

THE  
**SAGEBRUSH  
CHRONICLE**



**RAVEN<sub>ous</sub> ???**

**Satisfy that Hunger!**

**Attend, socialize and  
participate in the**

**GN Potluck Dinner**



**Tuesday, June 27 at 6:00 PM**

**At the Nature Centre in the back Patio**

**Simply bring a dish of your choice for sharing:  
either a main course, a salad or a desert!**

**Also bring a chair, cutlery and a plate.**

**Coffee and Tea will be available!**

## 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 may 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, Sept. to May **Board Meetings:** 1<sup>st</sup> 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](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

### **Where's Sprague's Pipit?**

Visit this great display at the Nature Centre!

**For information concerning events and happenings at the Nature Centre this summer contact the extremely helpful interpretive staff. Either visit the Nature Centre in person or give them a call at 403-529-6225**

**Come and visit the Nature Centre and browse the Gift Shop for Nature Related Items.**

## **Members' Corner**

**Last Warning!** If you have not renewed your 2023 GN Membership it will expire at the end of June! Membership forms can be found at the end of this Chronicle.

**Next Issue of the Chronicle will be in Mid September! Have a Wonderful Summer Everyone!**

### **President's Report To GN: June 2023**

As I sit down to write this report, Annalora and I are about to leave on a three-week trip to the Rocky Mountain in the Kootenay region as well as into Montana. No doubt many of you have your own travel plans in the coming months. It is our hope that your travels will be safe and enjoyable. Besides attending a wedding in Cranbrook, we are looking forward to being in the Rockies when wildflowers are at their peak as well as birdsong. Hopefully, we don't see the same thing as far as wildfires are concerned! Who would have thought a few years ago that wildfire smoke would become one of our regular signs of spring and summer. (Sigh!) Climate change is bringing about a major change to our way of life. I can't help but wonder what this extreme smoky air is doing to the lungs of animals, especially the tiny lungs of birds. On top of that the fires are consuming huge acres of wildlife habitat which inevitably is reducing needed breeding grounds for those species that only breed in very specific environments. Pray for rain!

#### **Do you like hybrid indoor meetings?**

At our most recent GN Board meeting we discussed the merits of continuing indoor programs with the hybrid format. Our most recent indoor meeting only had 3 or 4 members participating online. During the winter months we sometimes had close to 20 people participating online. Setting up all the technical requirement for a hybrid meeting is a major undertaking for at least three of our volunteers. It takes hours of preparation. This summer we will be reviewing the need for future hybrid meetings and hope to make a decision before the September meeting. In the meantime, we would like feedback from you, our members. How important is to you, to have the option of attending virtually? One option might be to operate with hybrid meetings only during the coldest winter months. What are your thoughts? You can contact me by email address on page 2 of this Chronicle.

#### **Final call for membership renewals**

Most of you have already renewed your GN membership for 2023. For those of you who haven't got around to it yet, June is the deadline before your membership is deleted. We hope that doesn't happen. The last 2 pages of this Chronicle have the membership renewal form. Check it out.

#### **Can you help out at the Casino on August 5 & 6?**

The Grasslands Naturalists biggest and most important fundraising event of the year takes place when our members volunteer on casino dates that are awarded to our society. This year we have been awarded to casino nights on August 5 and 6. Bruce McLeod is our casino coordinator and he still needs a few more volunteers. Elsewhere in this Chronicle edition, you will see contact information. He would love to hear from you! Each year this event raises thousands of dollars for our society. We could not operate without the proceeds of this event. It only involves one or two evenings of your time and it makes a huge difference. Bruce's contact information is 403-526-1701 or email him at: [roxymcleod@shaw.ca](mailto:roxymcleod@shaw.ca).

Safe travels to all of you. Have a fantastic and safe summer. Remember to join us on summer field trips!

