

Society of Grassland Naturalists
Minutes of General Meeting – November 26, 2013
Police Point Park

1. **Call to Order** at 7:05 pm. Anne Bernhardt – Chair; Barry Anderson – Secretary.
2. **Minutes:** The minutes from October 22, 2013, were reviewed and **Motion Carried** to accept the minutes.
3. **Exciting Sightings:** This month’s sightings include a varied thrush (Corlaine and Rob Gardner) and a mourning dove (Judy and Barry Anderson). Both birds were spotted in backyards.
4. **Newspaper Clips:** Recent “Prairie Post” articles included: “SEAWA’S executive director (Bob Phillips) remembered for water works”, “Alta. releases land use plan” and “Coal will take its toll in Sask.”.
5. **Treasurer’s Report:** – The most recent GN Balance Sheet and Income Statements for October were not available due to Eileen’s extended absence. Barry will collect GN memberships and donations for the next few months and arrange for bank deposits. Any such money can be left at the Nature Centre desk during this time; receipts will be issued as soon as possible. An accurate count of the GN membership was also not available at this time.
6. **Priority Business:**
 - Anne reported for Paul that the Governance Committee as sanctioned by the GN Board has provided copies of the GN Policies and Procedures regarding Meetings, Record Keeping and Field Trips. A binder with this documentation is available at the Nature Centre for perusal. As well, GN will be purchasing a First Aid Kit from St. John’s Ambulance which will be available for use on future GN sanctioned field trips.
 - Anne also reported for Paul that the Budget Committee continues to create potential ideas for future GN fundraising projects.
 - Corlaine provided details regarding the up-coming annual Christmas Hayride and Mini-Market on Sunday, Dec. 1 from 1:00 – 4:00 pm at Police Point Park.; volunteers are still needed. The “Dancing River” exhibit at the Nature Centre continues until the end of the year and will be replaced by the annual High School Art exhibit opening January 8, 2014. The annual Christmas Bird Count and Potluck Supper will be held Sunday, December 22; contact Marty at he Nature Centre to register for an area to bird watch.
 - Future field trips and events include birding at Strathcona Park on November 30 with Michael O’Shea; meet at the Pavilion at 9:00 am. The annual Cypress Hills Christmas Bird Count will be held January 4; more details to follow. Continue to check the GN website for last minute additions and changes.
 - Gary Martin mentioned that Christmas Tree Cutting is available starting December 1 in the Cypress Hills Provincial Park. Contact the Park Office for rules and regulations.
 - Martha provided recent updates from Nature Alberta and SEAWA.
7. **Other Business:**
 - John reported highlights from the November 26 meeting regarding the Alberta South Saskatchewan Regional Plan held at the Medicine Hat Lodge attended by about 30 people including Martha and Tina. John reminded everyone to respond to this plan by completing at least a portion of the workbook, writing letters, making phone calls or sending emails before the January 15, 2014, deadline.

- Due to holiday commitments, Milt Spitzer requests an early deadline of December 8 for any submissions to the December issue of the Chronicle.
 - Anne reported that approximately 800 copies of “Caught in the Spin” remain at the Nature Alberta Office but legal details need to be clarified with Dawn Dickinson’s lawyer to determine the fate of these books.⁵
 - The next GN Board meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 3 @ 7:00 pm at the Medicine Hat Public Library.
8. **Attendance tonight** – 20 members for the business portion of the program and 28 people for the outdoor program.
9. **Meeting adjourned** at 7:35 pm
10. **Indoor Program:**

Fire Ecology at Canadian Forces Base Suffield AB

Brent Smith, Range Biologist at CFB Suffield, gave a detailed analysis of fire ecology by discussing how fires shape the landscape, affecting not only the native grasses but also the 23 species of wildlife that inhabit this area. Using satellite animation, Brent began his presentation by sharing the fire history of Alberta from 2000 to 2013 leaving little doubt in the viewer’s mind that almost all prairie fires during this time frame have been within the British Block – a direct result of the military training that occurs there. Interestingly, some species like the burrowing owl and the kangaroo rat thrive on prairie landscape that has been ravished by frequent fires while others like the Sprague’s pipit face decreasing numbers due to the loss of much needed healthy grassland. How much fire on the prairies is too much? And if it is given rest, will native grass species recover to its original state? Brent’s research indicates that one fire every five years is optimal to support all species native to this area. In closing, Brent outlined ways to control unwanted fires on the base some of which include controlled fires, pre-burns, graded fire guards and mowed fire guards. Much thanks to Brent for sharing his research and expertise on this evening’s topic!