

Society of Grassland Naturalists
Minutes of General Meeting – April 23, 2013
Police Point Park

1. **Call to Order** at 7:05 pm. Anne Bernhardt – Chair; Barry Anderson – Secretary.
Anne began the meeting by introducing herself and giving a brief overview of her background.
2. **Minutes:** The minutes from the February 26, 2013 were reviewed. Anne moved the minutes to be accepted; seconded by John. CARRIED.
3. **Exciting Sightings:** The following species were reported during the last month:
 - Ray Gaudet – 2 house wrens in his backyard
 - Martha Munz Gue – red-breasted nuthatches and crossbills in her backyard
 - Randy Stotz (as reported to Bob Frew) – approximately 10,000 migrating snow geese spotted east of Calgary
 - Ben Velner – a den of Swift fox near Pakowki Lake
4. **Newspaper Clips:** John shared information that included:
 - Obituaries for both Donna MacLean and Dawn Dickinson
 - “Renowned local artist will never be forgotten”
 - “Saamis Rotary E-waste round-up May 11”
 - “Evelyn Schuler wins Public Interest Alberta Award”
 - “Invasive flowers on City’s hit list this Spring”
 - “Snow doesn’t stop Hatters from Getting Outdoors”
 - “Local Grassland Naturalist questions government actions over sage grouse”
 - “Local litter blitz ready to return”
5. **Board of Directors:** Anne announced the following GN appointments for 2012-2013:
 - Past President – John Slater
 - Directors at Large – Bill Knibbs, Gary Martin, Hugh Armstrong
These 4 members are in addition to the Executive Officers elected at the AGM:
 - President - Anne Bernhardt
 - Vice President - Jim Black
 - Treasurer - Eileen Cowtan
 - Secretary -Barry Anderson
6. **Committee Chairs and External Organization Representatives:** John provided an overview of the following GN committee appointments for 2012-13:
 - Interpretive Program – Phil Horch (chair)
 - Issues – John Slater (chair)
 - Indoor Program – Rob Gardner (chair)
 - Field Trips – Mike O’Shea (chair)
 - Communications – Eileen Cowtan (chair)
 - Governance – Paul Thibault (chair)
 - Budget Committee – Paul Thibault (contact)External Organization appointments included:
 - Nature Alberta – Martha Munz Gue
 - Prairie Conservation Forum – Rob Gardner
 - Palliser Airshed Society – David Gue

- SEAWA – Rob and Martha (acting liaisons)

John also provided an overview of the nearly 20 projects/tasks that will be on-going during the year.

7. Honorary Life-Time Membership Certificate

Bob Frew gave a heart-felt tribute to Ben Verner in recognition of Ben’s contributions to Grasslands Naturalists and the Police Point Nature Centre. Many thanks to Ben for his selfless commitment to enhancing the enjoyment of others whether it be leading a bird-watching outing or show-casing his carpentry and art-work skills at the Nature Centre – **Congratulations Ben!!**

8. Civic Recognition Environmental Award

An official letter from Alderman Jeremy Thompson has been received by GN announcing that the City of Medicine Hat has chosen **Jan Scott as this year’s recipient of the Environmental Award** to be given out on May 16 at 7:00 pm at the Esplanade. Other winners to be recognized that evening include: Jay Hitchen (Community Inclusion Award), the Kinettes of Medicine Hat (Community Service Award), Janice Dynes (Humanitarian Award) and Marg Derbyshire (Sports and Recreation Award).

9. Treasurer’s Report: – John for Eileen

John shared the following financial statement as of March 31, 2013:

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|-------------------------------|-------------|
| • Chequing account | \$9,632.81 |
| • ING savings account | \$6,041.67 |
| • Servus “20” savings account | \$4,925.79 |
| • Total assets | \$20,600.27 |

A reminder that membership dues are long overdue. Waiver forms must be completed and/or revised. Donations are always welcome! Contact Eileen for more information.

10. Priority Business:

- Paul provided information and hard-copy reports for perusal from **the GN Governance Committee Meeting** and submitted for board approval on April 10. Specifically, Paul addressed the Committees and External Organizations regarding General Committees, the Governance Committee and Budget Committee.
- Paul, contact for the **Budget Committee**, has requested that by May 1 all committees should have elected a chairperson and should forward to him an annual wish list and proposed budget for the upcoming year - April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014.
- Corlaine reported that **The Easter Program “Chicks and Bunnies”** was tremendously successful this year with a turnout of around 5500 people for the final weekend of activities. Despite poor weather, the “Get Outdoors Program” which ran on April 14 still attracted 60 people to the Nature Centre. Up-coming activities include a **Youth Photography Contest** and several **Spring Bird and Flower Counts:** Brooks on May 18, Medicine Hat on May 26 and Elkwater on June 1. Look for more details in the next Chronicle.
- The next field trip will be a nocturnal outing on Friday evening, April 26, led by Gary Martin, to the Cypress Hills to look for owls and similar night-time species. Meet Gary at Tim Horton’s, Dunmore Road location, at 8:00 pm. Dress warmly and expect to carpool.

