

Grasslands Naturalists General Meeting

Tuesday, February 22, 2022: Zoom Meeting 7:05 pm

- 1. Call to order – Phil Horch, President:** Thanked Board Member, Ian Turner, for setting up the Zoom meeting plus giving instructions. He also thanked Betty Rainville, acting Secretary, who filled in for Martha Maudsley. Phil briefly mentioned the challenges, as President of GN, that come with the changing regulations and restrictions of the pandemic. He spoke about the high levels of mental and emotional stress that society has experienced over the past two years. Lastly, Phil stressed the therapeutic value of immersing ourselves in the natural world especially during this disruptive time.
- 2. Member’s Exciting Sightings: Phil and Annalora Horch’s** sightings in August 2021 in the Boreal Forest of Manitoba included a Hawk Owl, two bear cubs frolicking with no mother bear in sight, a huge black bear munching on acorns in an Oak tree, an Osprey plucking fish out of the river, and countless Ruby Throated Hummingbirds in a feeding frenzy before their journey South. **Ian and Angela Turner** enjoyed a flock of Bohemian Wax Wings feasting on berries in their back yard. **Linda Fisher** saw an early gopher (Richardson’s ground squirrel) on her road. **Martha Munz Gue** and **David** viewed over 50 House Finches in their Larch tree for almost half an hour. Three members added a touch of humour by describing their long overdue visits with children and grandchildren as “exciting sightings”.
- 3. President’s Report – Phil Horch:** reminded members that **membership renewals** are due - see last 2 pages of the Chronicle for renewal forms and waivers.
Phil also reported that he, and someone from the **Climate Change Symposium Committee**, will be meeting with Clay Bos, the Academic Dean of MHC, as well as with someone from the College Advancement Dept. They will be discussing a possible partnership for the Climate Symposium.
Phil offered a big thank you to everyone who volunteered for Casino nights this coming weekend, and stressed the importance of Casino funds to cover our large insurance cost.
 - A. New Vice-President – pro tem: Martha Munz Gue** is the new Vice-President. Phil announced that Martha is Chair of the Nomination Committee and will be helping him as President. Congratulations Martha.
 - B. Upcoming Meeting with City – Master Environment Plan:** Phil announced that the Mayor and City Clerk’s Office contacted him to say they have decided to create and adopt a **Master Environmental Plan**. Phil, and Martha as Vice-President, will be meeting with Kevin Redden, Director, Environment, Land and Government Relations on March 3 to hear the GN vision for the Master Environmental Plan before public consultations commence. Gerry Ehlert has provided Phil with some good material, and other **GN members are invited to share their ideas** with Phil or Martha before the meeting. Martha stressed the importance of members’ help with **specific examples** of times they were unhappy with what has happened to nature within our city, in order to have certain aspects written into policy or a master plan.
 - C. Bird Friendly City Initiative:** Phil reminded members about the Nature Canada Bird Friendly City initiative brought up at the last General Meeting. Phil, Marty Drut, Ian and Angela Turner, and possibly more, have formed a small team to bring this plan to the City. Contact Phil to receive baseline criteria that the group is working with in order for the City to gain Bird Friendly status.
 - D. Nominations for AGM and annual reports:** Phil reminded members that the AGM has been moved to **June 28, 2022** to provide the option of having an indoor or outdoor location depending on weather and COVID regulations. There is still time to nominate someone for all Executive positions;

President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Please forward those nominations to Martha Munz Gue, new Chair of the Nominations Committee.

You may also submit nominations for **“Life-time” Membership for a current or past member**, or **“Honorary” Membership** to a person **outside the Society** who has made exceptional contributions to the society. (See Clause 3.1.2 of the bylaws) or page 3 of Jan. /2022 Chronicle. If someone accepts an invitation to be nominated, the nominator should submit the reasons for the nomination, and mail or email it to the Nominating Committee for review. Deadline for submission is **April 30th. Annual Reports are also due to Paul**, at that time, from **each committee chairperson**.

