



Native Plant News

Vol. 17, No. 1

Spring 2012

Making progress

Two native plants are down-listed

By SARAH VINGE
*Rare Plant Rescue,
Nature Saskatchewan*

Two of Rare Plant Rescue's target species were recently down-listed – meaning they were put into a lower risk category – by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC).

Buffalograss (*Bouteloua dactyloides*) and Hairy Prairie-clover (*Dalea villosa* var. *villosa*) were previously considered Threatened, but have been designated as Special Concern as of November 2011. While both still face numerous threats contributing to habitat loss and degradation, the discovery of larger population sizes has warranted a change in status.

The main reason for down-listing is similar for the two species.

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PHOTO BY SARAH VINGE

Male flowers of Buffalograss (*Bouteloua dactyloides*).

Nature vs. profit: A fine line in the business of ecotourism

By PENNY MCKINLAY
EcoFriendly Sask.

A dynamic group of speakers from a variety of backgrounds explored the challenges and rewards of balancing conservation and profit through ecotourism at the NPSS annual general meeting and conference on Feb. 17 and 18 in Regina.

Keynote speaker Jonathan Potts, Director of Marketing for Tourism Saskatchewan, said that tourism and conservation are compatible, but that you need to understand your audience and what motivates them.

To attract tourists to a natural area, you need to provide an authentic, interactive experience that engages people on many different levels, he said. They are looking for outdoor activities (gentle and action-packed), opportunities to learn and engage in the local culture (from local food to local history), and personal development.

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4 New SPARC greenhouse opens its doors

5 2012 Summer Field Tours announced

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Individual \$30

Family \$45

Student/Low Income \$15

Corporate \$200

Life \$500

Please contact the NPSS office for information about the lifetime membership instalment payment option.

Becoming your past president

This is my last message from the present.

It has been a difficult one to write. There are so many things that I would like to say, but I will try to keep it to three.

First, I am pleased to be passing the torch to long-time board member, Shelley Heidinger.

Shelley, I know you will do great!

Second, thank you for the opportunity.

When I first picked up a member brochure back in 1999, I was a student looking for an opportunity to learn more about native plants. I did not know then that the NPSS would be the source of so many wonderful friendships and become such an important outlet for volunteerism.



I have been on the board of directors for six years now, which feels like a short and a long time all at once.

During this time, there has been a lot of change.

TARA SAMPLE OUTGOING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Society has taken on an astonishing amount of project work. It is work that keeps native plants – as well as the Society – at the top of mind both within the province of Saskatchewan and beyond.

We have seen our membership double, while the benefits of membership continue to improve. The AGM and workshops continue to be popular, well attended events. There is more and more demand for summer tours where members can experience the flora of Saskatchewan together. And we have one of the best newsletters out there.

But the success we are enjoying is not effortless.

It comes from countless volunteer hours put in by a number of extraordinary individuals. More than ever, an engaged, active membership is what is needed to keep our momentum up.

So, thirdly, I urge you to get involved and share your skills with the Society. It is through your volunteerism and love of the natural world that we can do our best work and have the most fun.

Thank you and see you soon. ✿

Invasive plant funding

Did you know the Farm Stewardship Program is available to producers who don't have an environmental farm plan?

With the creation of producer driven Agri-Environmental Group Plans, farmers that reside within their borders have access to beneficial management practices (BMPs) offered through the Farm Stewardship Program. Several BMPs apply directly to the control of invasive plant species.

Funding options include erecting cross fencing for grazing weed control, creating an integrated pest management plan and putting the plan into motion. For more information on how the Farm Stewardship Program can help you with your invasive plant problems or to access other BMPs, contact your local EFP or Watershed Awareness Advisor (www.saskpcab.com). ✿

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Always in search of new PlantWatchers

By DEANNA TROWSDALE-MUTAFOV
PlantWatch Saskatchewan
Coordinator,
Nature Saskatchewan

The 2011 spring and early summer in Saskatchewan will be remembered for the very challenging weather – record breaking rainfall, flooding and very cool temperatures throughout Saskatchewan. All parts of the natural world, including wildflowers, had to “weather” the storm to survive, but nature somehow finds a way to adapt and grow, even under the most difficult circumstances!

