



Native Plant News

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Winter 2013

NPSS AGM Connects With Audience

The Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan's 19th Annual General Meeting and Conference took place on February 14-15 at the Conexus Arts Centre in Regina. This year's theme was "Creating Linkages" and looked at the fascinating topic of landscape ecology, the connections that make a landscape work, and how we as a society fit into it. The event was very successful. Although attendance was slightly lower than normal (due to competing events and Valentine's Day/long week-end), in the end 55 people attended the event.

Friday evening began with a NPSS member photo show, followed by the Volunteer of the Year Award ceremony. This year Inger Pors received the award for her tireless efforts on the Flowering Rush removal project. Keynote speaker Dr. Jessamyn Manson, a researcher at the University of Alberta, spoke about the relationship between pollinators and native flowers. Her fascinating research on bumblebees is on the leading edge of pollinator ecology and is unsurpassed anywhere. She has the rare ability to take a complex issue and distill it into something very interesting and understandable for even the non-biologist. She was a very engaging speaker and answered many questions from an enthusiastic audience. Following Dr. Manson's talk, a film screening of the documentary "Smarty Plants" was shown. Produced by Merit Motion Pictures in Manitoba and on loan to us from the Yorkton Film Festival,

this movie follows one of Dr. Manson's colleagues as he explores the notion that plants "behave" and are more animal-like than we ever thought. "Smarty Plants" has been so successful that it was turned into a "Nature of Things" special. A wine and cheese reception topped off the night.

Saturday morning began with the business portion of the annual general meeting. A discussion of the previous year's initiatives and finances ensued, along with a forecast of the NPSS' budget and activities for 2014. Following this, NPSS Executive Director Chet Neufeld gave a presentation on the successful projects and activities of 2013, and hinted at what was to come

for 2014. The rest of the day was filled with interesting and informative talks. Breanna Sikorski, a graduate student at the University of Saskatchewan, spoke about what cumulative effects are, how they are perceived and how they may play a role in the Northeast Swale, a natural area in Saskatoon that will soon be affected by urban development. Wendy Eskowich spoke about the South of the Divide project, an innovative approach involving multiple stakeholders to develop a single guiding document to help conserve multiple species at risk on a landscape scale. The last speaker before lunch was Sarah Vinge-Mazer with the Saskatchewan Conservation Data

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Socializing amongst the AGM participants.

PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

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**President:**

Shelly Heidinger 306-634-9771

Past-President

Tara Sample 306-777-9137

Vice-President:

John Hauer 306-463-5507

Treasurer:

Cheri Sykes 306-924-8028

Secretary:

Sarah James 306-780-6121

Directors:

Nadia Mori 306-946-3219

Dale Gross 306-347-0447

Jacey Bell 306-652-4432

Executive Director:

Chet Neufeld 306-668-3940

NPSS Address:

Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan

P.O. Box 21099, Saskatoon, SK S7H 5N9

Phone: (306) 668-3940 Fax: (306) 668-3940

E-mail: info@npss.sk.ca Website: www.npss.sk.caTwitter: @NPSS_SK www.facebook.clm/npss.sk

