

THE SAGEBRUSH CHRONICLE



Photo provided and approved by City of Medicine Hat



The Pathway to an Environmental Framework for the City of Medicine Hat

Co-presenters: Kevin Redden, (City of Medicine Hat Director of Environment, Land & Government Relations), and Adria Coombs, (Manager, Environmental Strategy and Compliance), will provide an update on the City of Medicine Hat Environmental Framework status currently underway.

Kevin Redden RTAg

Kevin Redden is a Registered Technologist in Agrology as a member of the Alberta Institute of Agrologists. Kevin joined the City of Medicine Hat in 2012. As part of a major corporate re-organization in April of 2021 he became Director of Environment, Land and Government Relations, a new Department formed as a result of this change.

Adria Coombs, P.En Ms. Coombs is currently the Manager of Environmental Strategy and Compliance at the City of Medicine Hat and is responsible for developing and implementing environmental strategies that support the City of Medicine Hat. As part of the 2023 Council Priorities, Ms. Coombs is managing the development City of Medicine Hat's Environmental Framework with the support of the department Director Kevin Redden and a qualified professional consulting firm.

Tuesday, January 24, 2023 at Nature Centre and by Zoom

7:00 to 7:50 PM: Business Meeting; 8:00 to 9:00 PM

For this meeting GN will continue with in-person general meetings to be held at the Nature Centre in Police Point Park. All up to date Alberta Health guidelines will be followed. We urge members attending in person meetings to also follow all up to date Alberta Health guidelines. The air ventilation system inside the theatre is poor. Please feel comfortable wearing an appropriate mask. This meeting will be a hybrid session between in-person or a Zoom meeting. For those who wish to attend on line: an email will be sent to all members a few days in advance of the meeting giving details on how to attend via Zoom.

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
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Past-President Hugh Armstrong
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Directors at

Large Ian Turner
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The Sagebrush Chronicle is published ten times a year by Grasslands Naturalists. **Submissions of writing and artwork are welcomed but may 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, Sept. to May **Board Meetings:** 1st Tuesday Sept. to 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

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.

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

January 2 to 31: Young Artists Inspired by Nature: Art Display in the Nature Centre featuring artwork by local high school students.

January 27 to End of February: Winter Story Walk: Mice Skating by Annie Silvestro.

February 20: Family Day Event: Volunteers Needed!!! Call the Natureline 403-529-6225, email mhip@natureline.info or drip in to the Nature Centre and sign up.

Cross-country skis, boots and poles as well as snowshoes are available at the Nature Centre by hourly or daily rental.

Come and visit the Nature Centre and browse the Gift Shop for Nature Related Items. Also view the amazing art from high school students in Medicine Hat.

Member's Corner

A reminder that GN memberships are due for 2023. Application forms can be found at the end of this Chronicle.

GN President's Report - Crucial GN AGM on March 28

All members of the Grasslands Naturalists Society should circle this date (Tuesday March 28) on their calendar because our society will need to make crucial decisions. At last year's AGM, our current President, Phil Horch, agreed to assume office for one more year but not beyond. He made this clear at last year's AGM. Unfortunately, last year nobody agreed to let their name stand as Vice President. As a result, Martha Munz-Gue agreed to fill in as an interim Vice-President with the understanding that she would not let her name stand for President in 2023.

Both Martha and Phil have had long-standing involvements in various positions within our society over the years including being presidents previously. Phil was previously President from 2001-2003. Advancing age and the associated symptoms of same are interfering with Phil's efforts to fulfil his duties as President. He has had weeks where his number of medical appointments have equalled his number of GN meetings. Focusing on the demands of the presidency become difficult under such circumstances. Our amazing Martha Munz-Gue, who seems to have boundless energy has made it clear that she is not about to assume the presidency now that she is in her 80's. She was previously President from 2004-2006.

Below this report you will see a call for nominations to fill GN's four executive positions. This year, more than ever, it is crucial that members step forward and allow their name to stand for leadership positions in our society. Failure to do so will threaten the future existence of our society. As a legal non-profit charitable entity, the law requires that somebody must fill the positions of President, Secretary and Treasurer.

At the moment we have a full complement of very talented and qualified board members, so whoever our new President is, will likely have a strong team to work with. Phil Horch, as Past President, would also be on the board and is agreeable to serve as support to the new president. If you value our society, care for nature, and want to see our society's rich heritage continue into a future fraught with all kinds of threats, then please consider what you can do to help.

A recent news report cited a study that had surveyed all non-profit volunteer organizations in Canada which discovered that over 60 per cent of them are experiencing a shortage of volunteers. This does not bode well for the future of democracies. For over thirty years our society has been southeastern Alberta's leading, and often only voice, in defence of our environment. We dare not let that voice go silent.

Call For Nominations for GN Executive Positions – This is to inform members of the Grasslands Naturalists Society that nominations are now being accepted for the positions of President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer of our society. Any member in good standing may make a nomination and the person being nominated must be a member of the society. It is advisable to have permission of the nominated individual prior to submitting his/her name. Submit your nominations to John Slater at jslater@telusplanet.net, or to his attention at the Grasslands Naturalists mailing address at: Box 2491, Medicine Hat, Alberta, T1A 8G8.

