

Society of Grassland Naturalists
Minutes of General Meeting – October 22, 2013
Police Point Park

1. **Call to Order** at 7:10 pm. Anne Bernhardt – Chair; Barry Anderson – Secretary.
2. **Minutes:** The minutes from September 24, 2013, were reviewed and **Motion Carried** to accept the minutes.
3. **Exciting Sightings:** This month’s sightings include a kestrel and golden eagle (Penny Evans), a dead Virginia rail found in an alley in the SE Hill (Rob Gardner), and a prairie falcon, pileated woodpecker and belted kingfisher in the Strathcona area (Phil Horch).
4. **Newspaper Clips:** No recent articles to report.
5. **Treasurer’s Report:** – Eileen shared the most recent GN Balance Sheet and Income Statements as of September 31, 2013:

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| • Servus “30” Chequeing | \$9,083.78 |
| • Servus “20” Savings Publishing | \$4,931.97 |
| • ING Savings | <u>\$6,072.03</u> |
| • Total Current Assets | \$20,087.78 |

An accurate count of the GN membership was not available.

6. **Priority Business:**
 - Paul gave updates on the progress of the Governance Committee by providing copies of the GN Policies and Procedures regarding Meetings, Record Keeping and Field Trips, with the latter document requiring even further discussion and revision. No report from the Budget Committee was given.
 - John reported from the Issues Committee that the Alberta South Saskatchewan Regional Plan will be open to the public on Tuesday, November 26 at the Medicine Hat Lodge. Participants are also encouraged to complete an online workbook. Marty spoke briefly about the continuing legal battle to protect the greater sage grouse in Alberta and Saskatchewan now that the federal government has issued an order to protect this species. Rob indicated that the Alberta Wilderness Association will meet tonight in Manyberries to discuss further action.
 - Corlaine reported that “Where’s the Sprague’s Pipit?” display has been put in temporary storage to make room for “The Dancing River” installed on October 22. This latest exhibit takes a closer look at our South Saskatchewan River including historic photos and experiments. On Sunday, October 27 @ 2:00 pm Kit will lead a guided walk entitled “The Point and the Flood” to examine the effects of high water on the park and its landscape. As well, the annual “Flight of the Snow Geese” outing will occur on Sunday, November 3 @ 2:30 pm; meet at the A & W on Gershaw Drive SE to arrange for carpooling.
 - Marty reminded those volunteers working at this weekend’s Home and Leisure Trade Show to check the schedule that has been emailed to them.
 - Corlaine updated everyone on the current construction outside the Nature Centre that involves replacing several posts to maintain the roof structure – watch your step!

- The next GN sanctioned field trip will be Saturday, October 26 when Phil will lead interested birders to Sauder and Murray Reservoirs; meet at the A & W on Gershaw Drive SE @ 8:30 am to arrange for carpooling. Look for more planned field trips on the GN website and through e-mail reminders.
- No reports from Nature Alberta and SEAWA were available at this time. However, SEAWA is currently hosting an Interprovincial Water Conference from October 21-23. Details can found on the website www.belowyourwatershed.ca

7. Other Business:

- Congratulations to Jim Black for his strong effort to become a councillor in this year's civic election. Despite not being elected, GN appreciates the political voice it has gained through his campaigning.
- It was suggested that the GN Board should correspond with our new mayor and council to make them more aware of our organization and its goals.
- Donations towards the cost of the park bench for life-time members are still welcome; arrangement to donate can be made through Eileen.
- The next GN Board meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 5 @ 7:00 pm hosted by Eileen.

8. Attendance tonight – 23 members for the business portion of the program.

9. Meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm

10. Indoor Program:

Healing our Headwaters

Kevin Van Tighem (writer, biologist and retired Superintendent of Banff National Park) gave a most stimulating and informative talk and slide presentation on the conservation of the foothills of the Rocky Mountains in Alberta for the Bow and Oldman Rivers. The headwaters of these two rivers west of Highway #2 supply virtually all of the water in the South Saskatchewan River. Downstream water quality and flow rate are dependent on the trapping and melting of the snow as well as holding back the water during heavy rains. The wetlands of the headwaters act as natural reservoirs for the rivers; thus, protection and management of the foothills areas are critical to the storage and release of the water; particularly to prevent flooding as experienced this past summer. Mr Tighem explained how logging using selective cutting practices (leaving patches of trees) rather than clear-cutting could be done effectively to manage the foothills forest industry as well as to control flooding by trapping the rainwater and leaving shade to slow the snow melt. Allowing the snow (and rain) to fall to the ground rather than clinging on the trees actually reduced the loss of moisture caused by sublimation (and evaporation), thus increasing the ground moisture and available water downstream. Furthermore, fires whether controlled-burns or natural events leave some trees standing; therefore produce some shade as well as tend to lead to diversification of the forest growth. Mr Tighem also explained how the controversial Pine Beetle leave trees standing with branches thus providing more shade to slow snow melt as well as attracting diversity of wildlife - especially wood peckers and other bird species. A primary concern of logging in the headwaters is land erosion in the clear-cuts and along the roads. Furthermore, after logging has ceased, the roads are quite often used by off-road vehicles and ATV for recreational activities which tend to lead to significant, uncontrolled runoff and erosion during snow melt and rain storms which contributes to flooding. Designation, responsible use and enforcement are needed to manage off-road vehicles in the headwaters areas. With the release of the draft of the South Saskatchewan River Plan, Mr Tighem encouraged individuals and nature groups such as Grasslands Naturalists to read the plan and respond by replying to the on-line workbook, writing a letter and/or attending one of the consultation sessions (eg. Medicine Hat Lodge Tuesday, November 26).

Thanks to John Slater for submitting this review of Kevin's presentation.