

# THE SAGEBRUSH CHRONICLE



**Biological Control of Weeds  
by  
Karma Tiberg,  
Biological Control Technician  
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada**

Karma will be giving a presentation on biological control of weeds using insects. In particular she will be talking about biological control of leafy spurge using *Aphthona lacetosa*.

Pictured on the left is a leafy spurge plant being devoured by *Aphthona lacetosa*.

**Beginning of Summer Annual Potluck Dinner  
At the Nature Centre  
Tuesday, June 27 at 6:00 PM**

Please bring a dish of your choice to share with the group. It can either be a main course, a salad or a dessert. Also bring a plate, utensils and a lawn chair (we will hold the get together outside, weather permitting). Coffee or tea will be available at the Centre.

Hope to see you all there! The food is delicious and it's a great time to meet and talk nature with an excellent group of people!

**(Next Chronicle in Mid September)**

## Executive

President	Hugh Armstrong <a href="mailto:Armstr55@telus.net">Armstr55@telus.net</a>	526-1003
Vice-President	Anne Bernhardt	527-2792
Secretary	Betty Rainville <a href="mailto:brainville@telus.net">brainville@telus.net</a>	529-7084
Treasurer and Memberships	Eileen Cowtan <a href="mailto:ecowtan@hotmail.com">ecowtan@hotmail.com</a>	526-1264
Past-President	Dave McKenzie <a href="mailto:naturist@telus.net">naturist@telus.net</a>	527-1701
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## MH Interpretive Program

(Managed by Grassland Naturalists)

Based in Police Point Park Nature Centre

Open Year Round

Tuesday to Sunday: 9:00AM to 5:00PM

Washrooms are on a timer and are open from  
7:00AM to 8:00PM daily!

To get up to date information on what is  
happening at the Nature Centre call the:

Nature Line at (403) 529-6225

Also find us on Facebook and Twitter  
[policepointpark](https://www.facebook.com/policepointpark)

During the summer, there are public events almost every weekend, and sometimes in between! Some will be in Police Point Park, but many will be in other special places. Call the Nature Centre to find out more.

June and early July events will include a Streamside Walk, Butterflies in Police Point Park, Canada Day at Kin Coulee, Hidden Wetland and McCutcheon Full Moon!

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, 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 529-6225**

**Annual Membership Dues: Eileen Cowtan**

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:

<http://www.natureline.info/gn>

GN Facebook:

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

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

The Interpretive Program is looking for volunteers to help in the booth operations at both Canada Day and at the Stampede. Canada Day will be short shifts while at the Stampede two people will run the booth on four hour shifts. Call Lisa to volunteer!

## Member's Corner

Welcome to new members **Dale and Muriel Gray**. Hopefully we will meet you soon. Perhaps at the Potluck Dinner which would be a great introduction to our society.

### **John Slater – Environmental Civic Recognition Award May 25, 2017**

By Martha Munz Gue

It is indeed a pleasure to present John Slater for the Environmental Civic Recognition Award.

I first met John when we were both encouraging active transportation through the addition of bike lanes on streets and bike racks on buses. Since then we have worked on many projects together to enhance the city and to encourage citizens to get outdoors and enjoy and protect our natural spaces.

John volunteers whenever he can to encourage projects that protect nature and inform citizens. He also enjoys the field trips and outdoor activities, just for the fun of being outside with nature and good people.

John joined Grasslands Naturalists in late 1990s enjoying field trips and General Meeting presentations. Upon retirement from his work, and since 2006 he has been an active participant in Executive and Committee Work for the organization volunteering wherever his skills were needed.

He has served many years in executive positions as Treasurer, President, Past President. He has been member and/or chair of several of the working committees, including the Issues Committee, Budget Committee, Governance Committee, MHIP Operations Committee, and the Field Trip Committee. He is also a frequent volunteer for various public events at the Nature Centre in Police Point Park.

John has moved forward many projects that protect nature. With his leadership Grasslands Naturalists have picked thousands of baby's breath plants before they spread their seed further. Truckloads of bags stuffed tightly with baby's breath from Ranchlands Nature Reserve have been hauled to the dump.