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Tribute to Gord Thomson

By CHET NEUFELD

NPSS Executive Director

Not long into 2014, Saskatchewan lost a great champion of native plants. Gord Thomson, a Dinsmore area native seed producer, harvester and cleaner, passed away in January. Gord Thomson was a pioneer of the native seed industry in Saskatchewan. Gord and his wife Marg have cleaned native seed for hundreds of clients, and also grew western porcupine grass (*Hesperostipa spartea*). Over the years thousands of kilograms of native seed have passed through their farm destined for projects all over the prairies, including several large projects such as roadside revegetation of major highways in Saskatchewan and restoration of prairie areas in the Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area. On a personal note Gord provided the blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*) that I used to establish my native lawn in Saskatoon, and refused to accept any form of payment for it because he was just that kind of guy. I first met Gord and Marg when I worked for the Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area and quickly learned that you couldn't leave the farm without at least a cup of coffee and some home baked goodies, or even a full meal if you came at the right time. I last saw Gord when he spoke alongside Darcy Henderson about the native seed industry at the 2013 Native Prairie Restoration Workshop in Saskatoon. I'm not sure that the audience realized how rare an opportunity this was, as though he was extremely knowledgeable and easy to talk to, he was also very humble and shied away from the public spotlight or any kind of recognition. Gord and Marg are two of the nicest and most hard working people you'll ever meet and his loss is felt by the entire native plant community. His legacy is massive and will carry on in the prairies that have been established with his help and in the native seed business which Marg has vowed to continue. Our sincerest sympathies to Marg and the family. ✿

SARA Recovery Strategy for Western Spiderwort



On October 22, 2013, Environment Canada posted on the Species at Risk Public Registry the Recovery Strategy for Western Spiderwort (*Tradescantia occidentalis*) in Canada.

This recovery planning document can be found at:

http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca/default_e.cfm ✿

PHOTO BY CANDACE NEUFELD

Noted Saskatchewan Naturalist Remembered

Shirley Jowsey of Saltcoats, SK, beloved wife of Dr. J. R. (Jim) Jowsey, passed away on Feb. 2, 2014 at the age of 94 years. She had an all encompassing love of nature. Shirley was recognized for her massive contribution to Wildflowers Across the Prairies in the third edition printed in 1999. She was an active member of Nature Saskatchewan, organizing excursions and submitting bird counts among other involvements. She was a charter member of the Yellowhead Flyway Birding Trail Association. Shirley loved to explore the prairies to find native plants and her wealth of knowledge and willingness and happiness in sharing that knowledge will be truly missed.

Donations as remembrances may be made in Shirley's name to the Leflay Trail or the Dr. Jim and Shirley Jowsey Wildflower Heritage and Conservation Area. Cheques are payable to the Town of Saltcoats, (Box 120, Saltcoats, SK, S0A 3R0) or the Saltcoats United Church (Box 58, Saltcoats, SK, S0A 3R0). *



Shirley Jowsey

NE Swalewatchers Win Award

The Northeast Swalewatchers, a Saskatoon-based conservation coalition of which the NPSS is a member, has recently won Ducks Unlimited Canada's 2013 Greenwing Conservation Award. The Northeast Swalewatchers were formed in 2012 in response to mounting urban development pressure that threatened the integrity of the Northeast Swale, an ancient glacial melt water channel composed of wetlands and mixed grass and fescue prairie. The area is located within Saskatoon city limits on the northeastern edge and is one of the city's most intact and biodiverse natural areas. It contains historical features such as trail ruts, a bison rubbing stone, and a quarry area that was used to gather limestone for the University of Saskatchewan. It also contains over 100 native plant species including provincially rare species such as crowfoot violet (*Viola pedatifida*). In the last 2 years, the Northeast Swalewatchers have been raising awareness of the site and the potential threats through site tours, social media and other activities and events. The group has also engaged the City of Saskatoon regarding sustainable development of the Northeast Swale, and some of the group's members sit on the city's environmental steering committee for the swale. Among their greatest successes to date was convincing the city to improve their development guidelines document for the swale (at considerable time and money to the city), minimizing roads in and around the swale, and guiding other developmental aspects that will have negative impacts on the swale. In the letter that came with the Greenwing Conservation Award, Brian Hepworth, Manager of Provincial Operations for Ducks Unlimited Canada, had this to say: "Ducks Unlimited Canada is pleased to recognize the contributions that your group has made as outstanding volunteers and champions for the conservation of valuable wetland and waterfowl habitat in your community." *

Upcoming Events

2014

NatureCity Festival

May 24-31, 2014

Saskatoon, SK

A number of (mostly free) events will be held across Saskatoon, ranging from native plant walks to speaking engagements and everything in between!

