

SOCIETY OF GRASSLANDS NATURALISTS
Minutes of General Meeting- May 24, 2016
Police Point Park

1. Call to Order: 7:00 pm., Hugh Armstrong- Chair, Betty Rainville- Secretary
2. Review and Adoption of Minutes of General Meeting April 26, 2016. Motion Carried.
3. Exciting Sightings: A pair of Brown Thrashers, a Lazuli Bunting, a Red-eyed Vireo, and a badger were seen by members.
4. Treasurer's Report and Membership: Eileen reported the chequing account totals \$4,526.58, the GIC is \$10,000.00, and the savings account holds \$10,015.39 for a total balance of \$24,541.39. \$14, 893.56 was received from the Casino, and a \$200.00 grant was received from Co-op. Membership stands at 84, with 1 new member.
5. Correspondence: None
6. Priority Business:
 - a. **Briar Run Development Plan:** John Slater reported a proposal was submitted to the City of Medicine Hat.
 - b. **Ranchlands Tiny Cryptantha Project:** John noted the City approved a grant of \$6,000.00 as mentioned in previous minutes. The GN Ranchlands Project Group has held 2 meetings, and a third one will be held on Wednesday, May 25. Besides controlling the invasive weeds to protect the endangered species such as Tiny Cryptantha, the group hopes to expand the project to include the archeological sites and more. The student hired for the project will also assist at the Nature Centre with the Interpretive Program.
 - c. **City Survey "Financially Fit for the Future":** Hugh stressed the importance of GN member responding to the online survey offered May 20-June 10 on the City Website. Please state the importance of the Interpretive Program, among others, in your response.
 - d. **Picnic Area Development in PPPark:** Corlaine reported Parks and Recreation may be building steps to the beach and adjoining sand bar on the river, and placing picnic tables there for public use. She suggested no manicuring of natural areas should occur when this addition is developed. The GN Board will discuss this at their next meeting June 7.
 - e. **The City Tree Planting Project:** planting in Lions and Strathcona Island Park will be on June 11 with prior volunteer training session the week before. Members are asked to contact Hugh Armstrong or Dave McKenzie if they are available for the training session and overseeing the planting. 10 people have volunteered, but a minimum of 12 people are needed.
7. **Interpretive Program Report:** Corlaine reported the IP has been busy with school programs, and public programs are coming up. May 29 is the Spring Bird and Flower Count. Marty will provide maps for specific areas. June 12 meet at 2 pm at the Family Leisure Centre to explore the Pocket Prairie Patch. June 19, meet at 2 pm in the parking lot north east of Strathcona Centre to walk the berm across Lions and Strathcona Island Parks. June 22 meet at 7:30 pm at the Ranchlands site on 11 Ave NE to explore the area. Phone the Nature Line at (403) 529-6225 for more information.
8. Committee Reports:
 - a) **MHIP Operations Committee:** John thanked Corlaine, Marty, Val, and the Summer Staff for their excellent work on Programs and Events. He encouraged everyone to participate in these events.
On a separate note, John is collecting and repairing donated bicycles to give away as needed. Please contact him if you have a bicycle for this worthy cause.
 - b) **Fund Raising Committee Update:** Gary Martin will attend the Casino meeting June 13 to discuss when and how to put Casino funds to use. The guidelines state 24 months are allowed to make use of these funds, and the Commission requires audited statements showing where funds were used. The Ranchlands Project is in need of funds at this time.
 - c) **Indoor Program Speakers:** Dave McKenzie is acting as host for tonight's speaker, Dominique Liboiron, and is not present to inform members of upcoming speakers in the fall.
 - d) **Birding Trails Project Update:** There is to be a meeting on May 31 at Phil Horch's home. Colton Prins and Mackenzie Fai are planning to participate in this project with their birding expertise. Please note the Cypress Hill's Bird Count happens Saturday, May 28.
 - e) **Communications Committee:** Angela Turner reported that the rack card design is laid out and she will be going to Copy Works Wednesday to confirm the order. There will be an update by June 7 at the Board Meeting.