He has also encouraged others to participate with him in wrapping hundreds of trees to prevent beaver damage so it is less likely that beavers will be killed for their eager deeds. Each year, John has also led Grasslands Naturalist participation in Spring Cleanups and the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup in the fall. Like the beavers John is keen to notice new or half finished projects into which to sink his teeth.

If you go to the website of Grasslands Naturalists you will find a new Birding Trails Guide for SE Alberta and a draft of a soon to be released wildflower brochure. John has been a keen participant to see the completion of these two ambitious projects.

John takes on responsibilities with cheerful good will, and completes them with skill and thoroughness. He is always willing to be the servant leader and go the second mile. Through his active participation in committees and outdoor activities, he not only helps with organizational improvements, but also leads by example.

Under John's leadership both the *Interpretive Program at the Nature Centre* and the *Society of Grasslands Naturalists* have achieved stability and have embarked on many exciting projects. He has also encouraged the involvement of many other volunteers.

For his active participation, his steady cheerful leadership and support for projects that protect the environment and inform citizens, it gives me great pleasure to present John Slater to be honored by the City with the Environmental Civic Recognition Award.



**From left to right: Mayor Ted Clugston, John Slater and Martha Munz Gue: Photo by Dwayne Myers.**

## President's Message June 2017 Chronicle

So, another GN club year draws to a close, and we finish it off with our June 27<sup>th</sup> potluck supper at 6:00 pm. We need a few people to help set up tables and chairs about a half hour early. I hope to see a very good turnout as we finish off what, I feel, has been a very successful year of projects, speakers and IP programs.

The first thing I want to remind one and all is to **come to the Nature Centre on June 15<sup>th</sup>: 11:00-2:00 for an exciting announcement from Co-op about a big presentation from them to GN in support of our renovations and upgrading of the Nature Centre. There will be hot dogs and drinks supplied by Co-op and the media will be present. We need a very good showing from members and non-members, so invite all your friends to come down and share in the food and refreshments.**

Also, a hearty congratulations to John Slater for receiving the Medicine Hat Civic Environmental Award for 2017 and thank you to all those who came out to support him. We had a very good representation from GN!

Last year we wanted to get our profile out to the public and let them know who we are. I think we can say we have succeeded, to a large extent. In no particular order, here is a list of the programs, functions and ongoing projects GN has done this past year:

Bird Trails Rack Cards and Booklet, GN Club Rack Cards, Wildflower Rack Cards and Brochure, Web Cam Project, Butterfly Project, Neighborhood Walks, Tree Wrapping Program, Flagging of Noxious Weeds, Bird Tales Program, Field Trips, and a few more I can't name at the moment.

On top of all that are the fantastic programs down at the MHIP. Thank you to Corlaine and staff for continuing to educate and entertain the South East on the wonders of the park and the outdoors!

This year culminates in a very exciting Nature Centre Renovation and Upgrade which we hope will get started in the late summer or early fall. We have been very fortunate to have received all of the grant money we applied for, which means we can probably finish all the modules we had in our plan.

And a big thank you to the Board and Committee members who have put in so many hours over the year, and to Milt for his fine job of putting the Chronicle together again this year.

**As always, I finish with a plea to step up and volunteer at the IP when required, and don't forget to get your name in to Dave McKenzie for the Casino dates (Sept 28-29, 2017).**

Enjoy the summer and we will see you in September.

Hugh

## **Hunting for Orchids in Elkwater on May 27, 2017**

A hunt for orchids in the Spring Creek area of Elkwater, led by Gary Martin, was enjoyed by 7 others (Rob & Corlaine Gardner, Barry & Judy Anderson, Marilou Montemayor, SEAWA ED, and Seline Solis a student working with SEAWA, and John Slater). Even though we could not find the elusive orchids, we did see many other Cypress Hills spring



wildflowers such as Prairie Shooting Star, Three Flowered Avens, Blue Violets, Larkspur, Mouse-ear Chickweed and Prairie Crocus.

Written and photos by John Slater.

## Upcoming Events, Field Trips and Announcements

**Thursday, June 15: 11:00AM to 2:00 PM: at the Nature Centre: BIG ANNOUNCEMENT by Coop regarding large contribution to GN for renovating and upgrading.** It would be great to have a great membership turn out. The media will be present while hot dogs and drinks will be supplied by the Coop.

