

**SOCIETY OF GRASSLANDS NATURALISTS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**Police Point Park Nature Centre, Tuesday March 27, 2012**

1. Call to Order – 7:00 pm  
Attendance: 46
2. Review and Adoption of the March 22, 2011 AGM Minutes– John Slater moved the minutes be adopted; Mike O’Shea seconded, all in favour, **Carried.**
3. **Committee Reports**
  - a. **President’s Report** – John Slater  
It certainly has been an enjoyable first year as President, due to the enthusiasm of executive and many members. Greatly appreciate donations received, they help provide the programs GN gives. In 2011, 19 field trips, 6 bird counts, 8 general meetings, 2 potlucks, IP special events, and 2 member awards. About 300 trees in Police Point Park and Strathcona Island Park were wrapped to protect them from beavers, and 5 miles of fence made more visible for sage grouse. For 2012, Communications Committee intends to develop a new brochure and website. Would also like to see young families and youth engaged in programs and develop young naturalists, tree planting, study species at risk, conservation, renewable energy, etc. Website ideas: adopt-a-species at risk, trail watchers (interactive map), GN logo t-shirts, caps, etc. Looking forward to upcoming year as President.
  - b. **Treasurer’s Report** – Eileen Cowtan  
Sent out 2011 financial statements by email showing joint statements of MH Interpretive Program and GN “Club”. Eileen went over statements – major income and expenses, info about deficits (salaries, program books don’t always match the calendar year, long-running programs have been carried over). Memberships sitting at about 100 with nearly 150 members. Eileen Cowtan moved the adoption of the Treasurer’s report as presented. Paul Thibault seconded, all in favour, **Carried.**
  - c. **Field Trips** – Michael O’Shea  
GN had 19 field trips from April 2011-present; (Gary Martin led 3 Cypress Hills field trips). If anyone has ideas for field trips you would like to see, let Mike know.  
Annual field trip to Manyberries – Sat. March 30, 2012, 6 am at Tim Horton’s by the mall, 1<sup>st</sup> birding trip of spring, not to miss.
  - d. **Operations Committee** – Phil Horch  
Committee oversees the operation of MHIP, approves budgets, set out terms of reference, insurance renewals and altered if necessary. Conducting negotiations presently to extend IP contract with the City, with incremental budgetary increases over 5 years. Contribution from the City is \$126,000. Hopefully City Council will approve this with 5 yearly increases (City is getting a lot of bang for its buck, public benefits, etc). Thanks to volunteers. Phil Horch moved the adoption of Operations Committee report; seconded Bill Knibbs, all in favour, **Carried.**
  - e. **Medicine Hat Interpretive Program** – Corlaine Gardner

We raise matching money (for City's \$126,000) through special project grants and school program fees, e.g. storytelling, video, workshop. Intern and student Katimavik work experiences as well as community group collaboration and volunteers keep the Nature Centre running. Your support is much appreciated; this really is a community centre. 35,000+ per year are in contact with Nature Centre, 400 school and community groups like Scouts/Brownies, about 50 special events and 8 art exhibits per year.

- f. **Issues Committee** – Martha Munz Gue
- Sage Grouse: meetings with MLAs and MP, needs to be addressed on a continuous basis.
  - Tiny Cryptantha in the Ranchlands area needs continued protection.
  - Tax recovery land transfers involve return of public land from the Alberta Government to the municipalities of Vulcan and Taber.
  - “Potatogate” Land Sale north of Bow Island: field trip and letters written to local and provincial politicians. Fortunately, Premier Redford canceled the sale of the grazing land.
- We should continue to support active/alternative transportation through support of the various community initiatives.
- g. **Nature Alberta** – Marty Drut
- Nature Alberta is an umbrella group of provincial naturalists groups, so interests of GN are issues of Nature Alberta. We're still looking for a Nature Alberta Rep. Some issues NA is involved with:
- Sage Grouse emergency summit organized by AWA in Calgary. A communiqué with recommendations to protect critical habitat sent to federal and provincial governments.
  - Potatogate proposed 16,000 acres sale was cancelled due to public outcry.
  - Suffield National Wildlife Area Coalition monitoring the progress of the Joint Review Panel's recommendations and Federal Government Response.
  - Industrial Wind Facilities/Transmission Lines continuing to be monitored.
- h. **Indoor Programs** – Rob Gardner
- Ten indoor programs which included eight presentations by guest speakers and two potluck suppers.
- i. **Prairie Conservation Forum** – Rob Gardner
- Rob represents GN on the Forum to monitor what's happening with 40 organizations that deal with the prairie landscape and focus on conservation of Species at Risk. Toured Suffield base and Wainwright to see prairie conservation techniques around oil and gas wells.
- j. **Sagebrush Chronicle** – Milt Spitzer
- Milt wants member contributions (articles/photos), someone to review/edit first draft of Chronicle, deadline is the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month.
- k. **Carol Porter Bluebird Trail** – Milt Spitzer
- Report has details about numbers of birds documented in 2011. Twenty-four volunteers help Milt with the bird boxes, thanks to them and Ben Velner who is making new boxes. In 2011; fledged only 185 bluebirds (lowest since 2002; Milt mentioned that Tree Swallows took over many boxes).

