

# THE SAGEBRUSH CHRONICLE



## Rare Mosses and Ferns of the Arid and Mixed Grass Prairie

**Presentation by:**  
**Ron & Cathy Linowski**  
**Retired Environmental**  
**Science Instructors**  
**Medicine Hat College**

Plant in the  
photo: *Marsilea vestita*  
(Hairy water "clover")  
Suffield NWA,  
2021. Actually a fern  
that many people would  
ignore or misidentify.  
Photo by R. Linowski

When most people think of the arid mixed grass prairie probably the very last type of plants that they would expect to see would be mosses and ferns.

There are however a variety of mosses that are highly specialized to grow within the harsh habitat of the prairies such as the drying margins of slightly saline wetlands. And yes, there are even a few ferns.

In this presentation we will be introduced to a sampling of the mosses and ferns of SE Alberta in the hope that citizen scientists might recognize them and add to the knowledge of their local distributions.

### **Tuesday, February 22: Zoom Meeting**

- 7:00 PM to 7:50 PM: Business Meeting
- 8:00 PM to 9:00 PM: Presentation by Ron and Cathy Linowski

**Note: Several days before this zoom meeting an email will be sent to all members detailing the specific instructions to join this zoom meeting.**

## Executive and Board Members

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The Sagebrush Chronicle is published ten times a year by Grasslands Naturalists. **Submissions of writing and artwork are welcomed but must be edited for publication. Deadline: the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month.** If you would like to advertise in the Chronicle, more information is available from the editor. Submissions are to be sent to: [milton.spitzer@gmail.com](mailto:milton.spitzer@gmail.com) (403-528-3120). Do not embed photos in articles but **do send** them separately.

The Society of Grasslands Naturalists encourages the study, conservation and protection of all components of the natural world. The Society provides educational opportunities, assists in the collection and provision of species data, acts as stewards of the environment, discusses environmental topics and organizes member activities. The Society also manages the Medicine Hat Interpretive Program.

**General Meetings:** 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday (**suspended during COVID**), Sept. - May **Board Meetings:** 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday Sept. - June

To join Grasslands Naturalists and/or send a tax-deductible donation, write:

**Grasslands Naturalists**  
**Box 2491**  
**Medicine Hat, AB T1A 8G8**

**Contact info: Nature Centre 529-6225**

**Annual Membership Dues: Angela Turner**

Individuals \$20

Families \$25

Organizations \$25

Donations to Grassland Naturalists and Interpretive Program are another great way to support local nature and nature education. Tax receipts are issued for all donations over \$10. Your generosity is greatly appreciated!

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GN Website:

[www.grasslands-naturalists.org](http://www.grasslands-naturalists.org)

GN Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/GrasslandsNaturalists/>

You must be a Facebook member to view most of it.

## MH Interpretive Program

(Managed by Grasslands Naturalists)  
Based in Police Point Park

[www.natureline.info](http://www.natureline.info)

**Nature Line: (403) 529-6225**

Facebook and Instagram: @policepointpark

The Nature Centre is open year round from:  
9:00AM to 5:00PM Tuesday through Sunday

**Masks** are currently required to enter the  
Nature Centre

### Upcoming Programs (Call to Register)

**Tue. Feb 15: 10:30 to 11:00 AM:** Tiny Tracks  
Toddler Program

**Fri. Feb. 18:** Nature Days PD Event.

**Sat. Feb. 19: 7:00 to 8:30 PM:** Love in Nature:  
"The Birds and the Bees"

**Mon. Feb. 21: 10:00 AM to 3:45 PM:** Wildlife  
Kit Building Workshop #1.

**Sat. Feb. 26: 10:00 AM to 3:45 PM:** Wildlife Kit  
Building Workshop #2.

**Winter StoryWalk until March 5:** "When the  
Snow Falls" by Linda Booth Sweeney.

**Free public in-park ski and snowshoe rentals**  
for all of February thanks to the generous  
sponsorship of the Medicine Hat Kiwanis Club.  
(hopefully we will get a snowfall event).

**Visit the Nature Centre Store for Nature  
slanted gifts including books, birdfeeders,  
bird houses, stuffies, comfort birds, and  
more.**

## Member's Corner

This is a reminder that it is time to renew your GN Membership for 2022. The membership renewal/waiver form is at the back of this Chronicle. Dues are detailed on page 2 of this issue. Renewals can be dropped off at the Nature Centre or can be mailed to **Grasslands Naturalists, Box 2491, Medicine Hat, AB, T1A 8G8**.

