

Society of Grassland Naturalists
Minutes of General Meeting – October 28, 2014
Police Point Park

1. **Call to Order** at 7:01 pm. Anne Bernhardt – Chair; Monica Bartha – Secretary.
2. **Review and Adoption of Minutes of General meeting:** **Motion carried** to accept the minutes from the Tuesday September 23, 2014 meeting, following correction on name of Young Naturalists Explorers Club.
3. **Exciting Sightings:** Phil Horch encountered a gray-crowned rosy-finch near Rattlesnake on the roadside. Valerie Martens seen a 6-point buck which had some plastic mesh wrapped around its antlers. Valerie with her bravery managed to take it off. Michael O’Shea seen a Rusty Blackbird. Sean Allen heard 20 elk around his truck
4. **Various Newspaper Clips – John Slater:**
5. **Treasurer’s Report – Eileen:** Total cash GN club: \$21 327.71; Interpretive Program: \$49, 226.91 as of September 30, 2014. Total new members this month: 4 (1 new and 3 renewal). Membership: 93.
6. **Priority Business:**
 - **Budget Committee** – Paul Thibault – none. Meeting was held on October 15; budget was updated
 - **Governance Committee** – Paul Thibault - none
 - **Fundraising Committee** – Hugh Armstrong -none Anne shared the explanation of the Co-op fundraising.
 - **Board Member** – Request Director at Large replacement.
 - **Honourary Life-Time Membership to Dennis Baresco: Friday Oct 3 – Phil Horch** – Nice write up in the Sagebrush Chronicle by Phil Horch.
 - **Issues Committee** – Completed Shoreline clean up with 5 participants.
Sage Grouse – Saskatchewan results are 8 male on 3 active leks. Montana releasing hunt on Sage Grouse.
Berms on Strathcona. We did receive a letter from City of Medicine Hat in which ~350 trees; 40% unhealthy will be removed from Harlow area.
 - **Interpretive Program – Corlaine Gardner**
Snow Goose tour coming up this weekend Sunday 2:30p.m. at Gershaw Drive, bring binos and spotting scopes.
Current exhibit will be down on Monday and new exhibit will be up called “Flourish” by Southern Exposure Photography Club on November 16th at 2:00p.m.
Hayride on December 7, 2014 in Police Point Park.
The popular StoryWalk “The Mitten” will open on Monday November 3, ~~2014~~.
 - **Field Trips** – November 1st Michael will be holding a field trip at 8:00am at Strathcona Island Park.
 - **Nature Alberta** – No update from Martha.
7. **Other Business:**
 - Hope Johnson – Darren Tanke is still accepting information for his biography on Hope.
 - Indoor Program: For January we are still waiting to hear from potential presenters for conformation.
 - Young Naturalists Explorers - Martha: None
 - Lunch and Learn held by the Community Educators Group of Medicine Hat on November 12th at the Esplanade on “Social Media” from 12:10-12:55 pm in the Cutbanks Room. Cost is \$5.00 or 5 pass punchcard for \$20.
 - “Respecting our land: Transition to A New Economy” Conference on November 7 & 8, 2014 in Camrose, AB.

- ESRD and the Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development will be holding the Joint Watershed Program Launch at the Royal Executive Inn in Leduc, AB from 10:00 am to 3:00pm on November 7, 2014.

8. Date of next GN Board Meeting on November 4th. General Meeting November 25th.

9. Attendance tonight: 22 members during meeting.

10. Meeting adjourned: Adjournment at 9:15 p.m.

11. Indoor Program:

“Home and Estonia”

Presented by Martha Munz Gue

Written by Monica M Bartha

Is from Barons, Alberta and grew an interest to know her “home”, the surrounding landscapes that embrace her. But Martha has her heritage in another part of the world where she has many family members, in Estonia. When she travels she brings her little notebook everywhere and has people sign it and draw pictures in it. This is her travelling keepsake to remind her of those she passes and meets up with during her travels. Martha has travelled to Estonia on many different occasions both by boat and plane to visit her family. Her family lived in Estonia in between the two world wars and are still thriving and enjoying Estonia.

