

Society of Grasslands Naturalists
(Draft) Minutes of General Meeting – October 27, 2015
Police Point Park

1. Call to Order: 7:05 pm, Dave McKenzie- Chair, Betty Rainville – Secretary
2. Review and Adoption of Minutes of General Meeting September 22, 2015: Motion Carried
3. Exciting Sightings: Sightings from members: a Cooper's Hawk, a Pileated Woodpecker, a Pacific Loon as well as Common Loons on Sauder Reservoir, 3 male Eastern Bluebirds in Golden Sheaf Park and possibly the same 3 seen in another location, 2 Golden Eagles at Elkwater, and a local porcupine. Members commented on the unusual Hooded Warbler reported recently in Fish Creek Park, Calgary.
4. Treasurer's Report: Not available. Eileen away.
5. Correspondence: Eileen away. None available.
6. Priority Business:
 - a. MH Community Foundation Endowment Fund: Hugh Armstrong and Dave McKenzie met with Mike Christie several days ago to sign the contract. \$100.00 was put into the account. MH Community Foundation is to return the contract. Hugh and Dave will write an article in the November Chronicle. It was noted that Casino proceeds may be put into this fund.
 - b. GN Board meeting minutes: Milt will put a Hot Link into the Chronicle to access the minutes.
7. Interpretive Program Report: Corlaine Gardner said there is lots of activity at the Centre with Grade 1 classes visiting. The Medicine Hat Public Library will help with a Saturday morning "Kid Friendly Halloween Story Walk". On November 8, Strathcona Art Studio presents "Parks are for Everyone". Opening reception starts at 2 pm. Corlaine reported that she attended a meeting in Lethbridge recently, along with Marty and Val, with over 20 people attending. Project work is slowing down due to the weather, so there is no assessing riparian health right now. Note that the City will close Police Point Park entrance road from October 28 to 30 then again from November 1 to 3 for repairs.
8. Committee Reports:
 - a. MHIP Committee: John Slater said that on October 5 Corlaine Gardner gave the Chief Interpreter's Report, which is printed in the October Chronicle. The tentative 2016 budget was presented to the Board and accepted. After the City Contract Funding for 2016 has been set, this budget may be updated for the next MHIP Operations Committee meeting on January 18, 2016.
Corlaine is continuing to search for a replacement for the Financial Bookkeeper for the MHIP.
 - b. Issues Committee: John stated the summer was a busy one. See the article in the October Chronicle about the project of removing Baby's Breath from the Environmental Reserve in Ranchlands. Lisa James was hired to manage this project. Hugh Armstrong is looking out for Baby's Breath in Police Point Park.
Please note the date change in the Ecotrust Conference to February 25 - 27 in Calgary. Also be aware that one or more GN members are encouraged to attend the Prairie Conservation and Endangered Species on February 16, 17 and 18 in Saskatoon. A budget will be formulated for that trip.
John replied to a question about the Seed Germination project underway. Lisa James is collecting Baby's Breath seeds from the Ranchland area to take to the College. She will count the seeds on the plant stalks and see how many germinate. The results will be seen over the winter.
 - c. Indoor Program: Joel Nicholson will speak on the Sage Grouse Count on November 24. In January the topic may discuss Insects in Amber. February and March topics may deal with the Swift Fox, or Alberta Parks grazing policy in the Spring Creek area.
 - d. Field Trips: Gary reported the November and December trips will be disclosed in the next Chronicle.

Rob Gardner noted that a GN ranching couple has kindly offered to host a group field trip to their ranch. GN members at the October General meeting voted to hold the trip in May or June, 2016 for more bird sightings.

