

Society of Grassland Naturalists
Minutes of General Meeting – February 25, 2014
Police Point Park

1. **Call to Order** at 7:10 pm. Anne Bernhardt – Chair; Barry Anderson – Secretary.
2. **Minutes: Motion carried** to accept the minutes from the January 28, 2014, meeting.
3. **Exciting Sightings:** This month’s sightings include a varied thrush that has been frequenting the SE Hill backyard of Corlaine and Rob Gardiner. Magpies are reported building their nests in Police Point Park (a sure sign of spring approaching) and a great horned owl was spotted on Parkview Drive NW.
4. **Newspaper Clips:** A variety of newspaper clips were shared, most involving the endangered greater sage grouse.
5. **Treasurer’s Report:** – Eileen provided a hard-copy report for perusal outlining GN and IP Balance Sheets and Income Statements for January 1, 2013 to December 31, 2013.

As well, Eileen shared the following current account updates:

• GN Servus Account	Chequing	\$10,639.64
	Savings	\$ 4,936.13
	ING Savings	<u>\$ 6,092.53</u>
		\$21,668.30
• IP Account	TD	\$41,373.57
	SERVUS	\$ 479.84
	ING	<u>\$50,130.81</u>
		\$91,984.22

Eileen continues to work diligently to finalize year end reports for the AGM to be held in March – thank you! Eileen noted that combined insurance costs for GN and IP will be approximately \$4100.00 this year, an increase from last year. An up-dated membership count was not available at this time since only about half of the GN members (55) have renewed memberships for 2014. Please contact Eileen as soon as possible to renew.

6. **Special Presentation:**
 - Corlaine reviewed information regarding an outdoor classroom and hollow-log-theme playground to be located on the southwest corner of the Nature Centre with a protecting berm constructed and funded by the city. Both the Kiwanis Club and GN Board have agreed to co-sponsor this project. Required supplementary funds to the \$35,000 Kiwanis’ grant are expected to be around \$40,000 which would be gained through grants and fund-raising. GN has two years to secure the required supplementary funding but is under no obligation if it cannot raise the necessary matching funds. **Motion carried** that GN Club proceed with this shared Kiwanis’ project pending fund-raising and approval from the City of Medicine Hat.
7. **Priority Business:**
 - No report from the Governance Committee due to Paul’s absence.
 - From the Issues Committee, John summarized Marty’s “Comments for the Greater Sage Grouse Amended Recovery Strategy Plan” dated February 15. Marty’s main concerns are implementing the Alberta Action Plans immediately rather than within the proposed four year timeline, varying grazing management to improve heterogeneous habitat, and prioritizing a captive breeding program with the logical location being the soon-to-be-phased-out Onefour Station. Marty’s letter will be posted in its entirety in the March Chronicle; comments are welcome. John also pointed out the need for a draft GN policy statement that would help to resolve any future environmental issues; work on this statement has already started.

- The GN Fund-Raising Committee consists of Hugh Armstrong, Jim Black, Gary Martin and Bill Knibbs; additional volunteers are welcome. The next Budget Committee meeting will be held on April 4 – time and location TBA.
- Corlaine reported from the Interpretive Program that “Close to Home” by local artist Fran Lauzon continues at the Nature Centre until March 23. “String Fever” – an evening of guitar music – is scheduled for March 21 at the Nature Centre. Watch for more details regarding a visit from a “Grasshopper Expert” on March 22. Marty reminded everyone of the up-coming Sprague’s Pipit display at the Trade Show this weekend; thanks to the volunteers who will assist Marty.
- No recent Field Trips to report on from Gary; continue to check the Chronicle for up-coming events.
- Martha, reporting for Nature Alberta, spoke about its goals and programs, and stressed the need for GN to initiate a Young Naturalists Club. The AGM for NA will be held in April in Edmonton; contact Martha if you are interested in attending and eventually becoming our future GN representative.
- Martha spoke about World Water Day activities to be held at the Public Library (lower floor) on March 22. Contact Martha for more details.

8. **Other Business:**

- Rob, on behalf of the SE Alberta Watershed Alliance, reported that SEAWA’s AGM will be held March 31 in the Courtyard at the Medicine Hat College. The meeting is from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. Guest speakers are: Cathy Maniego, Executive Director of Resilience and Mitigation for the provincial Flood Recovery Task Force who will speak on the Provincial Flood Mitigation Strategy; and Ron Robinson, Director of Emergency Management, City of Medicine Hat addressing Medicine Hat’s response to the flood of 2013. Rob also welcomes any issues to be forwarded to him on behalf of the Watershed Alliance.
- John spoke about the progress of the park bench honouring life members and asked members to vote on a suitable style of plaque (color, size, font, layout, etc.)
- John reported that the next Medicine Hat Plant Study Group will take place on March 15 from noon – 3:00 pm in L155 at the MHC. Discussion will be on a new and potentially very invasive plant called Thesium arvense that has become established in Fish Creek Park, Calgary.
- The AGM for Grasslands Naturalists will be held March 25 @ 7:00 pm at the Nature Centre with executive elections and summary reports to be high-lighted.
- The next GN Board meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 4 @ 7:00 pm hosted by Bill Knibbs at #307 – 3090 – 15 Avenue SE 403.527.006.
- Eileen extended get-well-wishes to GN members Veronica Swan and Hans Mueller.

9. **Attendance tonight** – 20 for the business portion and 25 for the indoor program. Adjournment at 7:55 pm.

10. **Indoor Program:**

“Remember Your Elephant”

Gordon Wright pointed out in his hour-long presentation at the Nature Centre on Tuesday evening that Nepal is home to an incredible variety of diverse flora and fauna, not to mention its poor but happy-go-lucky people, in this tiny Third World nation which is only about 350 km distance from north (bordered by China) to south (bordered by India). Gord used his photographic skills to capture and share three weeks he recently spent in Nepal visiting a close friend but also exploring and experiencing a country that is half-way around the world and eleven (or so) times zones away. Amongst the vegetation, Mr. Wright’s slide-show also included exotic animals and reptiles native to this country such as spotted deer, hog deer, gharials, pythons, birds and of course - monkeys. Many of his photos were captured aloft an Asian elephant offering not only a great view of the jungle but also safety. “And if perchance you should run into a rhino, it would be prudent to be sitting atop a bigger, better, beast. So remember your elephant.” As he pointed out in his closing comments, it is “Better to travel well than to arrive.” (Buddha) Thanks, Gord, for allowing us to escape with you on this cold February night to a place that few others from our city have been.