Call For Nominations of Honorary Lifetime Membership – Our Society bylaws permit the awarding of Honorary Lifetime Memberships to current or past members of our society who have made outstanding contributions to the society. Anyone making such a nomination should include a written description of the nominated members past involvement with the Grasslands Naturalists along with any other community involvements and contributions to the betterment of the natural world. These nominations can be sent to Honorary Membership Chair person, Martha Munz-Gue at mmunzgue@telusplanet.net or to her attention at the Grasslands Naturalists mailing address: Box 2491, Medicine Hat, Alberta, T1A 8G8.

The date for our 2023 AGM is subject to any COVID regulations that may arise before March 28. We are exploring the possibility of holding this year's AGM at a location that will permit larger attendance than is possible at the Nature Center. Watch for location details at a future edition of the Chronicle.

Cont. on next page

Notice of Grasslands Naturalists Bylaws Change

Presently the bylaws of the Grasslands Naturalists Society do not permit electronic voting at a General Membership meeting. Given our experience living through the recent covid pandemic it has become apparent that we need a bylaw change to allow electronic voting in the future. During covid restrictions some of our meetings were conducted entirely online preventing voting from taking place.

Our Governance Committee and the GN Board of Directors have both agreed that in future we need to allow general membership voting both in-person and online. This requires approval of a bylaws change at a General Membership meeting which will take place at our upcoming February 28th indoor program. To see the exact wording change which will permit online voting in the future you may go to GN's website at www.grasslands-naturalists.org and go to GN bylaws which are only available to members. There will also be hard copies of this bylaw change available for members to read in person at our January 24th indoor program. This particular bylaw change vote can only be conducted in-person until we actually change the bylaw. Once this bylaw change is approved it must also be submitted to the Federal Government for their approval because we are a registered charity subject to Government regulation.

Submitted by: P. Horch, President, GN

Upcoming Events, Walks and Announcements

Nature Walks

The weekly Wednesday Nature Walks continued throughout the pandemic years. We have explored most pond, creek, river, and coulee paths in Medicine Hat. With attendance of 5 to 10 people each Wednesday, well over 25 members have enjoyed nature with these regular outings. The walks have contributed to the health of the participants through social interaction, mild exercise in fresh air, and curiosity coupled with keen observation. The GN wildflower brochure has helped with identification of plant species and often invasive species have been reported using the EDDMapS app.

Wednesday Winter Walks or Cross Country Skiing. Meet Wednesdays 10am at the Nature Centre.

College and Weekend Walks: Anyone interested in organizing other walks based at the College or on weekends (for those that can't make Wednesday walks) please volunteer with the Outdoor Field Trip Committee.

Other Nature Related Topics

WORLD DECADE FOR RESTORATION OF ECO-SYSTEMS. <https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/>

ADOPT A POND OR PATH. Year three of the Adopt a Pond or Path Initiative will be launched on World Water Day (March 22). Individuals, families, and groups can adopt a pond or path near where they live or work. If you would like to adopt a pond or path, contact Martha (by phoning the Nature Centre at 403 529 6225). Currently 35 specific natural sites are adopted.

SEAWA : Public Forum, March 3, 2023 at the Medicine Hat College.

WEBSITES TO EXPLORE

The first four are created by members of Grasslands Naturalists

<https://transitionmedicinehat.ca/>

<https://hatwildflowers.weebly.com/>

<https://mhbutterflies.weebly.com/>

www.grasslands-naturalists.org

The next four are of interest to naturalists

<https://davidsuzuki.org/action/help-nature-thrive/>

www.seawa.ca Check riparian restoration reports and pictures of local riparian plants.

www.pas.ca Check for monthly air quality reports for Medicine Hat and SE Alberta.

www.naturealberta.ca Check here for citizen science opportunities.

Exciting Sightings by R. Frew

The first week of January ushered in a period of pleasant weather for birds and birding, replacing the challenging cold temperatures and snowfall we experienced in December. The local Christmas Bird Count on December 18th compiled by Ian Langill tallied 51 avian species which was on par with the previous 10 year average; however the total number of birds was drastically reduced, possibly due, at least in part, to the cold weather of December. Several recent exciting sightings were reported by GN birders outside and/or apart from the above official CBC count circle and date, and are documented below;

Gray-crowned Rosy Finch- This species breeds in our mountain parks in the tundra and heath meadow habitat above the treeline. It overwinters in the lower altitudes of mountain valleys, foothills, and even shows up further east on the grasslands. The male Gray-crowned Rosy Finch is brown with a pink rump, wings and undersides, and has a black cap and a gray head. The species feeds on the ground, usually in flocks, and often in open areas. While travelling on December 24th, Phil and Annalora Horch observed one such flock of ~12 Gray-crowned Rosy Finches feeding/foraging on the roadside alongside HWY #1 east of Strathmore. The species is considered a vagrant in the Prairie Region in winter.

