

# THE SAGEBRUSH CHRONICLE



## Community Spirit Awards

Grasslands Naturalists and the Interpretive Program were well represented at the Medicine Hat Awards night.

The top left photo shows all the award recipients along with **Mayor Linnsie Clark** at the far left and at the podium Councilor Allison Knodel about to present the special “**Award of Excellence**” to **Martha Munz Gue**.



On the bottom left are: Phil Horch who accepted the “**Award of Service**” on behalf of **Gerry Ehlert**. In the centre is Martha with her award and at the right is **Bob Townsend**, Operations Committee member, who accepted the “**Award of Service**” on behalf of the Interpretive Program at Police Point Park.

## Annual General Meeting on June 28 at 4:00 PM at PP Park

Two new honorary lifetime members will be awarded. Names will not be revealed until after the AGM election of officers and reports from various committees take place. Immediately following the business meeting a celebration honouring the retirements and achievements of Corlaine Gardner and Marty Drut of the Medicine Hat Interpretive Program will take place. Come and celebrate with your GN friends. Everyone is welcome to attend and friends and family of honourees are especially welcome. During the business meeting only paid up members of GN are eligible to vote.

**Bring Lawn Chairs and plates and cutlery** as pizza and cake will be served. If the weather is inclement the meeting will be held in the Nature Centre.

**Come and Celebrate with Us!**

## Executive and Board Members

President Phil Horch 403-529-5918  
[phil.horch@grasslands-naturalists.org](mailto:phil.horch@grasslands-naturalists.org)

Vice-President Martha Munz Gue, Pro Tem.

Secretary Martha Maudsley

Treasurer Angela Turner  
[angela.turner@grasslands-naturalists.org](mailto:angela.turner@grasslands-naturalists.org)

Past-President Hugh Armstrong  
[hugh.armstrong@grasslands-naturalists.org](mailto:hugh.armstrong@grasslands-naturalists.org)

Directors at

Large Ian Turner  
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Linda Fisher  
[linda.fisher@grasslands-naturalists.org](mailto:linda.fisher@grasslands-naturalists.org)

## 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



Hugh Armstrong presenting the "Award of Service" to the present IP team. Left to Right: Grace Porter, Drake Meili, Alicia Lew, Hugh Armstrong, Ian Langill, and Ayla Wikjord. (Not pictured: Tamara Miller and Bethany Klein). Note: the Award was decided on when the former staff (Corlaine, Marty, etc..) were at the Nature Centre but no doubt, as has already been demonstrated, the present team will carry on this excellent work.

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 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:** 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday (**Zoom Meetings only until further notice**), 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 403-529-6225**

**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

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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.

**Call the Nature Centre to get information regarding programs to be conducted the latter part of June and during the summer!**

**Also visit the Nature Centre for nature related gifts!**

## Member's Corner

We have some new members to Grasslands Naturalists! They are **Rachel Elliott**, who joined us on the GN field trip to Paul Von Huene's place and **Jim and Joan Vanden Berg** and also **Gregory Emann** and **Shannon O'Sullivan**. Welcome! We look forward to meeting all of you at our meetings or on one or more of our walks or field trips.

**Note: This is the LAST warning regarding the renewal of 2022 Membership.** While the next issue of the Chronicle will not be published until September if you are not a 2022 member you will not be receiving this or future issues. Also since this is a summer break any unannounced field trips, walks, and events will be sent out via email.

### GN's Trip to Paul and Twyla Von Huene's Property on the Ross Creek Valley

A **big thank you** to Paul and Twyla for inviting us, and hosting our field trip on May 28 to this wonderful piece of property on the upper portion of Ross Creek. A total of ten members availed themselves of this opportunity and were especially pleased that they were able to do so.



Viewing the collection of fossils, antlers and bones collected on the Von Huenes' property.



Paul pointing out the view from the top of the Ross Creek Valley



#### **The Warbler Walk at Police Point Park led by Phil Horch May 14, 2022**

We even got to see some warbler species among other interesting avian features of Police Point Park

## **President's Report To GN Members June 2022**

Probably the biggest natural event that has taken place in the past month has been the rain that came to southern Alberta. What a Godsend! One rancher mentioned to me two weeks ago that if rain does not come in the next two weeks, this year will be another ranching and agricultural disaster. It did come...and just in time! Not enough to end the drought but enough to give hope for the future.

