

SOCIETY OF GRASSLANDS NATURALISTS
Minutes of Grasslands Naturalists Board Meeting
April 6, 2020 via Skype.

Present via Skype: Phil Horch (Chair), Betty Rainville (Secretary), Hugh Armstrong, Eileen Cowtan, Ian and Angela Turner, Linda Fisher.

1. Call to Order: 1:31 pm
2. Review and Adoption of GN Board Minutes from March 2, 2021. CARRIED.
3. Additions to the Agenda:
 - a. **SEAWA and GN Russian olive dig-out:** Martha had suggested GN volunteers might want to partner with SEAWA for an Earth Day “dig-out” of this invasive species.
Board members discussed receiving no notice yet from the City, regarding 2021 Earth Day litter blitz. The recent increase in COVID-19 variants might discourage partnering with SEAWA members for a “dig-out”.
Suggestions were made that GN attendance as a group would not be recommended, but that members could attend as individuals, being aware of COVID restrictions and distancing. Or, individuals might wish to do a cleanup in their own area.
Phil will address this topic in his President’s Report in the April Chronicle.
 - b. **AGM Nomination Chair for Board Nominations at the upcoming AGM:** Board members remembered Bill Knibbs as a very capable nomination Chair at previous AGMs, before his passing in January 2019.
John Slater and Bill often worked together presenting and chairing AGM nominations dating back to 2013, if not earlier.
Hugh will ask John if he would act as Nomination Chair at the May AGM.
Hugh also mentioned that the Notice of Nominations should be placed in the April Chronicle again.
 - c. **Recommended Webinars:**
 - March 4. Nature Based Climate Solutions- Ian and Angela reported this Nature Canada group is similar to the Future Ground Network (FGN), but is more focused on issues of animal extinction. Their goal is to help participating groups set up a “tool kit” of resources to get their message out. You may still see this webinar on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/wLie2X9bi8U>
 - April 14, 7pm to 8pm MDT. iNaturalist Tutorial Webinar focusing on how to photograph flora and fauna for iNaturalist. Phil suggested this webinar would be a good example of how to conduct Club events during the pandemic. More information and registration at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/how-to-use-inaturalist-tickets-145573332757> Ian and Angela will report on this.
 - April 14, 12pm MDT. The Prairie Conservation Forum is hosting “Testing Management Intensive Cattle Grazing as a Restorative Tool in Semi-Arid Rangelands” with Kristi Gordon.
Register and receive more information at Prairie Conservation Forum Event Overview under heading “webinars”
Betty will report briefly on this. Information and speakers on this webinar may be relevant to the GN proposed Climate Change Symposium.
4. Action Items:
 - a. **AGM date and details:** After discussion, Board members decided on May 25, 2021 as the date for the GN AGM, pending COVID restrictions on group meetings. If the AGM is postponed, June 22, 2021 would be the alternate date.
Linda confirmed with the Board, that there would be no Indoor Speaker at the AGM. She will check with Phil to see if he is mobile enough since surgery, to lead a walk after the meeting. Milt Spitzer was also suggested as another knowledgeable birder who might lead a post AGM walk at Police Point Park.
 - b. **Committee Reports Due:** Hugh noted that committee reports are due to Paul by May 15, 2021, in order for Paul to post them on the website before the AGM.
 - c. **Call for Nominations:** Hugh reported the position of Vice President is still vacant.
The position of Secretary is also open, since Betty reported she will be stepping down. The past six years working with the Board, and other GN members, has been an enjoyable and enriching experience.
 - d. **Coal Mining Issues in the Eastern Slopes:** Phil has received no reply yet from the GN letter sent to the Office of the Premier, and referred to the Minister of Energy.
Betty noted AWA has response suggestions and explanations for the government survey questions at awa@abwild.ca.
Survey input is available up to April 19 at your.alberta.ca/coal-policy-engagement/survey.
Phil asked the Board if we want to reply as a society? He will contact Gerry about writing a letter on behalf of Grasslands Naturalists.
 - e. **Report on Brent Smith & Zoom Presentation re. City Mapping:** Phil reported on Brent’s ecological mapping of the City which included mapping Upland and Riparian areas within City limits. Phil said it will give us a great deal of information.

Brent asked if birders would like to contribute to the mapping, by identifying birds in sensitive areas, Phil reported.

Phil will talk to fellow birders, and would work with Brent, if other birders agree.

Linda suggested that Butterflies and Frogs might possibly be added to the ecological mapping list.

f. **Nomination for Community Spirit Awards:** The Board received one nomination.

Phil will contact the nominator to see if he will fill out the nomination paper and other necessary forms. Deadline for forms to be received by the City is Friday, May 31.

g. **Climate Change Symposium:** Phil reported he is working on the Steering Committee at present. He is pleased to report that Brooke Kapeller is now a member of the Committee.

Phil suggested that Brent Smith, who teaches at MHC, may be able to recommend names of 1 or 2 suitable College students.

Angela brought up the name of a young SEAWA member, graduate of the MHC's Environmental Reclamation Technician program, as a potential member of the Committee.

5. Reports:

a. **Treasurer's Report:** Angela and Eileen.

Angela submitted the Profit and Loss sheet for the period January through March 2021. Total GN 'Club' **Income** for this period was \$4,796.07.

Total Expenses of \$5,886.57 leave a **Net Income** of -\$1,090.50 for January through March 2021.

Angela reported the 'Club' **Savings** Account stands at \$16,587.93 as of March 31, 2021 and the GN **Chequing** Account Balance is \$5,913.09. Total Chequing/Savings with shares is \$22,502.37.

Total Assets, including GST Receivable, comes to \$22,544.32.

Angela reported the Casino Balance remains at \$381.02.