**Sunday, June 18: Streamside Walk: Time and Locale to be announced. Contact the Nature Centre.**

**Saturday, June 24: 7:00AM: Meet at the Gershaw Drive A&W: Visit to Birding Trail 5, Pinhorn Reserve North:** Trip will last until late afternoon so bring a lunch, and appropriate clothing and footwear.

**Tuesday, June 27: 10:30 to Noon: Neighbourhood Walk in East Glen Coulee:** Led by Dave McKenzie: Meet at mailboxes along East Glen Drive.

**Friday, June 30: 9:30AM to Noon: Neighbourhood Walk in Ranchlands Natural Area:** Led by Ian and Angela Turner: Meet at Ranchlands Crescent and Ranchlands Boulevard NE.

**Saturday, July 1: Canada Day Celebrations at Kin Coulee:** The Interpretive Program will be operating an interactive booth.

**Tuesday, July 4: Butterfly Count at Elkwater: Meet at 10:00AM at the Elkwater Visitors Centre:** Led by Dave McKenzie: Bring a lunch.

**Saturday, July 8: Birding in the Cypress Hills (Birding Trail 7): Meet at the Walmart Parking Lot at 7:30AM.** Led by Phil Horch: Trip will last until about 2:00PM so bring a lunch.

**Sunday, July 9: 2:00PM: Hidden Wetlands:** Interpretive Program led trip: Meet at the playground along Hull Way NE.

**Sunday, July 9: 9:30 PM: Full Moon Walk:** Interpretive Program led trip: Meet at junction McCutcheon Drive and Smythe Avenue NW.

**July 14 to 17: Nature Tour of Grasslands National Park: Contact Gary Martin at 403 878-3483 or email him at [gammag4211@gmail.com](mailto:gammag4211@gmail.com)** for details if you are planning on participating.

**July 26 to 29: Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede:** The Interpretive Program will have an interactive booth there.

**Saturday, August 12 at 09:00AM: Canoe/Kayak Echo Dale to Strathcona Island Park:** Contact Gary Martin at 403-878-3483 or email him at [gammag4211@gmail.com](mailto:gammag4211@gmail.com) for details.

**Tuesday, August 22: Butterfly and Bugs: Gas City Campground Coulee: 10:30AM:** Led by Dave McKenzie: Wear sturdy footwear as there will be some rugged terrain.

**Saturday, August 26: Blackfoot Crossing Tour: Meet at 08:00AM at the Tipi.** For details regarding admission etc. contact Gary Martin at 403-878-3483 or email him at [gammag4211@gmail.com](mailto:gammag4211@gmail.com).

**Saturday, September 9: Red Rock Coulee/Manyberries Tour: Meet at 09:00 at the Gershaw Drive A&W** Bring a lunch; Trip likely to be led by John Slater.

**Saturday, September 16: Sauder/Murray Reservoirs (Birding Trail #2): Fall Migration Trip : Meet at the Gershaw Drive A&W at 08:00.** Trip led by Phil Horch and will likely last until about 1:00PM.

### Exciting Sightings prepared by Bob Frew

During the month of May new migrant passerine species were being encountered daily as they returned to or passed through our city parks, surrounding grasslands and wetlands. By early June migration is reaching its peak, with numerous exciting sightings being reported.

On May 14<sup>th</sup> Barry Anderson reported a female **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** at a bird bath in his Ross Glen garden.

A rain downpour on May 17<sup>th</sup> was followed by an influx of neo-tropical migrants including: **Yellow Warblers**, **Tennessee Warblers**, and **Blackpoll Warblers** which were reported in Police Point Park by several GN birders. On May 26<sup>th</sup> at Strathcona Island Park, Milt and Elaine Spitzer reported a **Yellow-breasted Chat**, our largest warbler, with a very distinctive song, and a much coveted sighting by birders.

The flight songs of displaying male **Sprague's Pipits** were being heard above the open grasslands along TWP Roads 104, and 112 between RGE Road 53 and Eagle Butte Road on May 11<sup>th</sup>. This species is difficult to see on the ground.