Yesterday I visited the Cypress Hills and the native grassland has finally turned green and is showing signs of recovery. Here's hoping and praying!

**GN Legacy On Display** – The other big events this past month were the attention and honors that came to our society via the Community Spirit Awards and the Emerald Awards. Of the 9 community spirit awards given by the City of Medicine Hat, 3 were directed to our society through its members. The Medicine Hat Interpretive Program received a long overdue award for whom much credit must be directed to Corlaine Gardner and the many staff members who have worked so hard over the years impacting thousands of people with stories and revelations about nature. Gerry Ehlert received an award for all the work he has done in the plant world including some huge projects related to invasive species. I was honored to accept the award on his behalf because the covid-caused date change of the ceremony came at a time when he was out of province. And finally, the most prestigious award of the evening was given to our Martha Munz-Gue. SEAWA actually nominated her which was quite appropriate. Martha received The Heart Of Medicine Hat Award. We all know the great contributions she has made through various positions she has held in the Grasslands Naturalists, including right now as Interim Vice President, but she was also a founding member of SEAWA and also serves on their executive. In addition she is very active in other milieus of our community. Her energy and passion are boundless.

On June 1, myself, Annalora, and David and Martha Gue travelled to Calgary for the annual Emerald Foundation Awards for which we were short-listed in a non-profit legacy category. There were two others short-listed in our category, both of which were indigenous organizations involved in environmental work. We did not win but nonetheless our society was wonderfully on display at the ceremony via a power-point presentation to which David Gue contributed photos of our club activities. The event took place at Calgary's incredibly beautiful public library to which my son's architectural firm, Dialogue, had a hand in creating.

Over 200 people were in attendance, mostly people who were connected to environmental organizations that were nominated in other categories. What was striking to me was the young age of most of the attendees! Calgary actually has young people working to save the environment! That was so encouraging to see! Somehow we need for this to happen in Medicine Hat. Nonetheless, this has been a month when we could look back and realize anew what a difference our society has been making in southeastern Alberta over the years. We have much to be proud of and thankful for.

**Plan to attend GN's AGM with more awards to be handed out!** We are not finished with awards yet. On June 28 at 4 p.m. you are invited to join our AGM meeting at the Nature Center at Police Point Park. Weather permitting it will be outside so bring a lawn chair. If weather fails to cooperate we will meet inside the Nature Center so wearing masks is an option. At this event 2 new Honorary Lifetime Memberships will be awarded to worthy members of our club. At the conclusion of the AGM Business session, we will then honor our two recent retirees from the Medicine Hat Interpretive Program, Corlaine Gardner and Marty Drut. Presentations and refreshments will bring a fitting conclusion to this year's AGM. Friends and families of those being honored are welcome to join our AGM.

Our society is populated with amazing people with incredible skills. What a joy to work together with them. There are always openings for new volunteers to get involved. Your life will only be enriched if you become one of our active members. You will also find yourself learning and growing when you join one of our committees. I have been a member of 3 different Naturalist organizations over the last 54 years. My life journey has been greatly enriched because of it!

**Phil Horch**  
**President**

## Upcoming Events, Field Trips and Announcements

### Wednesday Walks all starting at 9:00 AM (finished before or by noon).

**June 15:** Redcliff River Valley Trail starting at the first parking lot down the hill on the east side by Trails Map.

**June 22:** SE Hill Trail starting at east end of 11<sup>th</sup> St SE.

**June 29:** SEAWA have invited GN Members to participate in their Restoration activities at Connaught Pond located near the College Residences. Bring gloves and wear suitable footwear.

**July 6:** College Ponds starting behind the Cultural Centre.

**July 13:** Saratoga Park starting at the bottom of Scholten Hill (South Railway St/Carry Drive SE). Additional walks in the summer will be announced by email, or details can be found by contacting the Nature Centre.

### Cypress Hills Birding Trip

**Saturday, June 25 led by Phil Horch:** Meet at the northeast corner of the Walmart parking lot at **07:00**. Bring a lunch and carpool for those that are comfortable doing so.