Estonia’s landscape is interesting. Each village is surrounded by forest and the forest is surrounded by agriculture. There are many parishes “counties” within Estonia. Each parish has it specific costume. The coast is lined with Erratics made of limestone and granite, which was pushed in from Finland by glaciers. There are many statues around Estonia, which are made from the limestone found around the coast. Estonia’s elevation is at the same level as the northern Alberta border. Given that note, Estonia is proud of their peatlands. One particular moss that is found there is called, “Porridge for the Moose”. There are many trails and boardwalks through the peatlands for you to follow and enjoy the preserved natural beauty of Estonia.

One of Martha’s highlights was the Song Festival, which happens every year and gathers thousands of people. To kick off the festival a parade begins at 11:00a.m., and carries on throughout the day until they reach the grounds where the concert begins at 6:00p.m. Once the concert begins your ears are listening to a beautiful choir which has 21 000 singers. Another local celebration is the Dance Festival, “Touched by time and the time to touch”. The Dance Festival consisted of sixteen families who shared their stories through a choreographic interpretation.

Thank you Martha for sharing your experience in Estonia. We enjoyed the photos, videos, and your love for the natural beauty of Estonia and your family.

“ Galapagos Islands”

Presented by David Munz Gue

Written by Monica M Bartha

Galapagos Islands is a national park and marine reserve located west of Equador and straddles the equator. There are 18 main islands but only two are populated. There are many wildlife species that inhabit the Galapagos Islands such as frigate birds, gulls, marine iguanas, giant tortoises and sea lions. The vegetation cover mainly consists of grasses, lichens, shrubs and trees. The plant communities are comprised of multiple different vegetation zones around the islands from arid to moist.

Dave travelled to the Galapagos Islands in May, perfect time of year for breeding birds. He travelled in a small group of ~20 with wonderful guides and photographers. The national park has strict rules and allows only so many groups at a time on the islands. They travelled by plane, boat and zodiac to reach the different islands.

One afternoon’s expedition was to explore an interpretive centre. Cat’s claw is a known tree, which has very long thorns and can grow into walls of vegetation. These thorns make it very hard to walk through, as they will catch your clothing. Dave was very lucky he was not detained by the Cat’s claw. As Dave made it past the

Cat's claw he made it to the preserved area of tortoises. The interpretive centre has been raising giant tortoises since 1965. The naturalists are very careful to not interrupt the gene pattern. The juvenile tortoises have soft shells in their first 5 years of life. Their shells have 13 segments and are held by cartilage. Adult tortoises can live without food for up to 18 months and live for hundreds of years. The largest tortoise shell is able to fit a 7-year old child.

His next visit was to Genovesa Island, which was travelled to by boat in the night. This horse-shoe shaped island is home of the Great Darwin Bay which is surrounded by cliffs. To begin his visit he hiked up the Prince Phillips steps. These steps are carved in lava, which lead to remarkable vantage points from which to observe different seabirds. Dave had many observations of Male frigate birds and other seabirds on the island. He was able to get 1 m away from an Eskimo boobie. Eskimo boobies have a beautiful white plumage. He also observed a Red Footed boobie, which are famous for gathering in flocks and spearing down into the water to fish. These birds, as their name suggests, have red feet. One specific bird, that is one of its kind on Galapagos is the Short-Eared owl. If you're lucky you may be able to observe it near its home. They can be found near the volcanic caves during the hottest part of the day.

The Galapagos Islands is a recommended destination for all nature lovers. If you are a whale lover, head out in March, if you're a birder fly out there April/May, and if you're a snorkeler be in the water in June/July but keep in mind June/July is quite a busy tourist season.

Thank you Dave for sharing your experience in the Galapagos Islands. We look forward to hearing Part II of your trip at the next General Meeting on Tuesday November 25, 2014.