**Submitted by Phil Horch, President**

## **Upcoming Events, Walks and Announcements**

### **Wednesday Walks: All walks start at 09:00 and finish by 11:00 AM**

(Dress for the weather and bring your own refreshments)

**June 14: Walk in Saamis Coulee:** Learn about the archeological history and participate in the removal of the invasive Hoary Cress. Wear long sleeves and sturdy footwear. Park either at the Tepee or down in Kin Coulee by the West ball diamond and meet at the bottom of the Tepee hill trail at 09:15 AM. Walk is rated as moderate due to the steepness of the Tepee hill paved path and/or some uneven dirt trails in the coulee.

**June 21: Search for Crocus and Wildflowers along the Northeast Crescent Height (Jeffries) Trail.** Meet at the junction of 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE and 6<sup>th</sup> St. NE to search for crocus and other wildflowers along the paved path. Walk is easy when walking on the paved paths and moderate when walking on some uneven trails.

**June 28: Search for Birds and Butterflies:** Meet at the far NE end of Ranchlands Blvd. to walk along the trails in the Ranchlands Wetlands area. Walk is moderate due to some uneven dirt trails.

For details of Wednesday Walks and possibly Saturday Field Trips in July and August please check with the staff at the Nature Centre (403-529-6225). We are looking forward to enjoying the benefits of nature with you. Dress according to the weather and bring refreshments.

### **Field Trips**

**Saturday, June 24: Cypress Hills Birding and Flower Trip led by Phil Horch:** Meet at 07:00 AM at NE corner of Walmart Parking lot. Bring a lunch and refreshments. Trip should be completed by midday. The walking portion of this trip is rated as moderate to easy as it will be conducted along paved trails or along gravel roadways.

### **Other**

**Thursday, June 22: SEAWA AGM at the Courtyard Room, Medicine Hat College from 1:00 to 4:00 PM**

For more information go the SEAWA website: [www.seawa.ca](http://www.seawa.ca) .

### **Adopt a Pond or Path. June 2023.**

The newest pond adopters agreed to adopt the pond behind Canadian Tire. Bonita Bernhardt is taking the lead after hearing that the pond near where she lives was the only pond (of 20) not yet adopted. She energetically cleaned up that large area bringing a wheelbarrow for collection of trash, and pushing a shopping cart back to the box store from whence it came. I visited her at the pond on two occasions, each time with another volunteer who lives nearby. Bonita wrote a letter about the Adopt a Pond Initiative, inviting neighbours to participate. She delivered copies of that letter to all the homes adjacent to the pond - 35 invitations!

The result is that the whole area around that pond is the cleanest I have ever seen it! And even more important is that a small group of people are enjoying the outdoors near where they live, and neighbours are getting to know each other.

The three pillars of environmental care are wrapped up in one through the Adopt a Pond Initiative: Appreciation, Awareness, and Action.

Any individual, household, or group may adopt a pond or path near where they live or work or play. Most ponds are adopted by individuals, couples or families. Most paths along the creek, river or coulees are adopted by individuals or groups. Employment groups and clubs use the opportunity for team-building while contributing to the well-being of their community.

The Adopt a Pond or Path Initiative is supported by SEAWA, Grasslands Naturalists, Parks and Rec and ELGR departments of the City of Medicine Hat. Martha coordinates the initiative. She can be reached by calling the Nature Centre at 403-529-6225.



### Exciting Sightings

As we enter the second week of June, spring avian migration has now peaked, with migrant species busy nesting on the grasslands, wetlands and riparian areas of Southeastern Alberta. In spring and early summer species diversity is optimal for birding, and there is always the chance of encountering late migrants and rarities. Recent exciting sightings reported include the following:

**White-faced Ibis-** This species prefers the marshes around lakes for breeding, and forages on mud flats and flooded pastures. Once a rarity in the province, numbers have increased dramatically, and the species is now widely distributed. A single Ibis was observed by Bob Frew on a small mudflat at the south end of Murray Lake on May 10<sup>th</sup>, and by Phil Horch on May 11<sup>th</sup>, at the same location (probably the same bird). On May 20<sup>th</sup> George Koopmans reported 40 Ibis foraging on an irrigated field along RGE Rd. 75 near Murray Lake.