www.wildaboutsaskatoon.org

Workshop - Start Your Own Targeted Grazing Business

May 29-31, 2014

Edgerton, AB

Registration \$350 before May 9th, \$400 after May 9th

For more info, contact Lee and Lynn

Sexton: (306) 544-2660 or

sextongrazingandconsulting@xplornet.ca

Saskatchewan Stock Growers 101st Annual General Meeting

June 8-10, 2014

Moose Jaw, SK

www.skstockgrowers.com

"From Roots to Shoots": 16th Annual Society for Range Management - Prairie Parkland Chapter Annual Tour

June 19-20, 2014

Val Marie, SK

For more information, contact Nadia

Mori at (306) 946-3219 or

nadia.mori@gov.sk.ca

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.

Some Interesting Lichens From Buffalo Pound Provincial Park, Saskatchewan

By *BERNARD DE VRIES*

The discovery of unusual or rare lichens, distribution or geographic range extensions are always thrilling and of interest. They are a great learning experience and broaden our knowledge of our fascinating lichen flora.

Saskatchewan has a great diversity of lichen species and their geographic distribution ranges from the grasslands into the boreal forest.

Lichen surveys in these areas are the best way to study and to understand their biological and ecological functions, identifying sustainable lichen habitat supporting rare or endangered species, as well as finding geographic range extension or new additions to a previously surveyed area was the case past summer, when Chet Neufeld volunteered to collect lichens for the author during field studies of native plants, and collected 14 species mostly in Buffalo Pound Provincial Park and some near Nipekamew Lake east of Montreal Lake and identified by the author.

Although the majority of these lichens are common in these locations, some interesting species were found in Buffalo Pound Provincial Park, which were not recorded by the author during his 2012 lichen surveys in this park: *Cladina mitis* (Green reindeer lichen), *Fulgensia bracteata* (Tundra sulfur lichen) and *Psora decipiens* (Blushing scale). The last two are typical dry grassland species, ranging into the southern Aspen Parkland as rather scattered populations and reaching their northern geographic distribution range.

The recording of *Cladina mitis* was of interest. Recent taxonomic revisions by some lichenologists have grouped *Cladina mitis* (*Cladonia mitis*) and *Cladina arbuscula* (*Cladonia arbuscula*), (Greater green reindeer lichen) under the name of *Cladina arbuscula* ssp. *mitis*. (Yellow or green reindeer lichen) because of similarities in growth form and ecological requirement, and tendency to intergrade.

Although this lichen is arctic temperate circumpolar in distribution and part

of the reindeer lichen complex: *Cladina arbuscula* (Greater green reindeer lichen), *Cladina mitis* (Green reindeer lichen) also known as *Cladina arbuscula* ssp. *mitis* (Yellow or green reindeer lichen), *Cladina rangiferina* (Reindeer lichen), *Cladina stellaris* (Star tipped reindeer lichen) and *Cladina stygia* (Black footed reindeer lichen) found in boreal and arctic regions, as almost unbroken mats, are an important winter nutrient for Caribou and other large ungulates, preserving soil moisture, reflecting heat, adding organic matter, and trapping seeds. Of these important species *Cladina mitis* (*Cladina arbuscula* ssp. *mitis*) is the only species who can be found as far south as the Aspen Parkland and reported for Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park as more or less isolated specimens.

A previous record for this species was made by the author in the Spy Hill-Ellice P.F.R.A. community pasture along route 600 north of the Qu'Appelle Valley in an open area on native grassland in the south-east Aspen Parkland in 2007 and 2009. Blushing scale and Tundra sulfur lichen were not recorded for this location.