Due to this poor weather, I was uncertain about how many PlantWatchers would be able to participate in the program in 2011. I was very pleased to receive datasheets from 21 participants, with over 140 blooming dates recorded!

Almost all PlantWatchers indicated that the weather was cool and rainy during the 2011 plantwatching season, with subsequent later blooming dates for some plants. It was a strange spring indeed!

Hard to believe but spring is here, and you can help us understand what is happening to plant growth in Saskatchewan by getting outside to watch the flowers bloom.

To become a PlantWatcher is very simple – just phone or email the Nature Saskatchewan office to indicate your interest and we will mail or email you a package of plant watching informa-

tion. Then just look for one or more of the 18 native plants or two non-native plants in your area, watch and record the first bloom and send those results in by mail or email.

Even one observation of one plant is a great contribution!

By signing up as a participant, you will receive two newsletters a year, including a recording datasheet and you can request other PlantWatch materials, such as wall charts, posters, Canada

in Bloom booklets and brochures – these materials are also available to download on the PlantWatch website found at www.naturesask.ca under Education and Monitoring.

I encourage individuals, school classrooms and youth and nature groups to get involved in this program – it’s fun to get outside and participate and your observations aid in climate change research! There is also information on the other NatureWatch programs that may be of interest to youth and adults alike – they are FrogWatch, WormWatch and IceWatch. All of these monitoring programs can be found on the website www.nature-watch.ca. Be sure to check them out!

For more information on the program or how to become a PlantWatch participant please call 780-9273 in Regina, or 1-800-667-4668 outside of Regina. Or e-mail the PlantWatch Coordinator at dtmutafov@naturesask.ca. There’s also a PowerPoint presentation on the program available for youth groups and classrooms, at no charge.

Thanks and Happy PlantWatching!✿



‘Sedges of Saskatchewan’ now available

This just in - the Flora of Saskatchewan's 3rd book, the *Sedges of Saskatchewan* has been printed and is now available for purchase.

To order your copy, please contact Ellen, the Nature Saskatchewan office

administrator, at 306-780-9273 or info@naturesask.ca.

The books *Ferns and Fern Allies of Saskatchewan* and the *Lilies, Irises and Orchids of Saskatchewan* are also available.✿

Upcoming Events

May 2012

Native Prairie Speaker Series – Managing Species at Risk on Pastures

Tuesday, May 29

Cypress Park Resort

Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park
Held in conjunction with the Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association's 99th AGM. Speaker: Heather Wiebe, Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, Agri-Environment Services Branch.

www.pcap-sk.org

www.skstockgrowers.com

Back To The Field: Essential Plant Skills 2012

May 29 and 30

Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve
Hafford, Sask.

This advanced plant identification and ecological health assessment workshop is being held by the Society for Range Management - Prairie Parkland Chapter.

For more information, contact Nadia Mori at 306-946-2319 or email nadia.mori@gov.sk.ca

June 2012

Nature Saskatchewan Spring Meet

June 15 to 17

Prince Albert Exhibition Center
Prince Albert, Sask.

The meet will include a tour of MacDowal Bog Ecological Reserve, an exploration of the headwaters of the Carrot River, a visit to the 2006 Crutwell forest fire site and learning about dragonflies and the Saw-whet owl. Space is limited so reserve your spot early.

www.naturesask.ca

2012 Native Prairie Appreciation Week

June 17 to 23

Native Prairie Appreciation Week is about appreciating Saskatchewan's remaining native prairie. With only an estimated 17 per cent of native prairie remaining, Sask. PCAP encourages all residents to get outside this summer and explore native prairie whether it is right in your backyard or taking a short drive to the country.

www.pcap-sk.org

To submit your native plant related event to our events list, send your information (including date, contact, phone number and location) to info@npss.sk.ca.

SPARC-ing scientific research

\$5M greenhouse upgrade benefits producers

EDITOR'S NOTE: THIS ARTICLE IS ADAPTED FROM A SUBMISSION BY SHARON RAMSAY OF AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD CANADA.

