

THE SAGEBRUSH CHRONICLE



The Beaver, the Switch, and its Wardrobe

Beavers are one of the most successful, yet maligned species in North America and Eurasia. This talk takes you into the remarkable world of the second largest rodent on Earth, and explores how it has managed to survive and flourish against all odds.

Beavers not only physically change landscapes, they dramatically change the ecological communities that depend on those landscapes.

During this talk, you will visit the steppes of Russia, the lochs of Scotland, and then return home to a world shaped and enriched by one of the world's most enterprising species.

Presenter: Dr. Glynnis Hood, Professor of Environmental Science, UofA, Augustana

Tuesday, March 22: Zoom Meeting

- 7:00 PM to 7:50 PM: Business Meeting
- 8:00 PM to 9:00 PM: Presentation by Dr. Glynnis Hood

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

President Phil Horch 403-529-5918

phil.horch@grasslands-naturalists.org

Vice-President Martha Munz Gue, Pro Tem.

Secretary Martha Maudsley

Treasurer Angela Turner

angela.turner@grasslands-naturalists.org

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hugh.armstrong@grasslands-naturalists.org

Directors at

Large Ian Turner

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Linda Fisher

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MH Interpretive Program

(Managed by Grasslands Naturalists)

Based in Police Point Park

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

**For Information Regarding
Events, Programs and Displays**

Contact the Nature Centre

(403) 529-6225

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 10th 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 (403-528-3120). Do not imbed 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: 4th Tuesday (**suspended during COVID**), Sept. - May **Board Meetings:** 1st 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!

EDITORIAL DISCLAIMER

The opinions expressed by the authors in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the editor and the Grasslands Naturalists. The editor reserves the right to edit, reject or withdraw articles submitted. While due care will be taken of all manuscripts, photos or artwork submitted, GN cannot be held responsible for any loss or damage to such articles.

GN Website:

www.grasslands-naturalists.org

GN Facebook:

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

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

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.**

See the President's Report regarding the recently held Casino.

Rare Mosses and Ferns of SE Alberta

Cathy Linowski has graciously given permission, for me to share to interested GN members only, a pdf of her February 22, 2022 presentation. If you would like a copy for your own personal use, please contact Linda Fisher. linda.fisher@grasslands-naturalists.org

President's Report To GN Members: March 2022

Since I last reported to you, our GN members, there has much happening. Besides the dropping of most pandemic restrictions in Alberta and the start of the war in the Ukraine (our world sure has been topsy-turvy these last couple years) there has been much happening on the local environmental front.

Our pro tem Vice-President Martha Gue has been busy gearing up the Adopt-A-Pond program for another season. This past year there were over 100 people involved in this wonderful community effort which maintains the beauty of ponds and riparian areas. Contact Martha if you're interested in helping this coming season.

Your Board of Directors and various committees have been busy. The Scenic Views project is nearing completion, the Climate Symposium Committee is seeking partnership with Medicine Hat College, David Gue has produced a marvellous new brochure promoting our society, many environmental issues are being monitored and addressed including irrigation developments, solar farm developments, invasive species initiatives, and too many others to mention here.

Another new initiative underway is to seek Bird Friendly City status for Medicine Hat under a certification program developed by Nature Canada, the umbrella organization for all naturalist societies. We are also planning to participate with a booth in the Spring Home and Trade Show, April 22-24 along with SEAWA as a membership recruiting effort. If you can spare a few hours that weekend, we could certainly use some help manning our booth. Contact me if you're interested. My e-mail is listed elsewhere in this Chronicle. Most importantly, is the following report on our meeting with the City of Medicine Hat regarding the planned Master Environmental Plan for our City.

Environmental Master Plan meeting with Medicine Hat – Myself and Vice-President Martha Gue met with the City's Director of Environment, Lands and Government Relations, Kevin Redden and two of his staff members on March 3 for 1-1/2 hours to discuss the development of a new Master Environmental Plan that has recently been authorized by our City Council. We received a brief from Kevin and his staff describing what they hope to inaugurate in the next two years beginning with the development of a strategic framework which will include opportunities for public consultation.

Martha and I also shared GN's vision for a City Environmental Plan and it quickly became apparent that we share very similar visions of how such a plan should work. Hopefully, the vision shared by Kevin and his staff will survive the development process and become a long-standing effective protection for environmentally sensitive lands that lie within city limits. This initiative is in its infancy but looks promising, especially given the leanings of our new City Council.

Martha and I also had the opportunity to discuss some current matters at this meeting such as the new mountain bike trails between Medicine Hat and Echo Dale Park, the protections needed for native grasslands, hillsides and riparian areas within the city, the importance of the Ranchlands preserve, and the need for better protection of Police Point Park habitat, among others.

Continued on next page

Overall, the meeting was cordial and positive and we offered GN's support for the scope of the plan that they are aspiring to create. We invited Kevin and/or one of his staff members to participate in a future GN Indoor Program and share the proposed plan with all of our members. Watch for this to happen in either the fall or early next year.