- e. Fundraising: Hugh Armstrong reported \$77.35 was raised from the last Co-op receipts. He reminded everyone that members need to deliver the receipts to Anne before the cut-off date. Dave noted that receipts must be turned in by a GN member although Bill Knibbs mentioned one group that collects receipts from all Co-op members. Hugh noted GN members as well as non-members are needed to sign up as Casino volunteers as soon as possible. He said the GN Bird Trail projects may be of interest to Tourism Alberta for funding. We may also qualify as a non profit group for Community Development Grants through the City. Phil Horch suggested that GN check with Canadian Badlands Limited as a possible source of funding.
- f. Bird Tales Project: Hugh thanked Milt and Phil for volunteering. Both residents and staff enjoyed the program which is designed to keep residents stimulated. Volunteers are still needed at Masterpiece Retirement for the two Thursdays left on November 12 and December 10. Sessions start at Meadow Ridge Seniors Village in February and March, 2016. Two staff have already volunteered to assist with bird feeders.
- g. Birding Trails Project: Phil will hold a meeting October 29 at his home. Milt is finished draft 6 while Paul continues his work on maps which may be ready by late 2016. Milt will eventually print 1 map in each Chronicle. Hugh reminded those involved to keep a record of volunteer hours spent. Ian Turner suggested Milt, Phil, or Paul might be willing to speak at a General Meeting about the Birding Trails Project.

9. Other Business:

- a..Dragonflies: Dave spoke about the Migratory Dragonfly Partnership formed between the U.S., Mexico and Canada to better understand North America's dragonfly Migration. Half a dozen species migrate, sometimes 12,000 km. per year. He noted that one kind of dragonfly perches while one is the flying kind. There are good books on this subject.
- b. Next GN Board Meeting: Tuesday November 10, 6:30 pm at Anne Bernhardt's home.
- c. Next GN General Meeting: Tuesday November 24, 7:00 pm at the Nature Centre.
- d. Meeting Adjournment : 7:45 pm. 17 people attended the meeting.
- e. Refreshments
- f. Tonight's Indoor Program : Jan Scott gave a fascinating talk on her work with the Monarch Butterfly. 21 people attended the program.

The Monarch Butterfly

Jan has always been interested in insects, but especially in this flying insect known as the Monarch Butterfly. Unfortunately the Monarch numbers have decreased drastically in many locations with only one official sighting each this year in Alberta and Saskatchewan. A sighting is not considered official without a photograph or an actual specimen taken.

This particular butterfly migrates 2000 miles or more, or over 4000 km, from Mexico or California. Monarchs West of the Rocky Mountains migrate to California, while those East of the Rockies migrate to Mexico. Several generations are involved in the annual migration cycle, not just the same single butterfly. We would see Monarch butterflies arrive about mid-June in Medicine Hat and see them leave mid-September .

Jan spoke about the four stages in the life of the Monarch, and how the female lays about 400 eggs one by one, on the underside of the Milkweed Plant. This plant is essential for the caterpillars to eat during the two week phase before they develop into a chrysalis. Jan has raised about 200 butterflies and described how the male may be distinguished from the female by the black dot on each hind wing. Similarly, the Viceroy Butterfly may be easily confused with the Monarch except for a black line on each hind wing of the Viceroy. This butterfly is also usually smaller than the Monarch, according to Jan.

We saw how to properly tag a Monarch Butterfly to determine how far it travels. Jan held the wings together gently and tagged the bigger section of the hind wing. Monarchs may also be tested for the Protozoan Parasite called O.E. or Ophryocystis Elektroscirra using sterile gloves and a sticky tag to pick up the spores. The paper strips are sealed and sent for testing. While 70% of Monarch Butterflies in Florida are infected with this parasite, only 30% of Western butterflies are affected.

Unfortunately Monarch Butterflies have several enemies despite the noxious taste they develop from eating Milkweed. Some birds in Mexico are becoming resistant to this taste. Non native wasps also

prey on these butterflies, while stink bugs eat the larva, and spiders eat both eggs and larva. Humans have harmed the Monarch Butterfly by use of pesticides and herbicides, as well as limiting access to Milkweed plants through Provincial weed laws. Even children may harm Monarch caterpillars by rubbing them while having insect repellent on their hands, and causing sores on the caterpillar.

Jan commented that we can overcome some of these hardships for the Monarch Butterfly by planting butterfly friendly back yards. Fill the yard with perennials that butterflies love, and be sure to plant clumps of Showy Milkweed that will remain in the same location year after year. You may be delighted to see Monarch Butterflies flitting around your plants and flowers.

A Summary of The Monarch Butterfly Presentation by Jan Scott Summarized by B. Rainville

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