With spring seeding in full swing, the benefit of a new state-of-the-art greenhouse will soon begin to take root.

In October 2011, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) cut the ribbon on a specially-designed greenhouse at the Semiarid Prairie Agricultural Research Centre (SPARC) in Swift Current. The event also marked 90 years of cutting-edge scientific research at SPARC and commemorated the 125th anniversary of the AAFC's research branch.

The new, modern and energy-efficient greenhouse strengthens the capacity of SPARC scientists to research and develop grain, pulse, and forage crops that benefit farmers, ranchers and all Canadians. Ten separate compartments are individually climate and light-controlled, which allows multiple researchers to conduct experiments simultaneously under different growing conditions.

The roof features tempered glass for maximum light penetration. The walls feature acrylic panels, which provide better insulation, and are more energy efficient than glass. Motorized shade curtains conserve energy at night in the fall and winter. In the summer, these curtains can provide shade when the sun is strong and bright.

The upgrade was born within Budget 2009, when the Government of Canada allocated \$5.34 million over two years to update the greenhouse facilities at SPARC. SPARC is one of eight AAFC laboratories that received funding from the Modernizing Federal Laboratories Initiative under Canada's Economic Action Plan. A total of \$25.9 million was committed to AAFC for these upgrades.

SPARC, one of AAFC's 19 research centres, is a significant asset to south-western Saskatchewan. Almost all of the durum wheat and nearly half the



PHOTO COURTESY OF AAFC

Mike Schellenberg leads a tour of the native plant research compartment at the new SPARC greenhouse.



PHOTO COURTESY OF AAFC

A native plant display at the new SPARC greenhouse open house.

spring wheat grown in western Canada traces its origins to research conducted at SPARC.

Research results generated by SPARC scientists have been well-received and readily adopted by

producers. SPARC scientists continue to advance crop genetics, develop new products and markets, improve production management practices for sustainable growth, and protect the environment and biodiversity.*

2012 NPSS summer field tours



PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

A view of the hills and native prairie at Saskatchewan Landing Provincial Park.

Touching down at Sask. Landing Provincial Park

By *CHET NEUFELD*

NPSS Executive Director

Are you looking for things to do and places to go this summer?

Then why not join the NPSS on one of its popular summer field tours.

This summer we'll be visiting many different parts of the province and exploring unique habitats. You don't need any native plant knowledge to attend, just a willingness to come out and have fun. You'll learn as you go. The trips are for all ages and experience levels, and a good time is guaranteed for all.

Mark your calendars for the following dates:

June 10

Northeast Swale – Saskatoon

This will be our second visit to the swale in as many years.

There will be a variety of mini tours throughout the day focusing on plants, history and nature in general. You are sure to see an amazing variety of plant and bird life for an area so close to town. It is a joint tour with Nature Saskatoon and the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, who will be providing a free lunch.

If you are interested, there will also be a birding excursion open to everyone starting at 7 a.m. To go, meet at the Northeast Swale, located at the corner of Agra Road

(a.k.a. Township Road 372) and Range Road 3050 at 9:30 a.m. You will drive through a gate near the corner and park near some white event tents on the site.

June 23

Saskatchewan Landing Provincial Park

The NPSS and its members have been invited to visit the rugged landscapes of the beautiful South Saskatchewan River valley in Saskatchewan Landing Provincial Park.

During our visit, we will conduct a bioblitz to record all of the plant and animal species we can find. In addition to finding beautiful wildflowers, we might be lucky enough to spot a golden eagle, a tipi ring or even one of the species at risk that call the park home.

We will visit several interesting sites in the park on both sides of the river, learning about the park as we go. The tour is intended to be a day trip, but if you plan on camping, the park has been kind enough to waive the camping fee.

Meet at the Goodwin House (the stone house by the bridge) at 9 a.m.

July 14

Wanuskewin Heritage Park

Although this tour is most convenient for residents of the Saskatoon area, if you've never been to Wanuskewin you should join us!

You will join us in helping the park managers compile a list of all of the plants that we find and will learn about the history of the area while we're out there.