A great big thank you to **Bruce McLeod** for stepping up to take over the Casino Management position and also a big thank you to all the members who have so graciously volunteered to help out at the end of this month's casino. Also we thank **Justine Bolen** who began as casino manager but had to resign because of her move to British Columbia. We wish her all the best in her new endeavours.

### President's Report To GN Members: February 2022

#### **AGM Date Has Been Postponed to June 28**

Typically the Annual General Meeting of the Grasslands Naturalists Society takes place in the month of March. However, the COVID pandemic has interfered with that date in the past two years. Our last two AGM's have taken place in September (outdoors) because of covid restrictions that made it impossible to gather indoors in person. Because it may be too soon to meet indoors or outdoors in March the board has decided to re-schedule this year's AGM to June 28 which gives us the back-up option of meeting outdoors if needed. Currently our bylaws do not allow electronic voting so a zoom AGM is not possible, though our Governance Committee is working on a change to our bylaws to address this.

All committee chairpersons are reminded to prepare their annual reports and submit them to Paul Thibault by May 10 so they can be published in the May Chronicle. A nomination committee has been formed to accept nominations for President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. Any members wishing to submit nominations may submit them to me, Phil Horch, by mail or e-mail. Contact information is on page 2 of your Chronicle.

#### **City Master Environmental Plan is On The Way!**

Earlier I had reported to Grasslands Naturalists members that Martha-Munz Gue and I had contacted the Mayor's Office and City Council requesting the opportunity to meet and discuss the need for Medicine Hat to adopt a Master Environmental Plan, something our city has done without for far too long. We felt this was crucial given that the Mayor and majority of our city council were first-time members. The City Clerk's office replied to me and suggested that we meet with one of their committees and will work out a date.

Subsequently, you may have read the headline in the Medicine Hat News that a recent City Council meeting has decided to do exactly what we were going to urge them to do. The City has decided to implement an Environmental Roadpath and work has started on it. Two days ago Mayor Linnsey's office contacted me to inform Grasslands Naturalists that they agree with what our requested meeting was about and work has started on it. Her letter stated, "City Council approves the commencement of Environmental Strategic Planning toward formalizing an approved Environmental Master Plan with an initial focus on aligning vision and key priority areas." This is all good news and Grasslands Naturalists will follow-up and continue dialogue with the city as this plan develops.

#### **Climate Symposium Decision Coming Soon**

For the past few months, I have been chairing an ad-hoc Climate Change Steering Committee to investigate the possibility of Grasslands Naturalists staging a major region-wide Climate Change Symposium that would involve students as well as the public at-large. This event would explore the coming impacts of climate change on Southeastern Alberta through expert speakers, panel discussions and Q & A's.

Continued on next page

Our committee envisions a two-day symposium with a focus for students and another for the public at large. There would be a keynote speaker, specific break-out session speakers as well as panel discussions. This symposium's theme would be to paint a picture of what southeastern Alberta will look like in 30 years once all the climate change impacts have played out. Our committee has also developed a budget for this symposium which adds up to about \$75,000.

This symposium idea took hold because some of us believe and hope that such a community-wide major symposium will attract young people to our society. Like most non-profit organizations these days, our membership is aging and something dramatic has to be done in order to get younger generations involved. Climate change more than any other issue will impact our children and their children. An event such as this symposium would raise the profile of our organization in the eyes of the community. It would be promoted with the goal of generating attendance of about 500 including students and general public.

Our committee is now faced with completing its task which is to recommend to the board of GN to either go ahead with this plan or abandon it. That is the mission of this steering committee. Our committee recognizes that the amount of money involved is more than our small non-profit society has the means to provide. Therefore we would need community financial support and a partner that can augment this effort. Medicine Hat College has expressed some interest in partnering with us and we hope to meet with them shortly to determine what such a partnership might entail. Financial support would have to come from outside our society through grants, corporate sponsors and admission charges.

It is also our intention to involve you, our members, in the final decision to go ahead if that is the recommendation from our committee to the board and they agree. Because this is a major undertaking it could only succeed if there is full membership support and involvement. That won't be necessary if our committee recommends to not go ahead. Feedback from you, our members, is welcomed.

**Submitted by Phil Horch, President**

#### **GN Field Trips, Neighbourhood Walks and Activities in 2021**

Even though various events had to be adjusted or cancelled again in 2021 due to continued COVID-19 conditions, GN had a successful year with a variety of outdoor activities and events throughout the year.

At the beginning of the year, winter conditions were ideal for both **Nature Walks** on various trails in Medicine Hat, and for **Cross-Country Skiing** on Spring Creek Trail in Elkwater. These outings were enjoyed by 14 different GN members.

