

Society of Grassland Naturalists
Minutes of General Meeting – February 26, 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 January 22, 2013 were reviewed. John moved the minutes to be accepted; seconded by Rob Gardner. CARRIED.
3. **Exciting Sightings and Various Newspaper Clips:**
 - Sightings included a group of 10 flickers (both yellow and red shafted) by Hugh and Dee Armstrong; juncos and chickadees by Martha Munz Gue; a gathering of 14 robins in Elkwater reported to Mike O’Shea; robins and blue jays being pestered by some magpies by Gary Martin; and a female purple finch, a golden-crowned kinglet and 7 crossbills (both red and white-winged) seen by Judy and Barry Anderson in their backyard.
 - John commented on recent photos and articles in the Medicine Hat News involving GN related events and topics. Articles included “Pheasants Forever holding fundraising dinner March 8 on new land” (Feb. 26), “Lots to love about Cypress Hills’ first loppet” (Feb. 25) and “Composting workshop at MHC on March 9” (Feb. 16). Also in Prairie Post “Census shows Chaplin Lake is important piping plover habitat” (Feb 22).
 - Rob suggested that it might be a good idea for interested GN members to support the “Pheasants Forever” fundraising dinner on March 8 by attending the banquet as a group. Contact Rob if you are interested in attending with him.
4. **Treasurer’s Report: Eileen Cowtan**
 - Our current checking balance as of February 26 is \$8880.98 with the savings account at \$4608.89 and the ING account at \$6031.91. The total balance is \$19,521.91.
 - **Insurance costs** for this year are \$3540.00 (\$30 increase from last year). Some discussion occurred regarding the GN and IP insurance split payment criterion. In 2012, GN paid approximately 43% (57% by the IP) of the total insurance cost. Rob Gardner suggested that perhaps the IP should pay slightly more such as 2/3 (67%) due to liability coverage of facilities and equipment, and higher risk of public and children’s programs. It was decided that the Board would discuss to work out an amicable solution for splitting the payment of the insurance cost.
 - Eileen reminded everyone that **outstanding GN membership fees are now due**. So far only 46 of 96 members have paid their fees. Please contact Eileen as soon as possible to arrange payment – thank you. New waiver forms must also be completed or the date changed on last year’s forms.
 - Milt Spitzer and Gary Martin have volunteered to review the 2012 yearly financial report. Thanks to both of them for taking on this necessary task.

- Donations to GN are always welcome; please contact Eileen to do so.

5. Announcements:

- As part of **Canadian Water Week** March 18- 23 and **UN World Water Day** March 22, Martha Munz Gue announced that there are plans for information booths and displays provided by Unisphere, SEAWA, GN and other interested parties at the Medicine Hat Public Library. The theme for this year is “Cooperation”. The final day will be high-lighted with a guided river walk hosted by one of the GN members.
- Rob Gardner reported that the **Prairie Conservation Forum** will hold a **Prairie Appreciation Day** near Elkwater on Saturday, June 8. More details to follow.

6. Interpretive Program: Marty for Corlaine

- **Kiwanis Family Day** activities held February 18 at Police Point Park attracted about 600 people of all ages. Thanks to everyone involved to make this day a success!
- Volunteers are still needed for the upcoming **Easter Programming** that will run from February 25 to April 1. Clean ice cream buckets with lids are still required so please check your storage areas at home. Contact Corlaine at the Nature Centre for more details and to sign up as a volunteer.
- **Bird seed** is still available for sale at the Nature Centre. No further bird seed orders will be taken this winter.
- Marty has completed the training of approximately 12 volunteers who have shown an interest in the **Sprague’s Pipit Project**. The project will kick-off this weekend with volunteers and staff working at the district Trade Show at the Cypress Centre.
- The **Feeder Watch Program** continues at the Nature Centre until April 5. Your assistance with bird watching would be greatly appreciated.
- An **Acoustic Guitar String Fever** evening will be held at the Nature Centre on Saturday March 16 at 7:00 pm. Everyone is welcome to attend.