Wanuskewin is a gem of native prairie that has managed to remain relatively intact and healthy despite its close proximity to Saskatoon. In addition to our native plant tour, we will visit the on-site interpretive centre and be treated to a native dance demonstration.

Meet at the front doors to the interpretive centre at 1 p.m.

July 21

NCC property near Maymont

Last year we helped Nature Conservancy of Canada inventory one of their properties, and we have been invited back to do it again.

This time we will be visiting a brand new property that has come into the NCC's possession near Maymont, Sask. NCC properties are renowned for being the best of the best and this property is no exception. One of the most unique features is the hanging wetland, which is sure to hold something interesting.

Meet at the Credit Union Centre parking lot in Saskatoon at 9 a.m.

All tours are free to attend but please call Chet at 306-668-3940 or email info@npss.sk.ca to register so that we can plan accordingly. 🌱

AGM explores ecotourism options



PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

Keynote speaker Jonathan Potts, Director of Marketing for Tourism Saskatchewan.

Colin Schmidt, the Visitor Experience Product Development Officer at Grasslands National Park, opened discussions on Saturday by explaining that Parks Canada is attempting to achieve two different goals at the park that seem to take these concepts into account.

Parks Canada wants to protect the natural plants, wildlife, cultural heritage and paleontology – there are 3,000 First Nations sites – in the park. But it also wants to welcome visitors to the park to enjoy the natural habitat, to experience outdoor adventures and to learn.

Schmidt said trails can serve as a welcome mat, but they also moderate impact by establishing designated walkways. Before building a new trail, the park enlisted the help of NPSS members to conduct a rare plant survey, and they tried to create a 10-metre buffer zone on either side of the trail.

Designing a trail on the Prairies is particularly difficult as you can see where you're going, so people want to create shortcuts, he explained. Erosion is also a problem, but it can be resolved by creating a rolling contour trail, which combines easy gradients for walking with grade reversals and outcrops that provide an escape route for water.

However, sometimes more effort is necessary to lessen our impact on natural areas.

Ericka Donald, a second-year student in the Integrated Resource Management program at SIAST, recently carried out a survey of the impact of ATV use in the Nesbit Forest. She explained that better education and regulations are needed to help ATV users understand why and how they can protect the forest.

The interaction between people and natural areas isn't a one-way street. Nature too can have an impact.

Gord Vaadeland is the Executive Director for the Sturgeon River Plains Bison Stewards. He told people that when the bison herd in Prince Albert National

Park grew in size and started visiting neighbouring farms, the local ranchers got together to find ways that ranchers and bison could co-exist.

Vaadeland's involvement with the bison has led to further stewardship initiatives with farmers and ranchers across Canada and around the world. He said his conservation work is now so intertwined with his ranch that he couldn't have one without the other.

Despite the challenges with balancing conservation and profit, there are some success stories.

Jori Kirk established the Cypress Hills Eco-Adventures zipline canopy tour in Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park and holds his business to exceptionally high standards. He's set up a low environmental impact, low energy operation and hopes that his business can act as an ambassador for the park and an advocate for nature.

"We have a duty to protect the park and to help people experience and gain a respect for nature," Kirk said.

The interprovincial park has made many changes over the years, for the better, according to Melody Nagel-Hisey, the Park Area Naturalist.

The park contains the only lodgepole

pine forest in the province, but it is aging. She said they are looking at different ways to sustain it. Cougars have been re-established in the park and they are providing a good balance for the growing population of elk and deer. To mitigate the risks, they've implemented cougar safety information and notices for hikers, and ranchers have come on side when a research study found no domestic kills.

The park has also developed a dark sky campground and has just opened a planetarium and observatory. A student astronomer will provide a full lineup of educational programming this summer.

As rapidly expanding urban centres, Regina and Saskatoon must also balance nature preserves with urban development.

Jared Clarke is the Park Naturalist for Wascana Centre Authority in Regina. He explained that this year is Wascana's 50th anniversary and that the authority has undertaken a strategic plan and vision assessment, with public consultations, to be held in the summer as part of the celebrations.