**Wood Warblers-** Following an earlier movement of warblers through Police Point Park in the last week of April, several additional warbler species have been reported locally. Eric Vokes observed a **Palm Warbler** at Echo Dale Regional Park on May 11<sup>th</sup>. This boreal forest breeder can be seen in the Grasslands and Parkland regions during migration, but usually only in small numbers. Sue Higgins and Donna Steele reported a **Blackpoll Warbler** at Sandy Point on May 14<sup>th</sup>, Milt and Elaine Spitzer also had a **Blackpoll Warbler** on May 21<sup>st</sup> as well as a **Tennessee Warbler**, and an **American Redstart** at Police Point Park. The distinctive call of the much sought-after **Yellow-bellied Chat** was heard at the park by Milt and Elaine Spitzer on May 26<sup>th</sup>. Several other chats were detected by ear and/or visually by other GN birders at Saratoga Park and Ross Glen Coulee as recently as June 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Broad-winged Hawk-** This uncommon buteo is similar in size to the Cooper's Hawk and breeds in the southern boreal forest and parklands regions. Bob Frew observed a dark dark-morph form of the buteo at Police Point Park on May 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Lark Bunting-** Phil and Annalora Horch reported this highly detectable grasslands species. The male's black with white wing and undertail patches are distinctive. The bunting was seen near the junction of Eagle Butte and Thelma Roads in the Cypress Hills on May 17<sup>th</sup>. The species is irruptive, in some years it is rarely seen, in others it reappears in large numbers.

**Black-crowned Night Heron-** This wader is recognized by its greenish black crown and long white head plumes; it can be found in colonies in the marshy parts of lakes, streams, and irrigation ditches. Dan Schiebelbein reported a single bird at Seven Person's Lake on May 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Lazuli Bunting-** This is another species that attracts birders to Southeastern Alberta each spring. The male is bright turquoise on its head and throat, with a cinnamon breast and white underparts and wing bars. It is a constant singer and is easily detected by its song. There has been a good showing of Lazuli Buntings this spring, the first report was received from Barry and Judy Anderson on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, and others by GN birders as recently as June 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Sora-** This species is the most common and least secretive of our rail species. It is found in all regions of the province where suitable wetland habitat exists. The Sora has a short yellow bill, its upper parts are brown, its breast is gray, and the front of its face and throat are black. Bob Frew observed and photographed a Sora in the reed beds at Frank Lake, which is along HWY 23 just east of High River AB on June 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Red Crossbill-** On a May 6<sup>th</sup> visit to the Cypress Hills Phil Horch observed a large flock of Red Crossbills mobbing a Red-tailed Hawk. This behaviour was unusual as Crossbill species rarely interact with other avian species.

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



## **Russian olive tree removal at Linda Fisher's acreage By Linda Fisher**

I am a lifelong nature lover, a city gal-gone-country rancher and a passionate naturalist. I have a B. Sc. in Human Nutrition and I am a retired Registered Dietitian. I had initially planned to be a biologist but seeing the thousands of other want-to-be biologists in my first-year classes, I veered off into the human nutrition area of science. I live on a dry corner of an irrigated quarter section in Cypress County. I have many planted trees around my yard and also a mature shelterbelt with 39 tree and shrub species and approximately 7 acres of horse pasture surrounding my house and outbuildings area.

Russian olive (RO) trees, on their own, started to grow here 4-5 years ago – beginning alongside the county range road and spreading onto my property. RO trees have taken root in two different areas at my acreage – 2 on the edge of the ditch against my property line, 2 others in the quarter section located right beside my property line and 10 or more in the same area, in a former dugout I had filled in a few years ago when my irrigation water line became pressurized, and I had no need for the dugout anymore. Two more RO trees also grew on their own - one in my dryland horse pasture, (right on the edge of my fence line beside the road ditch), and the other 6 inches away from my property line. They had both grown to be quite a large size, approximately 15 feet tall and one had a double trunk.