4. **Elections for the 2012-2013 Executive:** Nominations chaired by Bill Knibbs  
President: John Slater  
Vice-President – Anne Bernhardt  
Treasurer – Eileen Cowtan  
Secretary – Judith and Barry Anderson (shared position)  
Bill moved we accept these officers; Linda Carney seconded, all in favour, **Carried.**

**Appointment to Other Positions:**

Past President – Mike O’Shea  
Directors-at-large – Bill Knibbs, Marty Drut, Martha Munz Gue  
Membership – Eileen Cowtan  
Field Trips – Mike O’Shea  
Indoor Programs – Rob Gardner  
Operations Committee – Phil Horch (chair), Bob Townsend, Val Felesky, Dorothy Patry, Elaine Spitzer  
Interpretive Program – Corlaine Gardner  
Issues Committee – Martha Munz Gue/Marty Drut  
Communications Committee – Tina Regehr  
Newsletter Editor – Milt Spitzer  
Nature Alberta Rep – Martha Munz Gue/Marty Drut  
Prairie Conservation Forum Rep – Rob Gardner  
Carol Porter Bluebird Trail – Milt Spitzer  
Birder’s Guide Project - Phil Horch (chair)

5. **Bylaws Special Resolution:**

John Slater moved that we rescind the old bylaws from Feb. 21, 1991 and accept the amended bylaws draft as distributed to the members in Nov. 2011 together with revisions written in Feb. 2012 Chronicle. Paul Thibault seconded, **Carried.**

Discussion prior to the vote on the motion: Concern from Val Felesky that members be consulted when GN is being asked to be a part of any lawsuit which may involve financial implications. Paul Thibault suggested that Val's concerns would best be addressed in "Policies and Procedures" rather than the Bylaws.

6. **Birder’s Guide Project** – Phil Horch

Establish birding trails and develop a guide in Southeastern Alberta, based on many other guides in North American. Other GN’s members have joined Phil to undertake:

- update current Southeastern Alberta bird checklist.
- make birding trails in Southeastern Alberta with help from funding partners.
- Develop and print a guide to birding in Southeastern Alberta.

7. **Honorary Lifetime Membership** Presentation to Veronica Swan

Phil Horch detailed Veronica’s many years of dedicated service to Grasslands Naturalists and Interpretive Program Board and environmental movement in general, and presented her with a lifetime membership certificate. Veronica said a few words about how it is our duty to speak up for species, special places, and habitat in our area.

8. Special announcements
  - Wednesday March 28 Municipal Planning Commission will be discussing Medicine Hat Plan, public input encouraged.
  - Also Wednesday March 28, 4:00-6:30 pm at Medicine Hat College, Ron McNeil from Landwise, Inc. presented the Grasslands Vegetation Inventory. All day Field Trip planned on April 30.
  - March 31 – Ben Velner’s annual birding trip to Manyberries, 6 am at Tim Horton’s by Mall.
  - March 31 – Earth Hour from 8:30-9:30 pm, turn out all your lights.
  - April 3 – next Executive meeting at Eileen’s house.
  
9. Adjournment – 8:25 pm followed by presentation by Ryan Heavy Head from Red Crow College (Blackfoot Reserve): Renewing Traditional Blackfoot Phonological Science.