Moved that all Committee Reports be accepted as read. Carried.

9. New Business:

- a) **Bird Tales Update:** Dee Armstrong reported they are pleased with the Community grant from Co-op. She also said birds have arrived at Meadow Ridge. The eye-level feeders are a success, as well as the water fountain that Paul Thibault put in. Paul and Dee would be happy to see a bird feeder program established throughout the community, where friends of seniors could maintain feeders for them.

10 Other Business:

- a) **Web Cam:** Dave Curtis with the City returns June 7. How would we get access to the Heron nesting area? Is it possible to locate a transmitting site on top of the Sewage Treatment Plant?
The first step would be to place a web cam at the Nature Centre bird feeders later this Fall when feeding commences.
- b) **Chronicle:** At the last GN Board meeting on May 3, the Board strongly endorsed Milt Spitzer as Editor. Thank you for the excellent job that you do on every issue of the Chronicle.
- c) **SEAWA:** Gary Martin attended the last meeting and reported there was a good turnout.
- d) Next Board Meeting: Tuesday, June 7, 2016 at Betty's home.
- e) GN Pot-Luck Picnic: Tuesday June 28, Nature Centre starting at 6:00 pm.
See Hugh, Dee or John about volunteering to help set up at 5:30 pm.
- f) Adjournment at 7:35 pm with 22 people attending.
- g) Refreshment Break
- h) Program 7:45 pm with speaker Dominique Liboiron.
30 people attended this presentation.

Canoe to New Orleans by Dominique Liboiron

Dominique is a very engaging speaker who captivated everyone's attention tonight during his presentation. He showed courage and determination by setting off from Eastend, Saskatchewan in a canoe, and travelling over 5000 km to New Orleans. The purpose of his trip was to pay tribute to his late Uncle Mitch (M'Nonc Mitch) as well as raising awareness about heart disease. Dominique brought his late Uncle's ashes to New Orleans where he finally scattered them in the Mississippi River in an emotional ceremony with many other mourners.

The late May snows in the 2012 increased the level of the Frenchman River, properly known as the Whitemud River, so that Dominique was able to paddle his canoe in the shallow water. After starting his trip on June 8 2012, Dominique reached the Canada/U.S. border on June 24. There were more Cottonwood trees after the border, which provided shade, but also forced him to portage around some of the fallen trees. Six days later, Dominique arrived at the meeting (confluence) of the Frenchman and The Milk River. After navigating the silty Milk River, he reached the Missouri River which reminded him very much of the South Saskatchewan. He was surprised at how much colder the air temperature was above the Missouri compared to the warmer Milk River. We saw slides of the Paddle Fish which use its large paddle (antenna) to catch food. Electroreceptors on this paddle indicate the presence of prey which its poor eyesight cannot. A mature paddle fish, in the Missouri River, can reach 60 years of age and weigh 144 pounds, 65 kg. Not surprisingly, the most common bird seen on this part of the trip was the Blue Heron.

On August 4, the Missouri River became five big lakes which are actually a chain of reservoirs totalling 1000 km. Dominique would sometimes canoe this water at night under a full moon to avoid the heavy winds during the day. He called the kind people along the river who helped him with groceries and rides for supplies, his "river angels". By November 17, Dominique reached the confluence of the Missouri and the Mississippi rivers, called "The Marriage of the Waters". He found the Mississippi to be a very wide river dominated by hardwood trees but there were also copious amounts of vines which made walking in the forest very difficult. Eventually the hardwood trees changed to Gulf Coast Palmettos.

In New Orleans, only ten minutes away from the wooden stairs leading to where Dominique would place his Uncle's remains, a Coast Guard boat stopped him. The Super Bowl was in progress, so security was very tight. Luckily, Dominique was allowed to proceed to meet his waiting family. On January 28, 2013, eight months after starting, this intrepid voyageur had travelled 5232 kilometers and four rivers to reach New Orleans. Congratulations to Dominique Liboiron on a achieving this remarkable goal.