- John reminded everyone of the **Police Point Park Cleanup** scheduled for Saturday, April 27 from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm. Contact Val at the Nature Centre for more details. The **City-Wide Cleanup** happens one week later on Saturday, May 4 from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm. Meet at the Medicine Hat Parks Department in Kin Coulee for instructions and supplies. A free barbeque for all volunteers will follow.
- Participants are still needed for the **Stewards in Motion for Water Workshop** to be held at the MH Lodge on Thursday, May 2 from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm.
- Due to the late spring we are experiencing this year, the **Tiny Cryptanthe and Wildflower Walk in Ranchlands** has been rescheduled for late June. Cathy Linowski will also lead a Flower Walk on either May 24 or 25. Look for more details in the May Chronicle.
- Martha reported that the **Nature Alberta AGM** will be held in Edmonton on April 26-28 with a banquet and migrating snow goose chase to Beaverhills held on Saturday. **Martha moved that NA Board Members receive a complimentary copy of Dawn Dickinson's book "Caught in the Spin"; Bill seconded. Motion carried.** Martha also took the opportunity to thank GN for sponsoring her trip to Red Deer to attend the Prairie Conservation and Endangered Species conference this past February. She recommended room-sharing as a way to limit expenses for further conferences.

11. Other Business:

- Free copies of the **Revised Birders' Checklist** are now available at the Nature Centre and Alberta Parks in Elkwater.
- The **park bench** to recognize Dawn Dickinson and Donna McLean, and Honorary Life-Time Members will proceed with the City of Medicine Hat Parks Department in charge. Board members will discuss the details of this bench at the next GN Board meeting.
- The sale of Dawn Dickinson's book "Caught in the Spin" for \$10.00 continues at the Nature Centre. Other titles are also available.
- **Alberta Plantwatch** program is encouraging participation during April to June to watch the blooming of one or two selected wildflowers in a specific location. When reported annually to the website, this information gives indication of the advance of spring and climate change. Martha encourages members to participate in various locations around Medicine Hat and distributed sign-up sheets at tonight's meeting.
- Martha also spoke about a possible project entitled "**What's Blooming Now?**" with interested members monitoring a section of the city. So far, Martha would oversee NE Crescent Heights, Dave McKenzie NW Crescent Heights, Mike O'Shea East Glen and Cathy Linowski the College area.
- Corlaine reminded interested individuals of the workshop called "**Being an Effective Board: How Do We Measure Up?**" being held Saturday, May 4, at the MHC Crowfoot Room from 9:00 am – 3:00 pm. Cost is \$10.00 which includes lunch; registration deadline is May 1. The GN Board especially encourages the Directors at Large to attend. This workshop will be cancelled unless people register in the next day or so.

- Rob shared details regarding the **Prairie Appreciation Celebration** to be held Saturday, June 8 on the north slope of the Cypress Hills and Elkwater. The day will include events sponsored by the Ranching Community as well as Environmental Groups. This is an all day and evening event beginning at 9:00 am with an evening barbeque to follow. Overnight camping will be available at a minimal cost. Look for more details to follow in the Chronicle.
- John spoke about the **Walk to the Headwaters** – a 350km journey that will begin at the South Saskatchewan border and end at the Castle Mountain Falls. The distance will be walked in 16 segments beginning July 13 and ending July 28. More details to follow.
- Sean Allen shared an update on his involvement with the **Baby's Breath Removal Project** and displayed a mature plant that had been removed just a few days ago in the Ranchlands area. All of us were quite shocked at the size of the root! Thanks to Sean for pursuing this project and keeping everyone informed.

12. Door Prize Winner – Phil Horch

13. Attendance tonight – 20 members for the business portion and 23 for the presentation.

14. Meeting adjourned at 8.:30 pm

15. Indoor Program:

Tonight's program was shared by Ryan Davison from the Agri-Environment Service Branch and Bob Philips from SEAWA.

Ryan's program featured information about the "Bare Creek Wetlands Project" – a damming project that began about 45 years ago on the west side of Highway 41, 35 kilometres south of the Elkwater turnoff. In 1997, reconstruction of the original dam took place thanks to the partnership efforts of the Grasslands Naturalists and PFRA at a cost of \$18,000. However, the project now requires much needed repair work to manage the water flow in this wetland area and additional sponsors will be needed.

Bob's presentation focussed specifically on the Integrated Watershed Management Plan – its economic, administrative and environmental benefits. Bob used a detailed power-point presentation to outline the five different phases which SEAWA has identified in its quest to maintain water quality and quantity for all of its stakeholders. Bob ended his program by responding to questions and comments from the audience concerning water quality.