Casino Event Was Successful – Our Fund-Raising Chairperson and Past President, Hugh Armstrong reports that the casino event that our members worked in this past month was successful. This is one of our most important fund-raising events of the year. It will take a few months to learn how much money was raised by our volunteer involvement but it usually amounts to a few thousands dollars. A big thank-you to **Bruce McLeod**, our volunteer Casino Manager and all the other volunteers who worked Saturday and Sunday evening late into the night to make this possible. You are so appreciated!

Remember our AGM has been re-scheduled to June 28 – There is still time for you to nominate people for GN's Executive and to nominate a worthy person for an Life-Time Membership. Positions that are eligible for nominations include President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. Our current Secretary Martha Maudsley and Treasurer, Angela Turner are willing to continue in their positions for another year. I have informed the nominations committee that I am willing be President for one more year but if there is another worthy candidate willing to be President, I am quite prepared to step aside. I do not plan to remain President longer than one more year. It is time that someone younger and more computer savvy than me step into the role. We are looking for a Vice-President who will be willing to become President in the future so this is an important position looking for a candidate. Martha Gue has graciously stepped in as pro tem Vice-President but states that she has no ambitions to be President. Our organization has been an important player in south eastern Alberta for almost 40 years and we definitely need emerging leaders in order to carry on our rich heritage of studying and defending nature. Send your nominations to Martha Gue, our nominations chairperson. Her e-mail is mmunzegue@telusplanet.net

**Submitted by
Phil Horch, President**

Adopt a RIVER Path

Since all the ponds in Medicine Hat are adopted, and also the areas beside the creeks, we are now looking for individuals, households, and groups who would like to adopt an area beside the river. Most of the north side of the river is in negotiation with three groups. So that leaves the entire stretch of the South Side of the River.

If you, your business, club, or association would like to have a special relationship with a section of the path along the South Side of the river, please call Ian (403-529-6225) or Martha (403-526-2226). An individual or household who adopts a pond or path agrees to four simple things: 1. Visit the area every week or two and give it some love (meditate, sing, hum, dance, sketch, stretch..... whatever!). 2. Pick up trash. 3. Report invasive species on EDDMapS app and to parks office (We help with that). and 4. Invite one or two people to do the same.

When a **group** adopts a pond or path it still boils down to individuals and households. Four or more members agree to do the same four simple tasks. . Groups usually have a larger area which the volunteers can divide in whatever way works for them. In addition the group may plan a group excursion to the adopted area once or twice a year.

Submitted by Martha Munz Gue

Exciting Sightings

Late winter can be a quiet time for birding in Southeastern Alberta. As we enter the month of March, **Horned Lark** sightings have been reported alongside the gravel Township and Range roads south and west of the city. As one of our earliest migrants, the Horned Lark precedes the **Mountain Bluebird** as a harbinger of spring. Resident winter species including; **House Finch, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Tree Sparrow, Common Redpoll and Dark-eyed Junco** have been attracted to the feeders at the Police Point Park Nature Centre. Also in the park small flocks of **Bohemian Waxwings** continue to be reported, feeding on the remnants of last fall's scarce berry crop. Other recent sightings include:

A **Townsend's Solitaire** appears to be overwintering in the vicinity of Dan Schiebelbein's residence in NE Crescent Heights. It has been observed regularly over the past month, most recently on March 5th, and is usually in Dan's back or front yard and immediate adjacent properties; the Solitaire is probably attracted by the Juniper Tree seeds, and a heated birdbath in Dan's yard. This thrush species breeds throughout the Rocky Mountains and Foothill regions. It is gray, with a white eye-ring, and buffy wing patches, the white outer tail feathers are conspicuous in flight. There have been numerous overwintering records for this species over the years, and also breeding records for the Cypress Hills.

Common Redpoll- This small finch is an irruptive migrant, in some years they can be everywhere and scarce in others. The male can be identified by its red cap and breast, a black chin, streaked back, and white rump. The species has been seen regularly during February and early March at the Nature Centre's feeders by the Police Point Park Interpretive Staff. Flocks of Redpolls have been reported further afield by GN birders this winter, they are usually first detected vocally by their trills and twittering, and by their undulating flight as they seek seeds in weedy pastures, and rural shelter belts. The largest, a flock of ~ 200 redpolls was reported by Colton Prins near Rattlesnake Lake on January 9th.



Photo by Dan Schiebelbein dansnaturephotography.com

Northern Shrike- This migrant is a rare winter visitor to southern parts of the province, and is similar to the Loggerhead Shrike which is seen in the grasslands in summer. The Northern Shrike has blue gray upper parts, black wings and tail, its black mask is narrower than that of the Loggerhead, and does not extend above the eye, or across the forehead. The species leaves southern Alberta for its far northern breeding grounds by early April. Milt Spitzer and Bob Frew observed a Northern Shrike perched atop a Cottonwood Tree in Police Point Park on March 4th.