Photo by Barry Anderson



Photo by Dan Schiebelbein

While photographing waterfowl at the south end of Murray Lake on May 21<sup>st</sup>, Dan and Mark Schiebelbein observed an unusual **Cinnamon/Blue-winged Teal** hybrid among a group of teal species. The hybrid is on the right being followed by a Blue-winged Teal.

Chris Charlesworth of

Peachland BC heard and observed a **Sedge Wren** on the Soggy Bottom Trail in the Cypress Hills while leading a birding group on May 25<sup>th</sup>. There are only two confirmed records of breeding for this elusive species in The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Alberta. It is usually detected and identified by its song. The Sedge Wren was heard and briefly observed at the same location by Milt and Elaine Spitzer on May 31<sup>st</sup>.

Phil and Annalora Horch counted seven **Baltimore Orioles** while birding in Police Point Park on May 18<sup>th</sup>. Despite their brilliant orange and black plumage, spotting them can be difficult in the dense foliage of the riparian cottonwoods where they breed. This species is usually detected by its distinctive song: a series of flute-like whistles.

The first **Brown Thrasher** this spring was heard, and then observed singing from atop a cottonwood in Police Point Park on May 10<sup>th</sup>.

Early June is a good time to hear **Common Poorwills** calling in the Cypress Hills; Brent and Dee Cowan recently report hearing their distinctive "poorwill" calls at dusk from their cottage at Elkwater.

**Lazuli Bunting**, another of Southeastern Alberta's specialty birds, a male was observed singing at Strathcona Island Park by Bob Frew on May 31<sup>st</sup>, and at both Strathcona Island, and Police Point Parks on June 4<sup>th</sup>.

Ian Wallis and Wendy Blackwell had two **Common Nighthawks** over Ross Creek on the evening of June 5<sup>th</sup>. These members of the goatsucker family are usually detected in flight by their distinctive "peent" call at dawn and dusk.

### Exciting Sightings (continued)

On June 6<sup>th</sup>, Lorrie Sielski and Rob Wapple saw a **Northern Mockingbird** along HWY 884 east of Tide Lake. This species is a vagrant in the grasslands. They also found two **Short-eared Owlets** 150 meters apart at a location southwest of Jenner.

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

### Bugs and Butterflies: June, 2017

**Butterflies:** As they have done before, the Western Whites which were so common last summer have all but vanished this year. I saw a few about the middle of April, but only one or two since. We are seeing lots of Painted Ladies already this year. During our prescouting walk on Wednesday, June 7<sup>th</sup>, Valerie and I noticed a caterpillar on a patch of Canada Thistle which we took to be a Painted Lady. The Spring Azures that were so common at Police Point Park this spring are gone for this year, to be replaced by Silvery and Melissa Blues. I have included a picture of a Melissa Blue that I think is remarkable.

The Arctics too are nearly done, but there are lots of Ringlets about. You can recognize them by their

hopping flight and buckskin patch on the underside of their front wing, which is always visible as they perch with their wings closed. Look for them while you can, as they will be gone by the end of June. The Cypress Hills Butterfly Count will be on July 4<sup>th</sup> this year, a Tuesday. Meet at the Visitor's Centre at 10:00am. Bring lunch. We'll likely be eating at the viewpoint above Reesor Lake. We'll spend about an hour at the rodeo grounds, an hour at the Spruce Coulee junction, and after lunch, we'll end up at Reesor Lake. Hope the weather cooperates this year.

**Odonates:** I've seen a few Variable Darners but no Variegated Meadowhawks yet this year, although I'm sure they're out there. On May 29<sup>th</sup>, at Strathcona Pond, I was fortunate enough to photograph and subsequently identify a Dot-tailed Whiteface, a first for me. On May 30<sup>th</sup>, during a neighbourhood walk in Kin Coulee I photographed and subsequently identified a Four-spotted Skimmer, another first for me. I noticed a medium sized blue dragonfly but wasn't able to get a picture or net it for investigation.



Melissa Blue: Dave McKenzie



**Bumble Bees:** I'm only seeing Hunt's and Tri-colored so far this year, but I've not been out as much as I was last year. Hopefully, I'll get some new ones when I start doing Connaught Golf Club later this month.

**Mayflies** I had the good luck to see a major Mayfly hatch May 29<sup>th</sup> at Strathcona Pond. You could see them swimming to shore, then marching up the bank till they found a suitable stem to pupate on. I have included a picture of one I watched emerge.