- E. Spring Trade Show:** Phil reported that the Sunshine Home and Garden Show has been postponed to **April 22, 23, and 24th**. We are sharing the cost of a booth with SEAWA, South Eastern Watershed Alliance, in hopes of recruiting new members and raising the profile of our Society. Phil will be spending time at the booth, and asks that GN members **volunteer to assist** for a couple of hours over the three day period

Rob Gardner asked if some of the display panels from the Nature Centre would be used. Phil replied that there will be a display using the large GN banner as well as several pieces of GN literature. Phil noted that **David Gue** has created a well-written piece of literature describing the history of GN, and who we are as a Society. It has been submitted, along with six letters of recommendation, for the **Emerald Award** nomination. Phil thanked Martha and David sincerely for the considerable effort they dedicated to this project. This piece of work can also be converted into a promotional piece for our Society, Phil noted.

- F. Irrigation Developments:** none to report

- 4. Casino Report – Hugh Armstrong** introduced Casino Chair, **Bruce McLeod**, and noted that **Elaine Zimmer** is Co-chair. Bruce reported that Crystal Bates spoke to him Feb.20 to ensure that everything is in order for the upcoming Casino on Feb.26 & 27th. He has the Casino license and application, 2 signed cheques and a voided cheque, the electronic funds transfer notification, and a new license application for the following AGLC Casino after this one. Shift schedules are also set up with GN volunteers. Bruce appreciates the information he received from **Justine Bolen and Crystal**. The Casino Advisor will be providing hands-on training to the volunteers.

Many thanks to Bruce for taking on this fundraiser that is so important to the Society.

- 5. GN Finance Report – Angela Turner, Treasurer :** reported more memberships being renewed to make 21 individual memberships and 26 family renewals, or sign-ups, this year. There are 2 free memberships for the speakers we’ve had this year, and six lifetime memberships. Donations received this month amounted to \$230. Our biggest expense of the year, Executive and Business Insurance at \$2,730., was due this month. Thanks to the MHIP for paying a portion of the Business Insurance. Angela purchased six Charitable Donation receipt books at \$159. She also paid half of the booth at the April Trade Show at \$283.50. SEAWA will be paying the remaining half. Chequing account: \$7,716.64 and Savings \$16 621.14.

- 6. MHIP Report – Alicia Lew, Chief Interpreter / Hugh Armstrong, Operations Chair:**

Alecia noted February was another exciting month at the Nature Centre. There have been several staff changes, including Park Interpreter, Lisa Kennedy, who had to resign Feb. 15 to focus more on family. Alecia said she enjoyed working with Lisa, wished her well, and thanked her for contributing to the team.

Tamera Miller starts today as part time Interpreter, bringing her experience with Burrowing Owls, as well as her creativity and passion, to the role.

Alecia noted that 50% of the Interpretive Program team have started only in the last six weeks. She appreciates everyone's patience while the IP team becomes comfortable in the new situation, and becomes familiar with the more fundamental aspects of their position.

Alicia reported this month has been deemed February Family Month, thanks to the generous sponsorship of the Kiwanis Club of Medicine Hat toward programming in the Park.

Recently some Hatters have been taking advantage of the complimentary cross country skiing, in spite of the weather.

Toddlers and families have enjoyed the Tuesday morning Tiny Tracks nature program.

The Letters to Seniors event was hosted by Interpreter, Grace, and generated over 50 heartwarming cards for seniors at Cypress View Foundation.

Bethany, Park Interpreter, led a successful winter activity Bingo, with over 50 people participating throughout the day. Other great programs include The Birds and the Bees, as well as workshops on wildlife kit building. Although cross country ski programs had to be cancelled, the IP is seeing a slight increase in school programs being booked.

Alicia thanked Grant McLeod for loaning colorful race swag and photos to decorate the cross country skiing sport history exhibit at the Nature Centre.

The IP is preparing to sell Ukrainian Easter Egg Decorating Kits again, and to offer the egg decorating program to the Grade Threes in South Eastern Alberta. Corlaine Gardner has graciously offered to demonstrate this art form to the Interpretive Program staff.

Alicia explained there will be no Easter celebration for the public this year.

To conclude her report, Alicia asked that members contact her through her Nature Line email at mhip@natureline.info, which is checked regularly.

Hugh Armstrong thanked Alicia and staff for doing a fabulous job. He noted the end of the 5 year contract with the City takes place this year, and will be discussed in early September.

