

Society of Grassland Naturalists
Minutes of General Meeting – May 28, 2013
Police Point Park

1. **Call to Order** at 7:02 pm. Anne Bernhardt – Chair; Barry Anderson – Secretary. Susan Philips was introduced as a visitor from Windsor, Ontario.
2. **Minutes:** The minutes from April 23, 2013, were reviewed and **Motion Carried** to accept the minutes.
3. **Exciting Sightings:** This month’s sightings by Hugh Armstrong included young bald eagles and a coyote confrontation with his dogs in Police Point Park.
4. **Newspaper Clips:** John shared information on topics that included Jan Scott’s Civic Award, Jim Marshall’s nomination for the Order of Excellence Award, wind power, rattlesnakes, ticks and Lyme disease, Baby’s Breath removal, and the Prairie Appreciation Festival.
5. **Treasurer’s Report:** – Eileen shared the most recent financial statement:
 - Chequeing account \$8,527.01
 - Servus “20” savings account \$4,926.80
 - ING savings account \$6,046.64
 - Total assets \$19,500.45

Our current paid membership is 92. Waiver forms must be completed and/or revised before members partake in GN sanctioned field trips. Donations are always welcome. Eileen also reminded everyone that the Community Spirit Program has ended and final money received for GN and the IP.

6. **Priority Business:**
 - Paul provided updates on the progress of the Governance and Budget Committees. Policies & Procedures and Budgets available on the GN website as well as in a binder kept at the Nature Centre.
 - Corlaine reported that the Interpretive Program is very busy with Community Classroom Visitations. Check the GN website for future IP activities. The Spring Bird and Flower Count results were not available at this time due to Marty’s absence. The Sprague Pipit’s Project continues this weekend with an information booth at Spectrum. Volunteers have been forwarded a work schedule.
 - The Tiny Cryptanthe and Wildflower Walk in Ranchlands tentatively scheduled on Friday, June 21, at 6:30 pm.
 - A wildflower tour in Walsh is scheduled for Saturday, June 22. Meet behind Montana’s Restaurant at 12:00 pm noon to arrange for car-pooling.
 - Rob gave details regarding an evening supper excursion to Red Rock Coulee on Tuesday, June 11. Meet at the A&W on Gershaw Drive at 5:30 pm.
 - John up-dated the information on the invasive plant species Baby’s Breath and Leafy Spurge. No further information is available on the Sage Grouse Count from this spring.
 - Martha indicated that Nature Alberta encourages feedback from the more than 40 groups it serves.

- SEAWA-sanctioned 55 gallon rain barrels can be purchased for \$50.00 at Blondie's Greenhouse starting June 1. SEAWA is also sponsoring a South Saskatchewan River Canoe Trip from Medicine Hat to Sandy Point July 5-7 Cost is \$50.00 per person.

7. **Other Business:**

- GN will apply for a park bench (\$750.00 + GST) for Life-Time Members including Dawn Dickinson and Donna MacLean. Location of the bench still needs to be determined; proposals can be submitted to the board. Donations towards the cost of the bench are welcome. Rob Gardner suggested alternative project of refurbishing the seat and view platform located in Police Point Park.
- The sale of Dawn Dickinson's book "Caught in the Spin" for \$10.00 continues at the Nature Centre with a total of 334 books available. Distribution of the book will occur at other locations such as the public library and senior residences.
- Alberta Plantwatch program encourages participation during April to June to watch the blooming of one or two selected wildflowers in a specific location. When reported annually to the website, this information gives indication of the advance of spring and climate change. Martha suggested the creation of a pamphlet identifying local wildflower species much like the one designed by the Edmonton Naturalization Group. **Motion Carried** to proceed with the idea; the Communication Committee will investigate.
- Rob shared details regarding the Prairie Appreciation Festival to be held Saturday, June 8 on the north slope of the Cypress Hills and Elkwater. The day will include events sponsored by the Ranching Community as well as Environmental Groups. This is an all day and evening event beginning at 9:00 am with a supper barbeque available for \$15.00 per adult.
- John spoke about the Walk to the Headwaters. The distance will be walked in 16 segments beginning July 13 and ending July 28. The Medicine Hat to Seven Persons segment is scheduled for July 15. John suggested the participants detour to City Hall for a media event before resuming their journey via Highway 3.
- Sean Allen shared a final summary report regarding his involvement with the Baby's Breath Removal Project. A total of 30,000 plants have been removed over a 10 day period from the Ranchlands area. Many thanks to Sean for completing this project with the help of CalFrac workers and the guidance of City Hall.
- The next general meeting will be a pot luck event held at the Nature Center on June 25 at 6:00 pm. John and Bill volunteered to coordinate volunteers for set-up, clean-up, etc.

8. **Attendance tonight** – 25 members for the business portion, and 30 for the presentation program.

9. **Meeting adjourned** at 7:50 pm

10. Indoor Program:

Hidden World of Small (ish) Mammals Presented by Tim Schowalter (retired mammal expert)

Mr. Schowalter gave a most delightful, entertaining and informative talk and slide presentation on a wide scale of Alberta mammals (mostly of the small to tiny variety) found in Alberta. He began his presentation indicating that the distribution and populations of many of the small mammals is poorly known and he encouraged one and all to document (with photos if possible) encounters with any of the small mammals. To date, the distribution and population densities of voles, mice, shrews, bats, and other smallish mammals in Alberta have been documented based primarily on owl pellets, but also supplemented by the trapping of these critters. His slide presentation contained photos of the skulls of many of the small creatures in which he described the particular identification features of individual species. He also included slides of many of the mammals of Alberta varying from the very tiny shrew (less than a few centimeters long) to the large and stately elk.

In all, Mr. Schowalter spoke for about an hour keeping the audience in rapt attention.