Interestingly, some boreal lichens such as: *Evernia mesomorpha* (Boreal oak moss), *Flavopunctelia flaventior* (Speckled greenshield lichen), *Hypogymnia physodes* (Monk's hood lichen), *Parmelia sulcata* (Hammered shield

lichen), and *Usnea hirta* (Bristly beard lichen) can also be found in the Aspen Parkland transition zone. Whether they can be seen as relict species of a much larger boreal forest or southern range extensions is debatable.

Another interesting lichen *Xanthoparmelia wyomingica* (Shingled rock shield) was recorded south of Estevan on a small rock. This lichen ranges throughout the southern grassland and recorded by the author from Eastend, Rockglen and with a north geographic range extension into Saskatchewan Landing Provincial Park. The species resembles *Xanthoparmelia chlorochroa* (Tumbleweed shield lichen) in forms, occupying the same habitat in open grassland, but is not vagrant being attached to small rocks or pebbles.

This brief account on the results of lichen studies shows that field work is the only methodology to discover new, additional or even rare species and range extensions for our fascinating and diversified lichen flora.

Next time you are out in the field, try to observe these unique composite organisms, consisting of a delicate association of a fungus (mycobiont) and a photosynthetic partner (photobiont), usually green algae or blue-green (cyanobacterium) algae containing chlorophyll in a distinct lichen body, often vivid coloured. You will be amazed by what you might discover. ✨



Psora decipiens.

PHOTO BY BERND HAYNOLD

Saskatoon Develops Wetland Policy

Submitted By
THE CITY OF SASKATOON

Urban growth and development puts pressure on the natural environment around us. The rapid growth in Saskatoon in recent years has highlighted the increasing need to consider the impacts our development patterns have on the natural environment. The City of Saskatoon is continuously working to develop new policies and practices to minimize impacts and preserve, where possible, significant natural areas. The City of Saskatoon has been working on a Wetland Policy to guide the City as it seeks to balance the need to preserve important wetlands with the need for the city to continue to expand into the surrounding areas.

Saskatoon is located in the Prairie Pothole region and is surrounded by many wetlands ranging from temporary and seasonal to permanent wetlands with large expanses of open water.

Wetlands provide many functions that are beneficial within urban areas, such as:

- Groundwater recharge;
- Storm water storage, providing natural flood protection;
- Natural purification of surface water through nutrient absorption such as phosphorus and nitrogen, heavy metals and pesticides;

- Habitat and food sources for water fowl and wildlife;
- Greenhouse gases absorption; and
- Valuable recreational and educational amenities to residents.

Recognizing the value of these and many other functions, the City has been working on a policy that is intended to help guide the preservation and integration of wetlands into the city, as well as their ongoing management.

Wetland Policy

The City of Saskatoon recognizes that urban development will inevitably impact wetland resources. The intent of the Wetland Policy is to guide land use and development decisions related to wetland and riparian areas in a manner that is sensitive to the ecological integrity of wetlands and the objectives of achieving compact, sustainable and economically viable growth patterns. The Wetland Policy Project will create a framework to integrate as many of the benefits and functions of wetlands as possible within the urban context while maintaining a balance between the important Strategic Goals of Environmental Leadership, Sustainable Growth, Moving Around and Quality of Life (City of Saskatoon Strategic Plan 2012-2022).

As outlined in the Strategic Plan, the goal of Environmental Leadership

includes the following long term strategies that directly relate to the benefits of wetland preservation:

- Improve the quality and reduce the quantity of storm water run-off that is going into the river,
- Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions tied to City operations,
- Improve access to ecological systems and spaces, both natural and naturalized.

Building on the policies in the Official Community Plan and the vision and principles heard through Saskatoon Speaks and formalized in the Strategic Plan 2012-2022, the Wetland Policy will ensure that wetlands will be a significant consideration in urban development and will form an integral part of our city for years to come.

