

Society of Grassland Naturalists
Minutes of General Meeting – January 22, 2013
Police Point Park Nature Centre

1. **Call to Order** at 7:05 pm. John Slater – Chair; Barry Anderson – Secretary
2. **Minutes:** The minutes from November 27, 2012 were reviewed. John moved the minutes to be accepted; seconded by Bill Knibbs. CARRIED.
3. **Exciting Sightings:**
 - Sightings included large flocks of redpolls by Martha Gue, a varied thrush in the Police Point area by Elaine and Milt Spitzer, and a pileated woodpecker also in Police Point by Elizabeth and Warren Frank.
 - John commented on recent photos and articles in the Medicine Hat News involving GN related events and topics. Photos included: “Horned Owl” (Dec. 6), “Snowy Owl” (Jan. 5), “Landscape” (Dec. 20), “Natural Beauty at Red Rock” (Jan. 22), and “Better Water Management Could Equal Better Availability” (Jan. 12) – an article by Lorne Taylor outlining a water conservation program called WaterSmart.
4. **Treasurer’s Report: Eileen Cowtan**
 - Our current checking balance as of January 22 is \$9058.77.
 - Eileen reminded everyone that GN membership fees are now due. New waiver forms must also be completed or the date changed on last year’s forms.
 - Our current membership is 96 with 142 members.
5. **Announcements: John Slater**
 - John welcomed special guest MLA Drew Barnes to the meeting. Drew spoke briefly about Bill 202 and welcomed anyone with other concerns or questions to visit him at his local political office.
 - John announced that the City of Medicine Hat’s renewal of its 5-year contract with Grasslands Naturalists to operate the Nature Centre and the Interpretive Program at Police Point Park has been approved by the City Council. John extended a thank you to Corlaine Gardner and staff for their work at the Nature Centre, and to those individuals involved with the Operations Committee.
 - John shared details regarding a letter of support written on January 10 to Federal Environmental Minister Peter Kent for denying the proposal to develop more gas wells in the Suffield Natural Wildlife Area. The letter also requested that further actions be taken to protect critical habitat in SE Alberta for the recovery of the Greater Sage Grouse.
6. **Interpretive Program: Corlaine and Marty**
 - Corlaine reported that winter programming continues at the Nature Centre and school bookings have now resumed. The **Annual High School Art**

Exhibition continues until January 31 with **Got Snow – Learning about Fun Family Winter Sports** – beginning in February.

- **Kiwanis Family Day** activities will be held February 18 at Police Point Park from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm. This year's coordinator is Kit Hilsden who requires volunteers to assist with both indoor and outdoor activities. Please contact her at the Nature Centre for more specific details and to sign up.
- Volunteers are still needed for the upcoming **Easter Programming** that will run from February 25 to April 1. Contact Corlaine at the Nature Centre for more details and to sign up.
- Marty reminded everyone about the **Sprague's Pipit Project**; he will speak personally to those individuals who have shown an interest in assisting with this important project. More information is available in the October and December issues of the Chronicle.
- The **Feeder Watch Program** continues at the Nature Centre until April 5. Your assistance with bird watching would be greatly appreciated.
- The **Annual Christmas Bird Count Report** has been electronically distributed; hard copy reports are also available at the Nature Centre.

7. Field Trips

- No other trips or outings have been planned at this point. Please check the GN Website and up-coming Chronicles for any announcements.

8. Issues Committee: Marty and Martha

- As part of **World Water Week** March 18- 23, Martha announced that **World Water Day** is planned for March 22 with information booths provided by Unisphere, SEAWA, GN and other interested parties at the Medicine Hat Public Library. Look for details in the next Chronicle.
- Martha and John met with MLA Blake Pedersen on January 17 to discuss **Bill 202**. Support for the bill is highly unlikely at this point since cabinet will not relinquish total control. The need to protect critical habitat for survival of sage grouse was also discussed in light of the plans to have 24/7 border crossings at Wildhorse and upgrade of Hwy 41 south.
- Marty reported on the December 11 meeting in Manyberries with SRD Fish and Wildlife. **A Draft Copy of the Greater Sage Grouse Recovery Plan 2013 – 2018** was presented at this time. Comments have been submitted. Revisions to this draft are needed by February so that a timeline for action plans/strategies/budgeting etc. can be initiated before the next spring breeding season. The Recovery Team will meet annually over the next five years. Marty is the GN representative on this team which will also oversee a recovery plan for the swift fox. Marty indicated that a local biologist is still required to work on this recovery plan.

9. Communications Committee: Eileen

- Work continues as usual on the GN brochure, the GN display board and the GN website updates including gallery pictures, text and Chronicles

10. Nature Alberta – Martha

- For our perusal, Martha shared a list of groups (with contact information) who belong to and support Nature Alberta.
- Martha reported that a local plant study group meets regularly at the MHC and that an Alberta plant watch chart is available. Speak to Martha for more details.

11. SEAWA – Martha

- Martha shared print information and reiterated details regarding World Water Day and Week. Tina Regehr will assist with display on wetlands and shorelines.

12. Indoor Programs: No report given.

13. Other Business

- The new and updated **Bird Species Checklist** has now been completed thanks to the efforts of Phil, Bob, Marty and others. Holmes Printing costs for 2500 pamphlets is \$2700.00. Alberta Parks will cover half of that amount to obtain half the order for distribution at their parks. The remaining cost of \$1350.00 is to be covered by GN and those who wish to donate money to this cause will be appreciated. Holmes Printing will begin printing the order next week.
- The **GN Annual General Meeting Elections** will take place March 26. Nominations for Executive Officers can be made to Bill Knibbs.
- Paul reported that the digitizing and archiving of the GN Chronicles, minutes, scrapbooks and other historical documents at the Esplanade has begun with Paul being in contact with Philip Pype. Initially approximately 180 Chronicles need to be digitized for archiving. The Esplanade will provide one volunteer to begin the work; GN is asked to supply one other person to assist with digitizing. A meeting with the Archives will be held next week. Most past issues of the Chronicle have now been located due to the diligent searching of GN members. Thanks to Linda Carney for offering her remaining issues for donation.
- The **Ad Hoc Committee** to draft GN policies and procedures continues to meet under the direction of Paul - thank you. Paul has drafted an outline for the GN Policies and Procedures. The next meeting for any input is scheduled for January 23 at 1:00 pm at the Nature Centre.
- Sean Allen, a MHC student studying Land Reclamation, has shown an interest in participating in the **Baby's Breath Removal Project** in Ranchlands phase 2F & G. More concrete details will be provided as Sean consolidates his plan with the City Lands Development Department.
- Rob Gardner requested having the March GN General meeting and Indoor Program at the Public Library or MHC due to the Easter Program

preparations at the Nature Centre. Look for an announcement in the next Chronicle.

14. Attendance tonight – 23 for the business portion and 35 for the presentation.

15. Meeting Adjourned at 7:45 pm

16. Indoor Program:

Tonight's program by Bill Dolan (Land and Resource Coordinator for Southern Alberta) from Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation was entitled "What's in a Designation?" – a Primer on Provincial Parks, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands. Having 32 years experience with Parks Canada, Bill provided a detailed overview of parks and protected areas in Alberta, and how provincial park systems are designed to meet the needs of Albertans socially, economically, recreationally and historically. A short discussion period followed. Thanks to Rob Gardner for arranging Bill's presentation – another good crowd was in attendance!