

SOCIETY OF GRASSLANDS NATURALISTS
Minutes of General Meeting, November 22, 2016
Police Point Park.

1. Call to Order 7:01 pm.
2. Review and Adoption of GN Minutes from October 27, 2016. Motion CARRIED.
3. Exciting Sightings: Bob Frew noted that Eagles have moved nesting material to the Blue Heron nesting area.
Rob mentioned that Jan Scott reported seeing a cow Moose drinking from a pond in Medicine Hat SE Hill and took some photos.
Hugh Armstrong recently had a leucistic Blue Jay visiting his yard feeder. (Leucism is an abnormal plumage condition).
John has heard an Owl in the Marlborough area recently, and finally, a member spotted a Coyote in the Crescent Heights area.
4. Treasurer's Report and Membership: Eileen Cowtan away.
5. Correspondence: Eileen away.
6. Priority Business:
 - a. **December Bird Count and Pot Luck:** Corlaine will mention it in her report, item # 7. below.
 - b. **Location of March AGM:** Police Point Park on March 28, 2017.
 - c. **Outstanding Bills or Donations** need to be in to Eileen before year-end in order to receive payment or get tax receipts. Budgets have all been turned in to Paul Thibault by Nov 15th.
 - d. **Volunteers needed** for the Hay Ride December 4 and for the Christmas Bird Count. See item # 7 below.
7. Interpretive Program Report: Corlaine Gardner.
Corlaine said the IP is still busy with school groups. "The Mitten" StoryWalk by Jan Brett runs until the end of November. There will be a special StoryWalk in December called "The Night Before Christmas" by Barbara Reid. Opening day is Sunday December 18 at 3 pm. running until January 8.
Volunteers are needed to help with the Lions Hay Ride on December 4 from 1 to 4 pm, as well as helping with the Bird Count on December 18. Marty will be back at the end of November to group participants for the Bird Count. Newcomers are welcome to get involved with the Count. The Pot Luck and Bird Count wrap-up will start at 5:30 pm.
Corlaine noted that volunteer help keeps the GN and the IP running. She said these two groups have a great deal of influence in the Community. Approximately 90 volunteers were invited to the recent Volunteer Appreciation night that was put on to provide recognition for individual contributions. Volunteer hours for the October Fall Festival totalled 119. Corlaine encouraged everyone to step forward to help as a volunteer.
8. Committee Reports:
 - a. **Issues Committee:** John Slater
John expressed appreciation to Corlaine and MHIP Operations Committee members for the IP programs.
 - Following the initial walk about Hamptons Phase 3 on Oct 24, John called a special Issues Committee meeting the morning of Nov 8 to discuss the current proposed development plan; in particular the Storm Water Retention Pond. Also, in the afternoon, Tina and John toured the 4 Storm Water Retention ponds in Southlands area to see and photograph their ecological conditions. On Nov 14, the committee met again to tour 3 of the ponds in Southlands as well as tour Hamptons Phase 3 area and the new park in Saamis Heights. The 3 Southlands Water Retention ponds currently support geese, muskrats, cattails and other indicators of a healthy environment. A meeting with the City Planning and Development Services is arranged for Dec 1st to discuss recommendations for the proposed pond development in Hamptons Phase 3.
 - in the New Year, a sub-committee is to be organized to discuss enhancements to the environmental policies and regulations in the City's current Municipal Development Plan. Meetings with the City will then follow.
 - John noted that last year marked 45 years since Nature Alberta was formed. At the AGM on Oct 29, annual reports were presented via the teleconference. John will receive hard copies of these reports soon. John spoke of various NA programs such as Living by Water, Nature Kids, a Biodiversity Program for families, and NA Awards Program whereby individuals may be nominated. John added that Nature Alberta is now in partnership with Land Stewardship Centre.
 - b. **Indoor Program Speakers:** Dave McKenzie
Dave said the January presenter has been changed to Joan Armour speaking on Straw Bale Gardening. Doug Knowles had previously been booked to speak on Bees at the January meeting.
 - c. **Field Trips Update:** Gary will be back in Medicine Hat on December 6. He wants to meet with members when he returns to discuss field trips in 2017.

- d. **Fund Raising Committee:** Hugh Armstrong
Hugh said the Web Cam project is on hold for now due to the concern of the bald eagles building a new nest in the Heron Rookery (see item #10. a below).
Application to the Medicine Hat Horticultural Society to help with the Wildflower Brochure will likely be approved.
Hugh also mentioned application has been submitted to the Alberta Native Plant Council for additional funding.
- e. **Birding Trails Project Update:** Milt Spitzer noted that the write-ups and maps are all on the GN website now.
Click on the "Birding" tab to bring up the Trails Guide with Overall Map and Overview. A description and map for each of the 15 Trails can be viewed. Bird count summaries and other information are also listed.
Bob Frew is working on drafting a rack card for Bird Trails which will be similar to the new GN cards made by the Communications Committee. There is \$500.00 available for 2500 rack cards to cover the cost of printing.
Edmonton and Calgary birders who attend the Brooks Bird Count each May need to know about this site so they may leave helpful comments.
Hugh mentioned that Canadian Badlands Limited were very supportive of this project at the meeting with GN held in Brooks on Oct 27, but they are waiting for next year's budget to come out to see what funding is available.
- f. **Bird Tales Update:** Dee Armstrong mentioned that the program at Meadow Ridge takes place the 3rd Tuesday of each month. The next one will be held at 10:00 am on December 20. Paul Thibault and Dee lead one cottage, while the Recreation Manager directs two cottages without the benefit of volunteers.
Dee and Paul are hoping individuals would "adopt" a similar program for any home bound seniors, and commit to regularly filling their window bird feeder and visiting briefly. Two other Retirement facilities have approached Dee about setting up a Bird Tales Program but unfortunately there are not enough volunteers to help with the Program.
- g. **Communications Committee:** Angela Turner has nothing to report at this time.
- h. **Butterfly** (Bumble Bee, Dragon Fly & Damsel Fly) Pamphlet: Dave McKenzie said the Butterfly pamphlet is a great project that is continually evolving. He will give the Cypress Hills Butterflies hashtag, as well as hashtag for MH Butterflies on Instagram, to Milt to put in the Chronicle, and to Paul to put on the GN website.

9. New Business: None

10. Other Business:

- a. **Web Cam:** Hugh said the Web Cam project has encountered a setback with Eagles wanting to nest in the Blue Heron site where the webcam was to be installed. However, testing of a prototype webcam is continuing at the Nature Centre, and can be viewed as explained in the November Chronicle.
Paul and Hugh had been looking at a \$20,000.00 grant for the project. The plan is not being abandoned yet, but the Installation at the heron site may not take place next year as planned.
- b. **Bird Photography Displays:** at the Esplanade and Nature Centre ends January 8 and December 30 respectively. There is no charge on Thursdays at the Esplanade.
- c. **SEAWA Urban Sustainability Forum held November 4:** GN/MHIP hosted a display on the results of the Riparian Health Assessment project, which was well done according to Hugh. About 28 people viewed the display.
The Forum Presentations are now available on SEAWA website under the "Resources" page. Hugh mentioned the presentation on how sustainability is being promoted in south east Alberta communities. Lethbridge, for example, shows multipurpose use of buildings with a Library close to a Senior Complex and a Recreation Centre.
- d. Next Board Meeting: Tuesday, December 6 at Hugh and Dee's home. Everyone is invited.
- e. Adjournment at 7:50 pm, Attendance 25
- f. Refreshment Break
- g. Program 8:00 pm, Attendance 32 or 33. Speaker: Kris Samraj; Hiking the Appalachian Trail.