For celebrating **World Water Week** in March, Martha Munz Gue initiated the joint GN and SEAWA project **Adopted-a-Pond** with litter cleanup and invasive weed removal at Connaught Pond and then at Leinweber Pond. And within a few weeks, all 20 ponds in Medicine Hat were adopted and cared for by members as well as non-members of the two organizations. This activity continued successfully throughout the year, and was published in the Nature Alberta Magazine Fall 2021 issue.

On April 22, **International Earth Day**, cleanup was conducted at Ranchlands riparian area, as well as at Medicine Hat College Ponds, and then at other Parks over the next two weeks.

Over 40 **Neighbourhood Wednesday Walks** and other outdoor activities were enjoyed by GN members throughout the spring, summer and fall seasons. During two of the walks in September, additional **Litter Cleanup** of Ranchlands and Strathcona Island Park was included.

Four **Birding Field Trips** were conducted; first to Manyberries (Birding Trail Guide #4 area) led by Ben Verner on March 27th; to Sauders/Murray Reservoirs (Trail #2 area) by Milt Spitzer on April 24<sup>th</sup>; to Cypress Hills (Trail #7) by Phil Horch on July 3<sup>rd</sup>; and lastly to Schuler & Many Island Lakes (Trail #8 area) by Milt Spitzer on September 25<sup>th</sup>.

On September 1<sup>st</sup>, a special outing and lunch picnic to **Red Rock Coulee** was enjoyed by 19 members followed by a few stopping to see SEAWA's restoration site at the Yeast site along Seven Persons Creek.

The Medicine Hat Interpretive Program organized and ran a great variety of activities during 2021. Even though the Nature Centre was closed for part of the year, many of the activities were available either online or conducted outdoors by registration of small groups. In addition, the **Spring Bird and Wildflower Counts** as well as the **Christmas Bird Count** were organized by Marty Drut. A summary of the MHIP activities is given in Chief Interpreter annual report as well as on the MHIP and GN Websites, and reported in the GN monthly Sagebrush Chronicle.

**Submitted by John Slater**

## Upcoming Events, Field Trips and Announcements

Due to the changeable weather and snow conditions for XC Skiing, we are planning to focus our activities with walks in the City on WEDNESDAY mornings starting at 10 AM. Please come and enjoy the fresh air and beauty of nature along the following trails. Wear suitable footwear and hat & gloves depending on the weather. Also bring your binoculars to spot birds and wildlife as well as your camera to snap pictures!

**Wed Feb 16:** McCutcheon Drive NW, meeting at Smythe Ave.

**Wed Feb 23:** Strathcona Island Park, meeting at the Heritage Building.

**Wed March 2:** Police Point Park, meeting at the Nature Centre.

**Wed March 9:** Leinweber Park, Crestwood Drive, top of Scholten Hill (off Carry Drive).

**Tuesday, February 22: GN Zoom Meeting:** (described on front page of this Chronicle).

**Note: Interpretive Program events** are described in page 2 of this Chronicle.

**March 19: 09:00 to Noon: SEAWA and GN** request volunteers to participate in World Water Day by meeting at Connaught Pond to pick up trash and to see a demonstration on how to propagate cottonwoods in pots and the renewal of the Adopt-a-Pond initiative.

### Work Shops and Webinars

**March 2: Webinar: An Overview of the Alberta Invasive Species Council and their biocontrol release program in Alberta:** For details go to: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/3044324915724580624>

**Great Plains Conservation Network Annual General Meeting:** The Great Plains Conservation Network, GPCN, of which Grasslands Naturalists is now an Official Participant of, is having its Annual General Meeting via Zoom, on February 25 at 9 am MST. GPCN is a collaboration of more than 25 non-profit and tribal organizations working together to conserve and restore the wildlife, habitats, and ecological processes of the Great Plains. Information regarding this International Network can be found on their website. <https://plainsconservation.org/> and <https://plainsconservation.org/who-we-are/>

### Art Show - Ponds, Coulees, and Creeks - April 19 to June 14

We are pleased to announce that this spring SEAWA and Grasslands Naturalists have partnered to put together an exhibition titled, Ponds, Coulees, and Creeks. This exhibit will run from April 19 - June 14, 2022 and will be open to the public Monday - Friday from 12-5 pm-The TREX Space is the headquarters for the southeast region of the program that is organized through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. Learn more about it [here!](#) During our tenure at the TREX Space, we will be sharing the gallery with another traveling show called We Are Still in Control. This show features art from three Blackfoot artists who work in different creative styles. The TREX gallery is downtown on the corner of 3rd Street and 5th Avenue SE.