Eileen reported there is a Balance of \$314,564.82 in the **MHIP** Account as of April 5, 2021.

Eileen also reported that Angela and Phil have concluded the yearly financial report to AGLC showing how the 'Club' used Casino proceeds.

Board discussion followed, regarding Eileen's query on additional ways for GN members to pay for annual membership fees, other than mailing cheques.

Servus Credit Union indicated that Interac e-Transfer Auto deposit method only requires a Society email, to allow transfers to be automatically deposited to the Society.

Linda questioned how the important Field Trip waiver and Membership form, as well as the Consent form for use of personal information and receiving emails, would then be obtained from members.

Eileen noted she will pursue the topic with Paul Thibault. Phil suggested David Gue would also be a good resource person to talk to.

b. **Membership:** Angela/Eileen. Eileen reported there are about 60 memberships at this time, including both Individual and Family memberships.

c. **Correspondence:** Eileen noted that most 'Club' correspondence arrives by email, with the exception of magazines, which go to the Nature Centre.

Angela said she will check at the Nature Centre for paper mail when bank statements are picked up.

d. **MHIP Operations:** Hugh reported that the job description for Chief Interpreter has been sent out. It has been posted through Nature Alberta's numerous member clubs, as well as GoodWork Canada, the GN website, and the MH News.

Angela suggested contacting Conservation Officers who might be interested.

Hugh noted he will meet again with the rest of the selection Committee, including Bob Townsend and Corlaine, in 6 weeks. June 1, 2021 is the closing date for applications for this position.

e. **Issues Committee:** Phil commended the positive reaction to the Adopt-a-Pond project encouraged by Martha and the Issues Committee, and SEAWA.

Angela commented on the amount of garbage she and Ian collect at each visit to their adopted pond.

Following is the **Issues Committee Report for April 2021:** Martha & John

Ongoing:

Issue

Awareness of local natural areas & ecosystems;
Getting outside and connected to nature.

GN Response

Weekly Nature Walks and Adopt a Pond.

Climate Emergency

Climate Conversations every second week.
Phil's initiative: Climate Forum.

Appreciation of local nature	wildflower brochure butterfly website moths (Jan's website) scenic views (website) - in progress
Litter	Litter pick up is a part of every walk. Adopt a Pond. 14 ponds will have litter pick up by volunteers every week or two.
Invasives	Sapling removal for Earth Day April 22 with SEAWA leadership. Adopters of Ponds report invasives on EDDMaps (Alberta) app Ger continues to be our lead with John's help.

Decline of Insects:

<https://lethbridgenewsnow.com/2021/03/21/sacpa-the-decline-of-insect-populations-and-how-we-can-help-them-survive/>

There are some assets we already have from which we could grow awareness about the importance of insects, and how to work to improve their numbers starting with our existing resources. A core group could be appointed to brainstorm possibilities before deciding on what route to take to raise awareness. What we have already done:

1. GN had Dan Johnson here as a speaker a few years ago. Maybe we could do that again as a part of a larger awareness campaign.
2. A website was created by Dave McKenzie about local butterflies.
3. A local moth specialist, Jan Scott, who was awarded a lifetime membership in GN for work with moths, has a website about local moths.
4. SEAWA had a guest speaker a couple of years ago from the Alberta Native Bee council.
5. A pollinator garden is being established in PPP, as well as the many blooming shrubs and wildflowers shown in GN's Wildflower brochure.

End of Issues Report

- f. **Budget Committee:** Paul noted in an email, that no further Board approval is needed for Sapling extraction tool costs for John and Ger's invasive plant work, since the tool cost was already included in the 2021 Budget approved by the Board at its December meeting.
This month the Budget Committee will work on submitting the 2020 budget updates for the Club and Interpretive Program so they can be posted on the GN website before the May AGM.
- g. **Governance Committee:** Revised P&Ps to be discussed within the Governance Committee this week. These will likely be submitted for Board review and approval at the May 4 Board meeting.
The Governance Committee will meet on Wednesday, April 14 at 1:30 p.m. Paul Thibault will chair and Phil, Hugh, Eileen and Linda will attend.
- h. **Indoor Committee:** Linda reported she is still looking into finding help to learn more about Zoom operations.
It was noted that Nature Alberta has kindly offered the use of their Zoom account.
- i. **Fund Raising Committee:** Hugh reported that a new Chair is needed for future GN Casino organization, although Dave McKenzie has offered to continue in that position temporarily. Thank you, Dave.
Hugh noted he sent in a request to Alberta EcoTrust for a Grant of \$3850.00, which is part of the overall budget of \$18,200.00, including volunteer work in-kind of \$11,550.00. (See Other Business, item 6.b. below).
- j. **Field Trip Committee:** John and Martha. See all **Walks and Earth Day Activities** in the April Chronicle
Start times for walks will generally be 1:30 pm, but the time and location will be confirmed by email to all GN members, a day prior to the walk. For details, call John at 403 866-8415, or Martha at 403 878-9573, or the Nature Centre at 403 529-6225. For information on upcoming **Birding Field Trips** contact Milt Spitzer at 403 528-3120.
April 24, Birding Field Trip to Sauder's and Murray Reservoirs. Meet at Gershaw Dr. A&W at 8:00am. Contact Milt (above)
- k. **Communications Committee:** Angela reported that The Cypress County Welcome Centre at Walsh, welcomes GN brochures, pamphlets and merchandise, to be put on display for the May long weekend opening.
Hugh also has more Birding Trail Guides which can be picked up at his residence for showing at the Centre.
Board members then discussed the whole issue of photo posting of GN and MHIP activities, and the fact that individual identifiable photos cannot be posted anywhere without that person's written consent. This matter will be dealt with at the next meeting of the Governance Committee, and new policy and procedures will need to be clarified and updated.

