! Also, thanks to Alexandre Nicole for designing the poster. The CBC4Kids program is supported by the Weston Foundation and TD Friends of the Environment Foundation. To explore event locations and view eBird checklists, visit the CBC4Kids map here: <http://www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/cbc4kids/index.jsp?targetpg=cbc4kidsfind&lang=EN>. You can also connect with the CBC4Kids social media community on Facebook or by using the hashtag #CBC4Kids.

A Bird (Coin) in the Hand

2016 Commemorative Mountain Bluebird. Coins. Courtesy of the Royal Canadian Mint.

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Migratory Birds Convention, the Royal Canadian Mint is producing an amazing, limited-edition, colour series of fine silver collector coins. The first coin in the series is now available, and depicts a gorgeous Mountain Bluebird. A second coin, featuring an American Avocet, will be issued on June 2, followed by an American Goldfinch on August 2, and a Pileated Woodpecker on November 1.



Over the last few years, the Royal Canadian Mint has produced dozens of very attractive and highly collectible coins featuring many Canadian bird species. Bird Studies Canada's Director of National Programs, Jon McCracken, has been a behind-the-scenes technical advisor for the creation of these miniature works of art.

You can learn more about or invest in these coins on the Royal Canadian Mint website (http://www.mint.ca/store/buy/new-releases_coins-cat410002?catId=cat410002).

Thank You to Nature Saskatchewan's Funders for Their Generous Contributions in 2015-2016

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WOW Nature Festival Plans in Progress



Christy Morrissey. Photo courtesy of Christy Morrissey.



Friends of Wascana Marsh volunteers are once again planning their 11th Annual Wings Over Wascana (WOW) Nature Festival. This year, we are delighted to begin the festival activities with our Fundraising Banquet on Wednesday, May 11 at the Conexus Arts Centre in Regina. Funds raised from the event support our educational and conservation programs in Wascana Marsh. Our special guest Christy Morrissey is a very interesting and engaging speaker! Christy is an associate professor at the University of Saskatchewan for the

Department of Biology, and the School of Environment and Sustainability. You may have heard her on CBC's The Current or CBC Saskatoon Morning or CBC Nature of Things SongbirdSOS. Tickets for this unique fundraising event are available by emailing friendsofwascanamarsh@gmail.com or calling/texting 306-531-9759.

Our WOW Nature Festival school day committee is working hard to provide another fun and educational day for over 200 grades 4-6 students in the Wascana Marsh in Wascana Centre in Regina. Volunteers are always welcome to join in the fun. Saturday, May 28 is WOW Nature Festival Public Day. Everyone is invited to attend and enjoy nature based activities in the great outdoors – all activities are FREE! Check out all of the festival updates and all of our projects on our new website www.wascanamarsh.ca.

The Messenger Coming to Canadian Cinemas

Reprinted from Bird Studies Canada January 22, 2016 E-newsletter

The beautiful, moving, science-based documentary *The Messenger* (<http://www.themessengerdoc.com/>) follows experts as they explore staggering global songbird declines. This first-of-its-kind film has been at selected festivals in recent months, and a U.S. theatrical tour is currently under way. The Canadian theatrical release is next, and kicks off with an opening week at Toronto's Carlton Cinema, February 26 to March 3.

To view the trailer and learn more about showings in select Canadian theatres, visit the Canadian Screenings page of *The Messenger* website (<http://songbirdsos.com/screenings/canadian-screenings/>). Screenings are booked for late February and March in Cobourg, ON, **Regina and Saskatoon, SK**, and Calgary and Edmonton, AB. The site will be updated frequently as additional screenings are confirmed, so check back often for opportunities to see the film at a theatre near you!

With the goals of helping deliver the film's important message, and motivating audiences to take action for birds, Bird Studies Canada is the documentary's National Outreach Partner. Please visit our website for our Top 6 Ways You Can Help Birds (<http://birdscanada.org/education/tophelp.jsp>).

Thanks for Supporting the Christmas Bird Count!

Reprinted from Bird Studies Canada January 22, 2016 E-newsletter

Many thanks to all Christmas Bird Count (<http://birdscanada.org/volunteer/cbc/>) participants! The 116th season has ended, and data are pouring in. It looks like another record year for participation, with 12 new counts added to the previous season's Canadian total of 460.

Many volunteers reported impacts of the warm fall and winter, such as lingering migrants, particularly in eastern North America. At least one new species was added to Canada's all-time list: a Vermilion Flycatcher on the Wallaceburg, Ontario count.