In 2019 and 2020 SEAWA & GN hosted three art shows at the Arcade Plaza: "Water Art Show", "Winter Water" and "Riparian Plants and Scenes". That space was donated to us, until it was leased to the Country Crumbs Bakery. We also installed a show for World Water Day in March 2020, at the public library, just as the pandemic was closing down public spaces. It was a beautiful show! But the doors were closed! It was a lovely surprise this year to be invited to book a time for an exhibition at the TREX Public Gallery.

If you would like to contribute a piece of art, please contact the SEAWA office at 403-580-8980 or [executive@seawa.ca](mailto:executive@seawa.ca), before World Water Day (March 22). Come and celebrate the art depicting the beautiful ponds, coulees, and creeks we have in the SEAWA watershed! Completed work will be delivered to TREX space the first full week of April.

**Submitted by Martha Munz Gue**

### Exciting Sightings by Bob Frew

February is usually a slow month for bird sightings. Some irruptive “winter finch” species which we usually encounter at this time of year are noticeably absent; **White-winged Crossbills**, **Red Crossbills**, as well as **Pine Grosbeaks**, have not been reported to date. These species are erratic wanderers, with wide fluctuations in their southward movements from year to year. Exciting sightings recently reported by GN birders include the following:

**Golden Eagle**- The adult Golden Eagle’s plumage is entirely dark brown, with a distinctive golden brown on the nape and hind neck, otherwise it is similar to the juvenile **Bald Eagle**. Many birders travel to Mount Lorette in Kananaskis Country each fall to count the number of Golden Eagles migrating (<https://eaglewatch.ca/>). However, some of these eagles do overwinter in southern Alberta. Dan Schiebelbein observed two such Golden Eagles at the intersection of Jackpot Rd. and Eagle Butte Rd. in the Cypress Hills on January 17<sup>th</sup>, and Bob Frew observed a Golden Eagle along RGE Rd. 73 north of the hamlet of Seven Persons on January 29<sup>th</sup>.

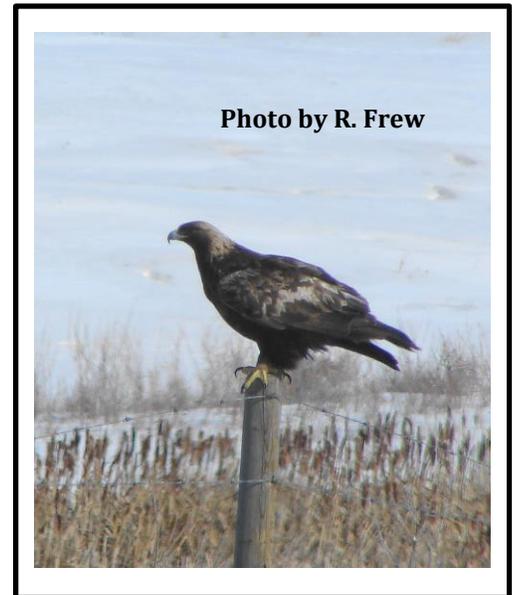
**Snowy Owl**- These iconic arctic owls continue to be seen in rural areas north of Seven Persons. Dan Schiebelbein reported four Snowy Owls along RGE Rds. 71, 72, and 73, north of Seven Persons on January 16<sup>th</sup>, which are probably attracted to that unique ~25 square kilometer area each winter because of the availability of prey.

**Accipiters**- Milt Spitzer recently reported the sighting two of Alberta’s three accipiter species at Police Point Park; an adult **Northern Goshawk** on January 10<sup>th</sup>, another on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, and a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** (smaller than the similar **Cooper’s Hawk**) on January 25<sup>th</sup>. These accipiter species are migratory, usually leaving the province in September-October, although some individuals linger/overwinter in the province.

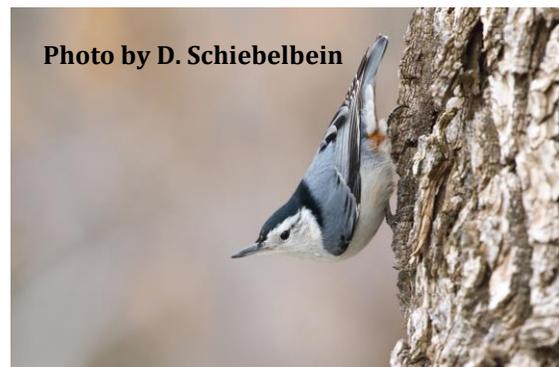
**Hoary Redpoll**- This species is an uncommon to rare winter visitor. It usually mixes with flocks of **Common Redpolls**, and can go unnoticed. Both species are similar visually and vocally, the white-looking birds in the flock with minimal or absent streaking on the under parts and rump are likely to be the Hoarys. Colton Prins reported a Hoary Redpoll on two separate occasions in early January at a bird feeder at his Redcliff home. Dan Schiebelbein also identified and reported a Hoary among 13 Common Redpolls at Cavan Lake on January 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Northern-Shrike**- This uncommon migrant and winter visitor was observed by Bob Frew , near TWP Rd. 114/RGE Rd. 53, south of the city on February 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Please report your exciting sightings to Bob Frew: phone 403-526-4573, or e-mail [Robert.frew@shaw.ca](mailto:Robert.frew@shaw.ca)**