To provide comments or feedback on the Wetland Policy visit the link below:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YZ87B73>

For more information, please go to the City of Saskatoon's website at www.saskatoon.ca or use the link below:

<http://www.saskatoon.ca/DEPARTMENTS/Community%20Services/PlanningDevelopment/FutureGrowth/LandUsePolicyandDevelopment/Pages/WetlandPolicyProject.aspx> ✱

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Centre (SKCDC) who spoke about the role of the SKCDC and recent initiatives such as reassessing the rarity of plant species in the province. After lunch, Dr. Daniel Gagnon from the University of Regina gave an interesting presentation on various research projects he is leading, including one that restores forest habitat, wildlife corridors and riparian areas using hybrid poplar plantings. Michel Tremblay then spoke about the role and importance of Saskatchewan's parks and reserves, and Gary Howland rounded out the speakers with a discussion on the need for a regional land use plan for the Qu-Appelle Valley in the Lumsden area. The conference ended with a film screening of the documenta-

ry "A Thousand Invisible Cords", which talked about the fascinating concept that a single gene in a foundation species like plains cottonwood may have cascading effects on the whole ecosystem. Portions of the film even mirrored the research being done by Dr. Gagnon.

All in all, it was another great conference and participants left enlightened and energized for the upcoming growing season. Of course this conference could not have happened without the support of our many sponsors: Affinity Credit Union - \$1,000 Platinum Sponsor, SaskPower - \$800 Carbon Neutral Sponsor, SaskEnergy - \$600 Gold Sponsor and EcoFriendlySask - \$500 Gold Sponsor. Thanks also to the Days Inn for provid-

ing rooms for out-of-town speakers and to the Yorkton Film Festival for the screening rights to "Smarty Plants". The Carbon Neutral sponsorship money goes to purchasing carbon offsets from CarbonZero to make our event carbon neutral. Carbon credits are calculated for the CO₂ generated by the venue and participant and speaker travel. To our knowledge, we are the only event in Saskatchewan to take this innovative approach.

For more information on our event, please see our webpage at www.npss.sk.ca. Speaker presentations may be posted for a limited time. Photos of the event are also available on our Facebook page. ✱

What are native grasslands worth?

Why it Pays to Conserve This Endangered Ecosystem

Prepared By

CHRIS NYKOLUK CONSULTING

FOR THE RANCHERS

STEWARDSHIP ALLIANCE

The following is an excerpt from a new report on native prairie and the forage industry produced by the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance. It is highly recommended that you read the full report if the following summary is of interest to you. You can find the full report at: http://www.saskforage.ca/Coy%20Folder/News/Native_Grassland_Ecological_Goods&Services-Ranchers_Stewardship_Alliance.pdf

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Today Canada lags other countries in the developed world in development of policy that recognizes the value native habitats provide. Funding for specific environmental programs is relatively insignificant compared to those for export grains. With the exception of the period following the BSE crisis in 2003, the prairie livestock industry has remained essentially unsubsidized. By not participating in income stabilization programs available through conversion of native prairie to cropland, livestock producers have forgone significant amounts of



PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

Saskatchewan Landing Provincial Park

income since settlement. For example, the average cropland payout due to government programs was estimated at about \$50/acre per year in the early 1990's (i.e. \$73/acre in 2012 dollars). Yet, we now realize that farmers and ranchers who sustainably manage native prairie are the stewards of much of the last remaining ecologically-rich places

remaining in Prairie Canada and research has shown that society continues to benefit greatly from the Ecological Goods and Services that these native grasslands provide.

Canadian agriculture policy has historically promoted practices that in many applications have been shown to impose a range of environmental costs. These costs have included increases in net greenhouse gas emissions and reduced carbon sequestration, increased soil erosion and degradation, permanent loss of biodiversity including species at risk, wetland drainage, and ultimately incremental climate change. Many of these practices can provide significant private benefits to the agriculture producer, and these private benefits are further augmented by the incentives introduced by the policy measures that encourage the management practice. However, these associated environmental costs are imposed primarily on society at large and less so on the individual producer making the management change.

