

Society of Grasslands Naturalists
Minutes of General Meeting - September 22, 2015
Police Point Park

1. Call to Order: 7:05 pm, Dave McKenzie - Chair, Betty Rainville – Secretary
2. Review and Adoption of Minutes of General Meeting May 26, 2015: Motion Carried
3. Exciting Sightings: Sightings from members: a Great Egret seen at Pakowki Lake, 300 to 500 blackbirds by Dunmore Hill, in Ranchlands a Western White butterfly quite dark in colour, a brown mink near Chinook Village, and several flowers in bloom including Asters.
4. Treasurer's Report: Eileen Cowtan reported end of August 2015 – Total GN Club: \$23,641.15 ; Interpretive Program: no balance available. The Interpretive Program received several sizeable grants thanks to Corlaine's efforts. Well done Corlaine! Membership numbers were not available, but numbers are down. John thanked Eileen for the article in September Chronicle (assisted by Dennis Baresco and Rob Gardner) on A History of Grasslands Naturalists.
5. Correspondence: Nature Alberta, and Wildlands Advocate magazine received, as well as a poster from Nature Alberta for their Gala event on November 7, 2015 in Edmonton. Eileen suggested someone could make notes from Wildlands Advocate articles to place in future issues of The Chronicle.
6. Priority Business:
 - a. MH Community Foundation Endowment Fund: John said 3.5 % of principle invested comes back to the GN club. The Community Foundation charges 1% yearly. Members and non-members can donate to the Fund or bequeath an amount in their will. Rob asked that the Finance Committee look into putting Casino funds into the Community Endowment Fund. Motion that the Board goes ahead with the development of the Endowment Fund for the Society of Grasslands Naturalists. Carried.
 - b. Policies and Procedures approved: Thank you to the Policies and Procedures Committee for their effort. Special recognition goes out to Paul Thibault. These results may be seen in a red folder at the Nature Centre as well as on the website.
 - c. GN Board meeting minutes: John suggested that monthly Board meetings be moved to every second Tuesday from every first Tuesday, to give the Treasurer time to complete reports for the meeting. Announced that GN Board meeting minutes will be available on GN website and in the GN binder at the Nature Centre rather than in the Chronicle due to cost of postage. To ask Milt about the electronic copy.
 - d. Announce Budget fiscal year changes to Calendar year: No Objections raised.
 - e. GN 30th Anniversary Celebrations: Angela will present a five minute slide show after tonight's meeting is adjourned.
7. Interpretive Program Report: Corlaine reported a workshop on Thursday on Cows and Fish regarding assessing riparian areas. Marty and others were out today. She asked for member involvement. The MHIP has been busy with school classes lately. Sunday, September 27 is MHIP Fall Festival combined with Alberta Culture Days to be celebrated at the Nature Centre. Grasslands

Naturalists members are needed. There is a signup sheet. Thanks to Corlaine for the Interpretive Program working so well.

8. Committee Reports:

- a. MHIP Committee: John reported there will be an Operations Committee meeting Monday, October 5.
- b. Issues Committee: Due to lack of rain there has been no digging of Baby's Breath, John reported. Calfrac was not available to help this year. GN volunteers picked the plant tops in June, August and September. GN members are encouraged to attend "Change the Climate" put on by Eco Trust in Calgary, November 12 -14, 2015; and to be aware of possible funding for attending PCES conference in Saskatoon Feb 2016. Interested persons should speak to Marty or Martha regarding previous conferences.
- c. Indoor Program: Dave reported Swift Fox Part Two was not ready for tonight. Next month's presentation will be on Migration, and Joel Nicholson will speak on Sage – Grouse Count in November.
- d. Field Trips: Gary Martin absent. Phil Horch will lead a 2 hour walk next Saturday Sept.26 at Police Point Park starting at 8 o'clock on "Late Migrants and Year Round Residents". On October 3 Ben Velnor will lead a trip in search of Southern Migrants. Meet at 8:00 am at the Bingo Hall across from Elm Street School.
- e. Fundraising: Hugh was absent but submitted the following: We have passed the Mar.16-Sept.14 time period for the second installment of the Co-op receipts. Please get them to Anne as soon as possible. Dave will speak to Co-op administration on Wednesday to check if other than GN members can submit receipts. He will let us know.
Casino dates are Feb.18-19, 2016. GN members as well as non-members are needed to volunteer for this. Please contact Gary Martin- Casino Chair, or Hugh Armstrong.
- f. Bird Tales Project: Hugh's report stated the Medicine Hat Realtors' Charitable Foundation has generously supported this program. To date about half the money has been used.
- g. Birding Trails Project: Hugh's report stated we are in a holding pattern since grant money generally has to be spent within the year it is received. The project is proceeding well but is time consuming and it will be some time before we can start applying for support. Next Birding Trails meeting on October 6 afternoon.

9. Other Business:

- a. Prairie Flower Walks: Alberta Plant Program. Martha said there was nothing new to add.
- b. Field Trips: Mentioned previously in 8.d. Dave has joined the North American Butterfly Association. It will be available to everyone. Perhaps as a data base, or just to reference it on GN Website.
- c. Next GN Board Meeting: Tuesday October 6, 6:30 pm at Ian and Angela Turner's home unless it is changed to a later date.
- d. Next GN General Meeting: Tuesday October 27, 7:00 pm at the Nature Centre.
- e. Meeting Adjournment: 8:00 pm.
- f. Slide Show: Angela presented a brief 5 minute slide show. Thank you Angela. 25 attended the business portion of tonight's meeting and 28 attended the Indoor program.
- g. Tonight's Indoor Program: Rob Gardner gave an informative presentation concerning the role of beavers.

“ ‘Drought Proofing’ The role of the beaver in the Prairie ecosystem”

Rob pointed out in his presentation that drought proofing and flood proofing are opposite each other, but both have to do with water management. Dams can be an asset and don't need to be big (even two to three feet) to catch runoff. Building man-made dams is costly and inefficient and requires lots of them to reap the benefits. What can be done?

Rob suggested we could hire our favorite web-footed creature, the beaver. Some benefits of beavers are: their dams store substantial amounts of water, they are cheap with no maintenance costs and no water license is required for their dams. The beaver's leaky dams are key to the beaver ponds always having room for more water to deal with droughts or floods. Beaver dams force water to spread out and produce moisture for lots of willow trees and other vegetation to make the riparian area more wide-spread. In this way, beavers bring food and shelter for deer, pheasants, migrating song birds, amphibians etc.

Could beavers flourish in other parts of the province? Rob suggested beavers could flourish on the North side of the Red Deer River or South of the Cypress Hills. These areas are not typical Beaver habitat, but yes, they could survive. Rob noted seeing a beaver lodge made of cat tails and mud! If beavers were introduced in these areas they would create their own habitat, once established. Better grazing along the streams and creeks would be the result.

Overall, beavers provide an environment that is drought and flood resistant, resilient in climate change, recovers natural eco-systems, and improves water management.