### Annual General Meeting

**Tuesday, June 28 at 4:00 PM at the Nature Centre:** Bring lawn chairs, plates, and cutlery as cake and pizza will be provided. If the weather is inclement the meeting will be held inside at the Nature Centre.

## Follow up Information from Api'soomaahka - Running Coyote - William Singer III

Oki. Api'soomaahka has graciously provided links to websites, Facebook pages, brochures, etc, that were asked about during his presentation.

### **Information for the 7th Annual KEPA Summit**

September 14, 15, 16 2022 - Water Conservation for the Future

Blood 148, AB, Canada

<https://www.naapigardenkepa.com/event-details/kepa-7th-annual-summit-september-14-15-16-2022>

### **Naapi's Garden and Katoyiss Seed Bank - KEPA**

<https://www.naapigardenkepa.com/>

### **Another Naapis Garden link for Instagram**

[https://www.instagram.com/naapis\\_garden/](https://www.instagram.com/naapis_garden/)

### **Naapi's Garden Native Plant and Flower Brochure**

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e5fe077316ef31fa3aa0210/t/5fd50d9cffab5d3c56d885bb/1607798187884/Naapi%27s+Garden+November+18.20+Final+copy.pdf>

**The Kainai Ecosystem Protection Association** - KEPA page, only found on Facebook.

Here you can also find the **Braves** comic Book and the **Our Family** colouring book which he designed and illustrated. (He is presently working on adding the comic book and colouring book links to the Naapis Garden and Katoyiss Seed Bank website.)

<https://m.facebook.com/KainaiEPA/>

Click on **Photos** then click on **Albums**, then click on **All Albums**, then click on **William Singer III,**

### **Api'soomaahka - Artwork**

**Podcast link from 2020 discussing Traditional Ecological Knowledge and how it relates to STEM and STEAM.**

You will have to redirect to YouTube to hear the podcast, or go directly using the YouTube link.

<https://www.migrationmusic.ca/post/episode-1-paa-pao-oh-tsi-ma-ahpihkaan-information-via-an-electronic-source> or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DBHfbkpAnNw>

## Exciting Sightings

May has been a busy month for birding with spring migration bringing an influx of bird activity to the grasslands, wetlands and riparian habitats of Southeastern Alberta. As we enter the month of June, migration has now peaked, but we can expect some late migrants and rarities, as well as much sought after prairie “specialty” species. Exciting sightings reported include the following:

**Whimbrel-** This species nests on the open tundra, and is a rare and/or casual migrant in the interior. Each spring Whimbrels pass through the Taber area, and can be seen on the surrounding tilled and irrigated agricultural fields during the month of May. On a May 14<sup>th</sup> field trip, Lloyd Bennett, fellow Lethbridge Naturalists, and visiting birder Bob Frew encountered a flock of 17 Whimbrels, which circled and landed in a pasture beside RGE Rd. 160, northeast of Taber, giving all present good looks at them. In recent years, Lloyd has seen the numbers of Whimbrels passing through the Taber area each spring drop from 1500 to 600 to a relatively few birds this spring, which may be due in part to recent drought as well as other factors. Further east, at Sauder Reservoir, Dan and Mark Schiebelbein reported 3 Whimbrels on May 15<sup>th</sup>. The Whimbrel’s bold, dark-striped crown and eye line extending through the lores are distinctive.

**Red-necked Phalarope-** Milt and Elaine Spitzer observed 5 Red-necked Phalaropes in the company of a larger number of Wilson’s Phalaropes at Pakowki Lake on May 15<sup>th</sup>. This species breeds in the arctic and subarctic tundra, and can be seen in the interior west during migration. The chestnut colour on the front and sides of the breeding female is distinctive.

**Black-bellied Plover-** Phil and Annalora Horch reported a single flock of ~800 plovers on a Lake Newell mudflat, along HWY 873, just south of Hwy 535 on May 21<sup>st</sup>. A small number of **Red Knots** were also possibly in the mix.