Photo of emerging Mayfly: Dave McKenzie

## **Operation Pollinator, and other programs at the Connaught Golf Course.**

Dustin Zdan, Superintendent of the Connaught Golf Club, spoke to GN members at our last meeting on environmental programs established at this Golf Club. He is the Alberta Director for Canadian Golf Superintendents Association, and is in his thirteenth season at this 18 hole semi-private golf course in Medicine Hat.

As a member of The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary program for Golf, created in 1991, Dustin says the program helps to protect the environment and preserve the natural heritage of the game of golf. He hopes the Connaught Golf Club will eventually be eligible as a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary. In order to help achieve this, Dustin said Audubon International provides a Site Assessment and Environmental Planning form to help with:

1. Environmental Planning
2. Wildlife and Habitat Management
3. Chemical Use Reduction and Safety
4. Water Conservation
5. Water Quality Management
6. Outreach and Education

A prime example of The Connaught Golf Club's outreach program is the building of bird nests with the Grade 4 students at Saint Patrick's School in Medicine Hat. This is the seventh year of this very popular activity. A Pond Study class with the Grade 5 students at this school also helps children explore Wetlands and observe the various insects living there.

The CGC property in Medicine Hat includes 4 Wetlands, treed areas, 135 acres as well as some grassland areas. Some of these grassland areas are now marked with signs as Environmentally Sensitive. The grass is mowed less often and less watering is carried out here. After 4 or 5 years, there is now a small stand of Pine trees established in one such location. Dustin reports there is an increase in pheasant numbers from about 10, to 20 or 25. More ducks are nesting, and song bird numbers have increased.

Another program which CGC shares with only one other Western Canadian Golf Club is called Operation Pollinator. It was launched in the EU in 2001 by the global Swiss agribusiness, Syngenta. The two Western Canadian sites (Connaught Golf Club and Springbank Links Golf Club in Calgary) initiated the program at their facilities in 2015. There are approximately ten more of these Operation Pollinator "Ambassador" Golf Clubs in Ontario. This program is designed, among other things, to promote bee populations by establishing bee-friendly habitats on out-of-play areas on golf courses.

According to Dustin, the physical set up for the program was relatively easy. Sod removal was the first step before the soil was tilled in an out- of- play area. A mixture of seeds including Coreopsis, Blanket flower (*Gaillardia arisiata*), Lewis Flax, Prairie Coneflower, Golden Aster, Ox-eye Sunflower and more, was hand-seeded. Finally, a small amount of hand weeding finished the process. GN members saw the lush and colourful slide taken only one year after planting

Where does the Connaught Golf Club hope to go from here? Dustin would like to add more Operation Pollination Plots to the Club, as well as continuing with Community Outreach. He added that some Golf Clubs have even installed bee hives which serve as indicators of the course's overall health. Bees are a key indicator species of biodiversity because of their sensitivity to the environment. Moreover, 80 to 90% of the world's plants rely on pollinators for fertilization and reproduction. Preserving bees will benefit pollinating insects, animals, and people.

In closing, one GN member suggested Connaught Golf Club might be interested in setting up an "Audubon Corner". Dustin replied enthusiastically that he would love to have a list of birds compiled for the club. What a great opportunity for GN bird photographers. Thanks, Dustin for showing us that a golf club in Medicine Hat is stepping up to demonstrate environmental leadership.

Six members of GN (Eileen Cowtan, Simonne Flynn, Milt Spitzer, Dave McKenzie, Linda Carney, led by John Slater) took a relaxing stroll along the paved path starting at the end of 11 St SE on the SE Hill overlook Kingsway Ave SE, Tuesday morning, May 30th. Milt delighted us with the sound and sight of Lazuli Buntings that frequent that area for nesting. Also Yellow Warblers were numerous. Dave enjoyed using his net to catch various butterflies (Ringlet 5, Clouded Sulphur 6, Melissa Blue 10, Pearl Crescent 1, Uhler's Arctic 1) and one Variable Darner dragonfly. The day was sunny and warm, so we enjoyed the cool shady trail through the woods near where Linda lives now, and close to where Milt lived as a youngster.