Townsend's Solitaire- George Koopmans reported sighting a solitaire at Police Point Park on his annual new year's bird watch January 1st. Bob Frew observed two solitaires at Police Point Park on January 4th; alerted to their presence by their repetitive sharp "peek" call. This thrush species which acts much like a flycatcher, breeds in our Rocky Mountain and foothills regions, A few solitaires are seen in the Prairie Region during spring and fall migration, but are considered rare.

Trumpeter Swan- This species is the largest of North America's waterfowl, larger than the very similar Tundra Swan, The Trumpeter is completely white with a black bill, and always lacks the yellow marking in front of the eye. Overwintering has occurred in Southern Alberta, and this winter several Trumpeter Swans have frequented open stretches of the Bow River at Carburn Park in Calgary. Bob Frew was fortunate to observe four Trumpeter Swans at this location on December 26th. ID was confirmed by several other birders on site.

Purple Finch- This finch breeds in the foothills and boreal coniferous forests of western and northern Alberta. The male is raspberry red on the head, neck, throat and breast, and is brownish red above. There are some subtle differences between similar finch species; i.e. The Purple Finch's notched-tail distinguishes it from that of the House Finch which has a more square-ended tail. White unstreaked undertail coverts distinguish the Purple Finch from the Cassin's Finch, which has streaked undertail coverts. The plumages of these similar finch species are variable, and care with ID is required where ranges overlap. The Purple finch's call a sharp "pit" can be heard in flight. Most Purple Finches leave the province in fall, but some overwintering does occur. Those observed in Southeaster Alberta are considered transients. Dan Schiebelbein reported a male Purple Finch in Police Point Park on January 4th.



Male Purple Finch: Photo by Dan Schiebelbein
dansnaturephotography.com

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Mountain Bluebird- This cavity nesting species is common in the Cypress Hills in spring, summer, and fall, and can be seen due to the presence of nesting boxes on bluebird trails such as the Carol Porter Bluebird Trail. Occasional fall/winter sightings have been reported previously in the Prairie Region including Police Point Park. Paul Wright reported a male Mountain Bluebird at Police Point Park on December 20th. A second sighting in the park, possibly the same bird, was made by Bob Frew on January 7th.

Brown Creeper- This inconspicuous diminutive songbird can be difficult to detect as it creeps up tree trunks searching for insects. After it has gone some distance up a tree, it will fly to the base of a nearby tree and resume its upward climb searching for insects. The Brown Creeper's soft weak high pitched call is difficult to detect. Eric Volks reported a Brown Creeper at Hillside Cemetery on January 9th.



Male Mountain Bluebird: Photo by R. Frew taken in the summer.

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

Well Worded

Ideas! Surprises! New Discoveries! Ancient Wisdom! There are so many interesting books and documentaries catching our attention that it can be difficult to choose!

We have had a suggestion: create a nature related book club, or maybe a book list. For now, we are starting with this column. We hope to have a brief description of a book or topic in each Sagebrush Chronicle.

A fascinating book came up for discussion at one of the Wednesday morning walks. **"Finding the Mother Tree"** by Suzanne Simard, a BC forester, researcher, and professor, explores the emerging recognition of the underground ecosystem. Trees and their neighbours are communicating through a network of roots and fungus mycelia. These plants from many different species are cooperating. The models of competition that many of us were taught need a major overhaul! Biodiversity creates resilient and productive landscapes. We are walking on a tapestry that can heal the world.

The book is available in the Library in regular, large print, or e-book.

Jesse R. also recommended a related documentary hosted by Judi Dench, **"My Passion for Trees"** It is available at <https://www.facebook.com/AnnasTreesOfLife/videos/judi-dench-my-passion-for-trees-bbc-documentary-2017/1606305749458704/>

If any of you would like to chat about this, let me know. If you have found related books or material, we would love to hear about it.

What are you reading? Send me suggestions for the next **Well Worded** column.

Submitted by Corlaine Gardner corlaine.gardner@grasslands-naturalists.org

Manyberries Christmas Bird Count: January 2, 2023

By Rob Gardner, Compiler

Four adventurers left town in the dark, headed to Manyberries for some prairie birding. A golden eagle perched on a power pole, but rats!, we're not in the count territory yet.

We crested the continental divide, with our territory spread out below us and the three Sweetgrass Hills in the distance. This magnificent landscape was completely snow-covered. Not even the roads were bare. As a result, most birds had moved on to less snowy regions.

Raptors were absent, but sharpies and partridge showed up in fair numbers, and several flocks of snow buntings brightened the day. All together, we found nine species of birds, the lowest total of 18 counts.

Our two groups gathered in Manyberries for lunch while checking several feeders.

On the way home, we watched a badger patrolling the ditch along a gravel road. It seems the snow keeps the ground underneath from freezing, making it easier for badgers to dig out a gopher-flavoured popsicle.



This reminds us that time spent outdoors is always rewarding!



Mule Deer Bucks in Milt and Elaine's Backyard on January 1, 2023



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



Membership Form for 2023

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 dc website www.grasslands-naturalists.org. **Regardless membership form must be filled out and subn.***

* 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: _____