**Virginia Rail-** On May 24<sup>th</sup>, Milt and Elaine Spitzer, and Bob Storms, a Calgary birder reported hearing and seeing a Virginia Rail at a lookout along the Soggy Bottom Trail in Elkwater. This secretive and rare rail can be difficult to see, and its presence is usually detected by its call. Following up on this exciting sighting on May 26<sup>th</sup>, Dan Schiebelbein and Bob Frew stood at the end of the lookout for about 15 minutes, listening to the rail calling, before it finally came out in the open for about 20 to 30 seconds on two occasions, giving them very good looks, and the opportunity to photograph the rail. Ideal habitat includes freshwater lakes, ponds, and marshes with coverage of bulrushes, cattails, and sedges.



Virginia Rail: Photo by Dan Schiebelbein

**Wood Warblers-** A dozen or so of these colourful neo-tropical migrants (family *Parulidae*) can usually be tallied while they are passing through Southern Alberta to their boreal breeding grounds, while others nest locally in the coulees, and riparian habitat of the South Saskatchewan River, and in the Cypress Hills. Earlier arriving **Yellow-rumped Warblers**, **Orange-crowned Warblers**, and **Yellow Warblers** have been followed by **Tennessee Warblers**, **Blackpoll Warblers**, and **Common Yellowthroats**. A **Townsend’s Warbler**, which breeds in the coniferous forests of our mountain parks, and is considered a vagrant in the prairie region in spring, was reported and photographed in NECH by Elisha Lake on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. Several GN birders have reported recent sightings of **American Redstarts** along the Sunset Trail, and at Spruce Coulee in the Cypress Hills.

Continued on next page



Townsend's Warbler: Photo by Elisha Lake

An **Ovenbird** was detected by Bob Frew in the Enchanted Forest at Police Point Park on June 7<sup>th</sup>, first by its *Teacher Teacher Teacher* song, and then confirmed visually. There have been reports of two **Yellow-breasted Chat** sightings; Marty Drut reported one at Saratoga Park on May 29<sup>th</sup>, and Barry and Judy Anderson reported a second Chat in Ross Glen Coulee on June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Lazuli Bunting-** Dan Schiebelbein observed several Lazuli Buntings (2 males and 1 female) in the ravine across from McCoy High School in Crescent Heights on June 3<sup>rd</sup>. The male is bright turquoise above, and also on the throat, with cinnamon across the breast, and thick white upper wing bars, and is easily detected by its persistent song. The inconspicuous female is grayish-brown with a bluish-gray rump. The northernmost breeding range of the Lazuli Bunting extends into the southern parts of the province.

**White-faced Ibis-** These long-legged stork-like waders have become well established in Alberta since their initial sighting at Pakowki Lake in 1974. Participants of a Lethbridge Naturalists field trip with Lloyd Bennett observed 34 White-faced Ibis in an irrigated field along RGE Rd 160, between TWP Rds. 102 and 104, northeast of Taber on May 14<sup>th</sup>. Similarly, Milt and Elaine Spitzer reported 70 White-faced Ibis at a leaking irrigation pump northeast of Rolling Hills on May 21<sup>st</sup>. There are also anecdotal reports of recent **Glossy Ibis** sightings in Alberta.

**Grosbeaks and Tanagers-** Multiple **Rose-breasted** (3), **Black-headed Grosbeaks** (4), and **Western Tanagers** (3) were observed by Dan Schiebelbein and Bob Frew at/near the disbanded bird banding station in Elkwater on May 27<sup>th</sup>. Both Grosbeak species are highly detectable visually and vocally, but the song of the Black-headed Grosbeak can be difficult to distinguish from that of the Rose-breasted Grosbeak. The Western Tanager is usually first detected by its unique *pit-er-ick* call.

**Broad-winged Hawk-** A light and a rare dark morph of this species were reported at Police Point Park on May 12<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup> respectively. This buteo breeds in a narrow east-west strip of the southern boreal forest and parkland regions. There are breeding records for the Cypress Hills. Outside of its western breeding range, it is considered a rare migrant. The buteo's broad black and white tail bands are distinctive.

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

**Avian Jewells of the Cypress Hills**  
**First Three Photos by Dan Schiebelbein ( dansnaturephotography.com )**



American Redstart



Black-headed Grosbeak



Western Tanager



Baltimore Oriole (photo by Milt)



White-winged Scoter( photo by Milt)





**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: \_\_\_\_\_