These types of costs are referred to in economics as external costs. In the presence of external costs the market



PHOTO BY WWW.FAO.ORG

Cowboys moving cattle.

will fail to allocate resources efficiently, meaning that the total net benefits to society (i.e. social welfare) will not be maximized. In these types of situations – where there are external costs and/or there are government policies that encourage specific management strategies – natural capital may not be managed or maintained at levels that are optimal to society.

Mainstream money-based arguments misrepresent the biophysical dimensions of human ecological reality. Where research exists in which Environmental Goods & Services have been valued, in every case the value of the loss of these “non-market” goods and services outweighs the market or commodity benefits of resource conversion. In some cases, research has shown that the value of non-market goods and services can outweigh market values by up to 100:1. Investigations undertaken in this project are consistent with these findings and show an undervaluation of native prairie grasslands. Decision makers need to include this factor because failure to value the natural capital of native grasslands has long term negative

implications for society.

Results of this project investigation show that:

1. Using existing relevant studies on native grasslands, the indirect values that native grasslands provide is on average \$297.79 per acre per year (in 2012 Canadian dollars).

This could safely be considered a gross underestimate (due to lack of adequate data for full calculation purposes), however, the realization that this is an underestimated benefit is still useful for policymakers.

2. Opportunity costs for native prairie conversion to production of other agricultural crops range between \$21.58 and \$1,836.80 per acre per year.

3. Basic data provided by Partners who protect native prairie show that the annual gross stewardship management costs range between \$5.20 and \$13.88 per acre in the conventional market economy. However, the amount and nature of management applied by Partners varies greatly.

4. Taxpayers have paid significant amounts of money to support the grains and oilseed export industry, often at the

expense of other forms of agriculture such as beef production using native prairie grasslands. The total amount of direct payments made to producers in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba during the period between 1981-2011 was \$42 billion dollars. The bulk of this amount was paid to farmers with cultivated crops, not beef producers.

5. Once native prairie is converted it is lost forever. However, government expenditures to reseed cropland back to a very basic native species mix have cost taxpayers up to \$109 per acre. The average cropland conversion payouts for all government and nongovernment programs examined and for both tame and native species combined was \$71.82 per acre. The range of payouts was between \$12.70 and 109.16 per acre. It is important to realize that producers have additional forage establishment costs beyond this payout – likely in the order of \$57 per acre in 2012 dollars. ✱



Matador Ranch

PHOTO BY M. PUT.

Saskatchewan Shout-Out

*Submitted By
M. PUT, PAG.*

With the increasing focus on community pastures, we would like to recognize some of the very fine people who continue to manage some of the last big tracts of native grasslands. These folks expertly oversee our provincial community pastures, juggling not only livestock-related work but all of the additional challenges associated with oil and gas development, hunting, research and countless other tasks. Their rewards are healthy cows, good grass, and satisfied pasture patrons.

Jeremy Simpson is the pasture manager of the Matador Community Pasture, part of the Saskatchewan Pasture Program, and together with his riders runs almost 4000 head of cattle. This striking area lies west of Kyle, bordering the north side of the South Saskatchewan River and extending over 3 townships or 76,480 acres. The sheer expanse alone demands a group of people who work efficiently and cooperatively (and sometimes simply by-the-seat of their pants in emergencies). Jeremy knows the complex ecology of the landscape, and his understanding of economics, herd health, statistics, biology - not to mention a bit of crystal-ball gazing and a whole lot of common sense – all gets tossed into one big pasture “soup pot.” It has certainly paid off over the years; where the cows haven’t rotated through, carry-over is exceptional and makes hiking through the rough fescue and needle-and-thread almost work!

While rarely publicly acknowledged, we would like to send out this season’s shout-out and thank you to the Matador folks and their fellow managers and riders for their continued dedication and expertise within the Provincial and Federal community pastures. ✿



PHOTO BY M. PUT

Good grass management thanks to Jeremy Simpson.

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