Snowy Owl- Lack of prey can force these iconic arctic residing owls to move southward in winter, and they can often be encountered in the grasslands of Southern Alberta at this time. The first sighting this winter was reported back on December 2nd by Dan Schiebelbein in the area north of the hamlet of Seven Persons. Dan's most recent sighting was reported on February 17th along RGE Rd. 71 between TWP Road 120 and 122. Snowy Owls usually leave the province by mid to late March.

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

Upcoming Events, Field Trips and Announcements

Wednesday Walks (All start at 10:00 AM)

March 16: Leinweber Park, Crestwood Drive at top of Scholten Hill (off Carry Drive)

March 23: Pond along Somerside Road SE (behind Canadian Tire)

March 30: Pond behind Masterpiece Senior Residence (off Southlands Drive SE)

April 6: Ross Glen Nature Park, Trail from East Glen Drive SE to search for Prairie Crocus

March 22: Monthly GN Meeting (See title page for details)

April 2: Ben Verner Memorial Trip to the Manyberries Area: For many years Ben Verner led a trip to the Manyberries area to observe Sharp-tailed Grouse and to find early spring bird migrants. Meet at the Dunmore Road Tim Horton's at **06:00 AM**. With the relaxing of COVID rules we will carpool here for those that are ok with doing so otherwise one can take their own vehicle. Dress warmly and in layers as the Manyberries Chinook (cold east wind) is often encountered. Bring a lunch as the field trip will end about mid afternoon. For further details contact Milt Spitzer milton.spitzer@gmail.com.

Other Events

March 19: 09:00 AM to Noon at Connaught Pond: Year two of the Adopt-a-Pond Initiative will be celebrated by GN and SEAWA. Participants will be shown how to identify shrubs and trees and how to use the EDDMapS. SEAWA will demonstrate propagation of plains cottonwood stems. After that volunteers will clean up Connaught Pond and the trailhead of Marlborough Coulee.

March 22: Groundwater: Making the Invisible Visible: Join Alberta WPACs virtual World Water Day for a province wide discussion of the value of groundwater and water resources. More information and registration details can be found at:

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/groundwater-making-the-invisible-visible-wpacs-world-water-day-2022-tickets-246137863977>

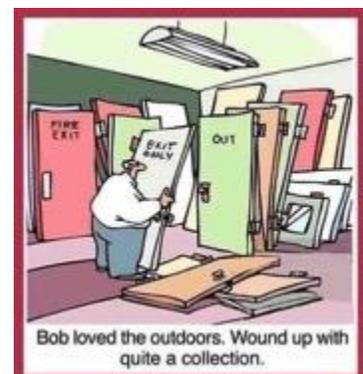
March 22: Final day to register intent to participate in the **Art Show at the TREX Space: "Ponds, Coulees and Creeks"** Over 25 artists have registered so far. Art works are to be delivered to the TREX space downtown during the first week of April. The show opens on April 19 and runs to mid June.

How to go on an Alberta Wildlife Safari; according to naturalist Brian Keating: Mr. Keating was recently interviewed by CBC Calgary the summary of which can be found at:

<https://a.msn.com/r/2/AAUQjGA?m=en-ca&ocid=News>



<Townsend's Solitaire
Seen and photographed
by Ian and Angela
Turner. Perhaps the
same bird that has been
coming to Dan
Schiebelbein's heated
birdbath all winter?
Same species has also
been seen in SE
Medicine Hat.



Migratory Ducks Roughly Ordered by Approximate Date of Appearance in the Spring

Mallard



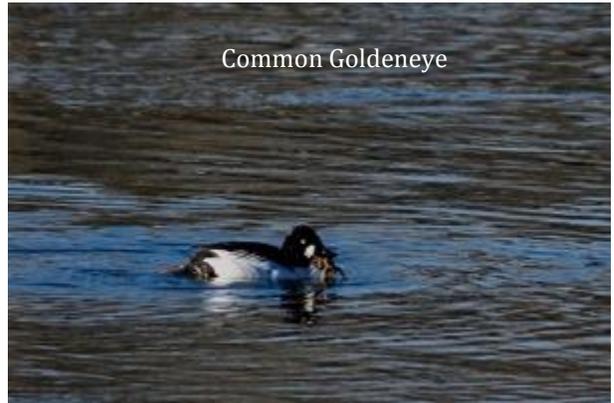
Green-winged Teal



Northern Pintail



Common Goldeneye



Northern Shoveler



Gadwall



Bufflehead



American Wigeon





Common Merganser



Red-breasted Merganser



Hooded Merganser



Canvasback



Redhead



Ring-necked Duck



Cinnamon Teal



Blue-winged Teal

Missing are Ruddy Duck and Lesser Scaup (Unfortunately there was insufficient space for their photos).



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



Membership Form for 2022

Name* _____ Name of 2nd 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

*Current and recent Chronicles can be viewed and downloaded from the Grasslands Naturalists website 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 2nd 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 2nd Family Member

Date: _____

Date: _____