7. Field Trips – Mike O’Shea

- Mike reported on the most recent field trip February 23 that saw 6 birders record 19 species in the Strathcona Park area. A northern shrike and a prairie falcon were the highlights. Thanks to Mike for leading this outing!
- Ben Verner will lead our next bird outing on Saturday March 2 at 9:00 am. Please meet at the A & W on Gershaw Drive.
- Please forward your ideas for future field trips, destinations, leaders, etc. to Mike.

8. Issues Committee: Martha

- **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. Currently, Mike does Ross Glen Creek, Martha NE Crescent Heights and Cathy Linowski at the MH College.

- On April 20 at 9:00 am Ron and Cathy Linowski will give a short presentation at the Nature Centre on the **Tiny Cryptanthus Recovery Plan** to be followed by a walk through Crescent Heights Ranchlands to search for plants as well as observe other wildflowers.
- **South Saskatchewan Regional Plan** is in the third phase of public consultation. The regional plan will be finalized based on the public consultation. Please check the Alberta ESRD website for more information.
- Tina Regehr and John attended the **Water Usage Conversation** Stakeholders session February 19 afternoon at the Medicine Hat Lodge. There was a Public session in the evening. Four selected topics were discussed: Water Management, Drinking Water and Wastewater, Healthy Lakes (and rivers), and water use for oil and gas Fracking. Please check the Alberta ESRD website for more information.
- There is a document **Proposals to Amend the Canadian Migratory Bird Regulations** which proposes to add hunting of Sandhill Cranes in southeast Alberta. The main concern is the possibility of shooting endangered Whooping Cranes, particularly the juveniles due to misidentification.

9. Nature Alberta – Martha

- The next general meeting will be held April 27 at their AGM combined with the Tofield Beaverhill Lake Snow Goose Rally. Other GNers are encouraged to attend.

10. SEAWA – Martha

- Martha distributed materials for our perusal from the last meeting.

11. Indoor Programs: Rob

- Rob announced the next indoor program for the AGM, March 26, 2013, 7:30pm at the MH Public Library. Lorne Fitch, Alberta Government Biologist from Lethbridge will give a presentation on the condition and status of freshwater fish in the South Saskatchewan River entitled “The Zen of Fish and Watersheds”.

12. Other Business

- Copies of Dawn Dickinson’s book “**Caught in the Spin**” are now on sale for 50% off at the Nature Centre.
- The new and updated **Bird Species Checklist** has now been completed. 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. The newly printed checklists should be delivered within the next few weeks.

- The **GN Annual General Meeting Elections** will take place March 26 at the Public Library at 6:30 pm. Nominations for Executive Officers can be made to Bill Knibbs.
- The **Plant Study Group** will meet at the MHC in room L155 on March 16 from noon to 3:00 pm. Check the current issue of the Chronicle for more detail.
- A reminder that **Civic Recognition Awards Nominations** must be made before March 15. GN is currently in the process of nominating one worthy candidate for the Environmental Award.
- The **Prairie Conservation and Endangered Species Conference** held February 19-22 in Red Deer was attended by Martha, Marty and Rob. Each of these participants will post an article in a future Chronicle summarizing a particular aspect of the conference. We look forward to their opinions!
- **Alberta Wilderness Association** is sponsoring a Meet and Greet evening at the Nature Centre on Sunday, March 3, for AWA members and friends to give an overview of their work in the Grasslands region of SE Alberta and to hear about our wildness issues. Please invite friends and plan to attend by RSVP direct to AWA, Christyann Olson.

13. Attendance tonight – 20 for the business portion and 28 for the presentation.

14. Door Prize- Tonight's winner of a book and book bag was Elizabeth Frank.

15. Meeting Adjourned at 8:05 pm

16. Indoor Program:

Tonight's program by Chris Dodds, Interpretive and Education Co-ordinator in Elkwater, for Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park, was entitled "Happy Trails to You!: How do you like to enjoy the Cypress Hills?". Chris gave a short presentation on the Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park's program on getting input from various groups regarding their requirements for a more enjoyable Park experience. He outlined the steps to put these wishes into practice. Following the presentation the floor was opened to the attendees to express their concerns and wishes which were detailed on a flip chart. The underlying feedback from the attendees is that GN would like to see some areas preserved for simply communing with nature.