To check out Christmas Bird Count results on the Audubon website (<http://netapp.audubon.org/cbcobservation/>), by species or by count, click on "Current Year" at the top of the page. So far, data have been entered for about half the counts.

Bird Studies Canada coordinates the Christmas Bird Count in Canada. We rely on your donations to lead this important program. Please donate online here: <https://www.canadahelps.org/dn/24504>.

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.

Upcoming Events

Saskatoon Nature Society 2016 Field Trips

Everyone is welcome to participate in any field trip. Bring your friends. Carpooling for out-of-town trips is arranged at the meeting place; there is no charge other than to share gasoline costs. Phone the trip leader if you have any questions. Participants are free to depart early if they wish. Members with CB radios 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. Bus Information: 306-975-3100.

Thursday, March 31, 7:00 PM–10:00 PM
Saw-whet Owling near Pike Lake

We will listen for owls calling after dark. Wear warm clothes, and bring a flashlight and a hot drink.
 Meet at the Western Development Museum parking lot on Lorne Ave.
 Bus: Route 1 Exhibition departs downtown terminal at 6:31 PM and arrives at meeting place about 6:50 PM. Bus leaves hourly.
 Leader: Michael Williams (306-242-5383)

Saturday, April 2
Bluebird Trip to Pike Lake, 9:00 AM–2:00 PM

We will look for bluebirds and other early spring migrants. You may wish to bring a picnic lunch.
 Meet at the Western Development Museum parking lot on Lorne Ave.
 Bus: Route 1 Exhibition departs downtown terminal at 8:31 AM and arrives at meeting place about 8:50 AM.
 Leader: May Haga (306-955-3954).

Saturday, April 9 – Sunday, April 10
Northern Owling Overnight Trip

We will drive to northern areas looking and listening for Boreal, Saw-whet, Barred, Great Gray and Northern Hawk Owls plus songbirds. Participants may leave early. Bring a lunch. Book your accommodation at Hawood Inn. Please register for the trip in advance by contacting the leader. Leaving at 9:00 AM
 Meet at the south-west corner of the Lawson Heights' Mall parking lot.
 Bus: Route 12 River Heights departs downtown terminal at 8:16 AM and arrives at Lawson terminal at 8:45 AM. Walk to SW corner of parking lot.
 Leader: Marten Stoffel (306-934-3769).

Wednesday, April 13, 6:30PM–8:00PM
Gull Identification

A chance to learn gulls. There should be at least four species present and maybe a rarity. We will carpool and drive to a variety of gull hangouts along the river in the city.
 Meet in the riverside parking lot south of the Mendel Art Gallery.
 Leader: Kyron Giroux (306-955-2473 or 1-306-827-2126)

ICELAND: LAND OF FIRE AND ICE AND SO MUCH MORE! WITH MELANIE ELLIOTT AND SARA WILLIAMS - JULY 11 – 24, 2016

Known for its volcanos, glaciers, waterfalls, geysers, and (slowly!) shifting tectonic plates, Iceland is indeed the Land of Fire and Ice. Our tour will take us to all of these as well as lava fields, basalt columns and black sand beaches. Iceland is also the home of puffins, gannets, terns and many other birds, not to mention several species of whales, reindeer, and the elusive Arctic fox.



This is a customized small group tour accompanied by Melanie Elliott and Sara Williams.

Rates are \$6940 per person (Double Occupancy) and \$8810 per person (Single Occupancy). These rates are based on a minimum of 20 passengers.

Tour includes: Transfers and transportation, accommodation, tours and excursions per itinerary, meals per itinerary, English-speaking guide and more.

Along with geo-thermally heated greenhouses producing an immense amount of vegetables and fruit (even bananas!), Iceland boasts the most northerly botanic gardens in the world! It traces its history from the early Vikings. We will visit museums devoted to its Sagas and early settlement, a fish skin tannery, a working farm, a herring museum, enjoy guided walks in National Parks, and stop at a woolen mill. There will be opportunities to soak in natural hot springs, ride Icelandic horses, and attend theatre (in English).

For more information and to book Iceland: Land of Fire and Ice please call or email Ruth
 Ruth MacRae, Worldwide Ecotours, Phone: 403-247-8407 or 1-888-778-2378 or Email: ruth@worldwideecotours.com

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Please renew my membership

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Spring 2016 Nature Views

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