After learning from SEAWA and the Society of Grasslands Naturalists how badly RO trees impact our local environment in SE Alberta I knew I must remove or kill them, without using chemicals. In early April 2023, armed with my loppers, 2 dull hand saws, gloves, a carpet knife, 2 black plastic bags, twine and knowledge from reading the SEAWA document on how to deal with RO without using chemicals, I headed off to trim off all of the lower branches so that I could then safely handsaw down both of these trees and then tie the bags to their stumps. I lopped off all of the lower branches, cleared all the tall, dried grasses and tumbleweeds and began sawing. It was a lot of work bringing down those 2 trees with the dull saws but eventually they were toppled. Knowing that they would never make seeds and harm the environment gave me strength to keep sawing and gave me a great feeling of accomplishment when they hit the ground. I made notches around the base and snugly tied the black plastic bags to both of the stumps. My horses graze in this pasture so I will regularly check that the bags are still in place.

The very soft ground in the other RO growth area where many RO of many sizes had begun growing was the next very large task – 12 or more were here ranging from 12 feet high to 2 shoulder height, to waist height, and 2 I hadn't even seen earlier which were less than knee height and very slender but had surprisingly large roots. Due to the very saturated soft clay dirt soil, I was able to pull out the entire root system of the 2 very small RO. The 2 large RO trees were just inches away and 4 feet away, beyond my property line I planned to girdle. So, I lopped off all the lower branches, cleared away the very long dried grasses and tumbleweeds, and girdled them using a large axe. I had to straddle the [irrigation] pivot wheel path trench which was 12 inches or more deep filled with smelly water. Lots of careful, observant movements were needed to work on the largest of these 2 trees growing between my panel fence and the pivot trench 18 inches away. I did not want to kneel on the saturated ground to use a knife blade to girdle them, so I crudely girdled them both using an axe, the larger one had a double trunk. Not a pretty sight, but hopefully effective.

All of the other 10 or more RO I planned to dig up by their roots taking advantage of the very wet ground which the ice drifts had melted 3 days prior. What an experience this part was!!! It was very hard work digging in the wet clay and rock and pottery, etc, in-fill ground which is also a seeded horse grazing pasture. I started on the smaller and the single trunked trees; trimmed off lower branches; for these I was able to remove quite an amount of their root systems and then lopped them off under the soil level and replaced the heavy, wet clay soil as best I could. I was getting very tired after this time and had quite a bit of trouble with the few multi trunked trees, (one with its wide diameter trunk growing horizontally) and also the larger single trunked trees. The thickness of their many roots, stickiness of the clay soil, hitting rocks and large objects with the shovel, made digging them out as outlined impossible for me to undertake. I lopped off all of their lower branches, dug around them and attempted to unsuccessfully extract them, then tipped them over still firmly in the ground, lopped off the roots about 4 inches down and covered them well with the soil.

Cont. from previous page:

I was not happy with my efforts for these, I will closely monitor for regrowth. For the large multi trunked horizontal stumped tree I tied a black plastic bag around the stumps. I will need to monitor this as well since my horses graze in this area.

I am so happy knowing that I successfully removed many of the RO at my acreage and hope that all I attempted to kill will die. I will monitor for regrowth and new RO sprouting. I am very alarmed at the many, many RO I see spread-out all-over Cypress County. I hope that all the local municipalities will work together so that RO can be eradicated – if all parties don't work cooperatively the RO will continue to spread negating all of the efforts and money of the other parties which are actively working to remove the RO.

**Some GN Members' Photos**



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**Great Horned Owl near RR Bridge: Photo by Ian Turner**



**Left to right and then down**

**Burrowing Owl: Photo by Dan Schiebelbein**

**Ferruginous Hawk: Photo by: Bruce McLeod**



**Ferruginous Hawk: Photo by: Bruce McLeod**

**Wildflowers along the Bluebird Trail: Photo by: Ian Turner**





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



## Membership Form for 2023

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: \_\_\_\_\_