Looking North from Cypress Hills nr. Spruce Coulee



White-breasted Nuthatch



**Society of Grasslands Naturalists**  
Box 2491, Medicine Hat, Alberta T1A 8G8



## Membership Form for 2022

Name\* \_\_\_\_\_ Name of 2<sup>nd</sup> Family Member \*\* \_\_\_\_\_

Address\* \_\_\_\_\_ Membership: Individual \$20/year \_\_\_\_\_

City / Province\* \_\_\_\_\_ Family \$25/year \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code\* \_\_\_\_\_ Organization \$25/year \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone+ \_\_\_\_\_ Donation \_\_\_\_\_ Tax Receipt Available

Email++ \_\_\_\_\_ **Total Enclosed** \_\_\_\_\_

Preference for receiving Chronicle newsletter\*:

Post or  Email or  Neither

Payments can be made by cheque, cash or using e-Transfer at [memberships@grasslands-naturalists.org](mailto:memberships@grasslands-naturalists.org)

*Current and recent Chronicles can be viewed and downloaded from the Grasslands Naturalists website [www.grasslands-naturalists.org](http://www.grasslands-naturalists.org). **Regardless of payment option used, a signed membership form must be filled out and submitted.***

\* Required information. \*\* Required information for family membership.

+ Optional Information. For phone number(s), please note whether it is a residence, cell phone or business number.

++ Information required if you wish to receive the Chronicle and announcements by email.

### **Informed Consent for Field Trips**

I may wish to participate in field trips and events organized by the Society of Grasslands Naturalists.

I affirm that, as a participant, I and my child(ren)/ward(s) are prepared to stay with the group and follow the directions of the coordinator and activity leader. I affirm that, knowing my personal state of health, I feel that I am mentally and physically capable of participating in the trips and events that I choose to attend.

I acknowledge that I am aware of the inherent risks, hazards, and dangers associated with activities arising from my participation in trips, events, litter cleanups, invasive species removal or any other activity that may result in injury, sickness or death to me or my child(ren)/ward(s). Some of these risks may be specific to the area. These include, but are not limited to, animal attacks as well as poisonous snakes, insects and vegetation. Therefore, in consideration of my participation in these trips and events, for myself, my heirs, my executors, my administrators, and my successors, I voluntarily assume all risks and hereby waive all my rights against Grasslands Naturalists and unconditionally release and discharge the Grasslands Naturalists, its members, directors, officers, its affairs and its coordinators from all manner of activities, causes of action, suits, claims and demands for damages due to personal injury, sickness, death, loss or damage to property, expenses or otherwise which may or shall arise in any way as a result of my participation in the above trips and events.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of 2<sup>nd</sup> Family Member

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**Society of Grasslands Naturalists**  
 Box 2491, Medicine Hat, Alberta T1A 8G8



## Consent Form

### **Consent to the Use and Distribution of Personal Information**

Grasslands Naturalists (GN) collects personal information subject to the '*Personal Information Protection Act*' (PIPA). GN may, subject to your consent, wish to make some personal information public through, for example, its Chronicle, Website, Facebook page or newspaper article. Please indicate your consent to the following release of information and note any specific exclusion of a consent such as for children.

	Yes	No	Exclusion
Name	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Residence telephone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Cell phone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Business phone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Email address	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Residence address	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Pictures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

Beyond the above consents, GN will not distribute personal information to a third party without your consent unless such information is required, by law, to be released to a federal or provincial government agency in order, for example, to maintain GN's non-profit organization status.

### **Consent to Receive Emails Related to Commercial Activities**

GN may wish to send you emails to promote some of its commercial activities including those provided by its *Club* and *Interpretive Program*. Please indicate your consent to receiving such information.  Yes  No

### **Modification of Consents**

You may modify any of the above consents, at any time, through a written request to the member of the GN Executive responsible for Memberships.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of 2<sup>nd</sup> Family Member

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_