He said Wascana Centre is not native land, but there is significant biodiversity within the preserve. In addition to the popular public areas, like the waterfowl ponds, there is a Habitat Conservation Area. The Wascana Junior Naturalists program and the Wings over Wascana Nature Festival also provide carefully structured activities that balance human enjoyment of the area with conservation of plants and wildlife.

After the presentations, small group discussions among conference participants determined that there was a significant opportunity for the NPSS to partner with the Meewasin Valley and the Wascana Centre Authority. Initiatives at Wascana could include invasive weed pulls, advocating for increased biodiversity using native plants, educating the public about native plants and attending Wascana's strategic planning session to provide biological expertise and strengthen partnerships. Joint activities with Meewasin could include bioblitzes, awareness initiatives regarding the conservation of natural habitats and collaboration on invasive weed management. 🌱



PHOTO BY CANDACE NEUFELD

A bee visits the flower of a Hairy Prairie-clover (*Dalea villosa* var. *villosa*).

Rescuing native plants working

Continued from Page 1

Increased survey efforts have revealed larger populations than were previously thought to exist. Buffalograss formerly qualified as Threatened due to the small known population size, but it no longer fits this criteria. The total Canadian population of Hairy Prairie-clover is thought to be 10 times larger than previously believed. The level of risk to Hairy Prairie-clover is considered to be diminished with this larger known population size, resulting in its status change.

Rare Plant Rescue (RPR) has carried out extensive searches for Buffalograss

since 2007, and mapping and population estimates for Hairy Prairie-clover since 2008. The program has been relatively successful in locating new occurrences of Buffalograss in native pastures in the Estevan area in the past five years, expanding its known extent of occurrence in Saskatchewan.

We have also conducted searches for Hairy Prairie-clover, locating previously unknown occurrences in both of its Saskatchewan locations – one near Mortlach and one near Dundurn. We then worked to delineate and map patches of this species and estimate the number of plants in each patch.

Rare Plant Rescue is proud to have

contributed to a more accurate assessment of these two plant species.

But, despite the down-listing, Buffalograss and Hairy Prairie-clover are still species at risk.

Threats to Buffalograss include coal strip mining, invasive species and competition from woody and taller species. Hairy Prairie-clover faces threats such as decline in open sandy sites, invasive species, recreational traffic, sand extraction and lack of disturbance.

RPR will continue to work with land-owner stewards to protect these species from further habitat degradation, and to mitigate these threats to ensure that both of these species remain down-listed.*

2012 Volunteer(s) of the Year Award

Glen and Maureen Lee are hard-core Native Plant Society volunteers and worthy recipients of the 2012 NPSS Volunteer of the Year Award. The couple was presented the award at the AGM and conference in February.

Glen and Maureen went on several of the 2011 field trips, including a very difficult search for invasive salt cedar (*Tamarix* sp.) at Findlater, Sask., on an extremely hot day in September. They are also excellent photographers, contributing their imagery not only for the Native Plant News on occasion, but as a great record of the native plants of our province. View their pictures of native plants and wildflowers at <http://em.ca/garden>.

Congratulations! *

Learn about Monarchs

Want to learn about Monarchs? Want to teach your students?

Then you'll want to become a member of the Monarch Teacher Network (MTN) and take the two-day training workshop: Teaching and Learning with Monarch Butterflies.



PHOTO BY DAVID FREEMAN

Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*).

The workshop empowers educators with the knowledge, experience, materials, confidence and passion to raise Monarchs right in your classrooms.

You have two opportunities to learn. Join the MTN in Regina on July 10 and 11 or in Winnipeg on July 17 and 18.

For more information about the program, go to www.monarchteachernetwork-westerncanada.com. *

Spot the crocus contest

The Spot the Crocus contest is back!

Keep your eyes peeled and when you spot the first prairie crocus (*Pulsatilla patens*) of the season (or if you've already spotted it!), let us know. You can even include a picture of it.

The winner will receive bragging rights for the year and a mention in our newsletter. All submissions will also be sent along to PlantWatch (see Page 3), a program which helps to monitor climate change. *



PHOTO BY CANDACE NEUFELD

Prairie crocus (*Pulsatilla patens*).

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