- 7. Indoor Program Report: Linda Fisher, Indoor Program Chair.** Linda announced that tonight's presenters are Ron and Cathy Linowski, retired Environmental Science Instructors MHC. They will be speaking on the Rare Mosses and Ferns of the Arid Mixed Grass Prairie. (See item # 11 below)
March 22 Zoom General Meeting speaker will be Glynnis Hood, Ecologist and Professor of Environmental Science at the University of Alberta, Augustana Campus, Camrose. Dr. Hood has been studying beavers for many years, and will share some of the information she has learned about these very resourceful and ecologically important rodents.
Lastly, Linda noted that Grasslands Naturalists Society is now a member of the **Great Plains Conservation Network** (GPCN). Their AGM is scheduled for this Friday, Feb.25 from 9 am to 2:30 pm. If anyone is interested in the agenda and zoom link, please contact Linda at linda.fisher@grasslands-naturalists.org
- 8. Issues Committee Report – Martha Munz Gue** will present the report tonight for **John Slater, Chair**.

 - 1. The Issues Committee** was formed to provide more time to discuss, ponder, and recommend to the Board a course of action on issues of concern to the members. If you as a member have an issue you would like to pursue, the Issues Committee will work with you on that issue. The board makes the final decisions on actions. Currently the Issues Committee is also coordinating Weekly Walks and Field Trips. Suggestions are welcome.
 - 2. GN is partnering with SEAWA on three initiatives:** the Adopt a Pond, the "Ponds, Coulees and Creeks" Art Show at the Trex space, and "Special Days activities":

Adopt a Pond or Path. All but one of the individuals, households, or groups that

adopted ponds and creek agreed to continue in 2022. Now we have six responses of individuals, households, or groups that have agreed to adopt a pond or path.

Art Show. GN artists working in any medium are invited to contribute to the Art Show downtown at the Trex space on 3rd Street and 5th Avenue. The due date for Intention to submit artwork is anytime up to March 22 (World Water Day). Deliver artworks during the first week of April. The show runs for 2 months from mid-April to mid-June.

Special Days. World Water Day will be celebrated on March 19 at Connaught Pond together with SEAWA. All GNers are welcome to participate. Wear sturdy boots and work gloves. The agenda includes the launch of year two of the Adopt a Pond or Path initiative, identifying local and invasive plants, using the EDDMapS app to report invasive species, learning how to propagate cottonwood cuttings, and finding out some of the learnings from the restoration experiments around the pond. It will be a full and varied morning from 9 am to noon. All are welcome. Invite your families. Other water-related online events will be listed in the March Chronicle, along with **Earth Day** which will be celebrated on April 23rd.

- 3. Weekly Walks** and occasional cross country skiing (when snow is available). This is a wonderful activity where relationships with nature and members are strengthened. Join us if you can! This week (tomorrow) Walk in **Strathcona Island Park meeting at the Heritage Building at 10 am**. The snow conditions are perfect now for Cross Country Skiing. Phone a friend and consider skiing at PPP, Kin Coulee, or Elkwater. (John reported excellent conditions at Elkwater yesterday and today with 10 inches of fresh snow). Reminder that X Country skis may be rented at the Nature Centre.

- 9. Other Announcements** none.
Business Meeting ended at 7:55 pm.

10. Coffee Break

- 11. Introduction of Guest Speaker – Linda Fisher:** (See Indoor Program Report item #7. Above).

- 12. Linowski Presentation – Cathy Linowski** regrets that Ron will not be available for tonight's presentation due to a commitment in B.C.
Cathy spoke about some of the mosses and ferns of South Eastern Alberta, including typical habitat conditions and other species associated with these plants. She hopes that GN members will make her aware of mosses they may see in native grassland.

- 13. Closing Remarks and Speaker appreciation – Linda Fisher thanked Cathy** for her interesting presentation. She suggested members contact her for a PDF of tonight's talk, and will put a link in the next Sagebrush Chronicle. Cathy received a one year membership to GN, a copy of Birding Trails of Southeastern Alberta, a birding checklist, and thermos with PPP logo, and other GN brochures.

- 14. Adjournment-9 pm**