

Native Plant News

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www.npss.sk.ca

Summer 2014

NPSS Field Tours Aim High and Hit Their Mark

Riding a successful wave of field tours in 2013, the NPSS once again set out to educate and engage botany enthusiasts by exploring the best Saskatchewan had to offer through a series of 4 summer field tours.

Small Swale Tour

The schedule kicked off on May 31 with a bioblitz in an area known as the Small Swale, a natural area within the Saskatoon city limits and very close to its better known counterpart the Northeast Swale. Participants were treated to a show of spring wildflowers, including Crocus (*Anemone patens*),

Goldenbean (*Thermopsis rhombifolia*), Early Cinquefoil (*Potentilla coccinea* var. *coccinea*) and Moss Phlox (*Phlox hoodii*). Those that did attend the Small Swale tour had a unique opportunity as this site is normally not open to the public, and is down from the gun range so would also be hazardous to one's health! Thanks to the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation for closing their gun range for our event.



PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

Hudson Bay Tour

Participants on the tour of the Small Swale.



PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

Taking in the scenery of the Small Swale.

Our next tour on June 14-15 took us to the beautiful forests and bogs around Hudson Bay, SK with locals Dave and Alice Biggs, and honorary locals Glen and Maureen Lee leading the tour. Saturday morning saw us travel up the Fir River Road to the Pasquia Forest, with stops along the way to see provincially rare plants such as Bird's Eye Primrose (*Primula mistassinica*). The real prize though, was at the end of the road where we were lead a short way to the only

known population of Swamp Saxifrage (*Saxifraga pennsylvanica*). The word 'population' might be too grand to describe the occurrence though; only 3 plants are known to exist, making it one of Saskatchewan's rarest plant species. The rest of the area also provided plenty of botanical interest, as we found other provincially rare plants such as Cuckoo Flower (*Cardamine pratensis*), Macloskey's Violet (*Viola Macloskeyi*), and other more common but still interesting plants like Goldthread (*Coptis trifolia*), so named for the color of its thin rhizomes, as well as one of

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Native Plant News is a quarterly publication of the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan (NPSS) and is one of the benefits of membership. Members are invited to submit articles, news, views, photographs and comments. Views expressed by the authors are not necessarily those of the NPSS.

Deadlines:**Submission****Publication**

Winter Issue: November 1 December 15

Spring Issue: February 1 March 15

Summer Issue: May 1 June 15

Fall Issue: August 1 September 15

Membership Dues (Year End November 30)

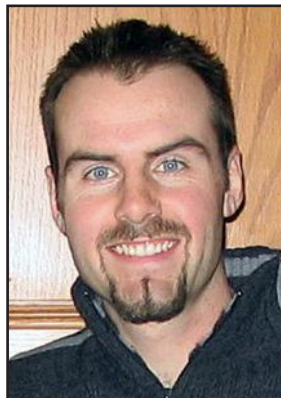
Individual \$30 Non-profit organization \$100

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Student \$15 Life \$500

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Executive Director Report

**Chet Neufeld**

Well it's been another extremely busy summer for the NPSS! Of course, a late and wet spring didn't help, and we were frantically trying to catch up on field work and crossing our fingers that the weather would hold for our field tours. However, everything more or less worked out; we were able to keep up with the incredible amount of field work on our plate and the weather (mostly) cooperated for our field tours.

For the third year in a row, our Rare Plants and Ranchers program required the most time in the field, and saw me travel to places in the Cabri, Outlook and Elbow areas. This program works to develop site specific management plans for plant species at risk, and uses Nature Saskatchewan's Rare Plant Rescue stewards. It was great to meet so many nice people and encouraging to see the level of interest and commitment to conservation!

Our field tours also went very well. This year we visited areas around Saskatoon, Hudson Bay, Frontier and the Qu'Appelle Valley. Attendance was very good, and participant satisfaction was also high (who wouldn't be happy with all of the great stuff we saw!). Each tour treated us to a different set of habitats and interesting species, from the mixedgrass prairie and wetlands of the Qu'Appelle and Saskatoon areas to the bogs and boreal forest of the Hudson Bay area to the badlands and dry prairies around Frontier. More about what we did and saw can be found in the article later in this newsletter.

The NPSS is also continuing their work with invasive species - namely, Flowering Rush (*Butomus umbellatus*) and Salt Cedar (*Tamarix spp.*). For several years now, we have been digging Flowering Rush out of a wetland near Watrous with the hope of eventual eradication, and have also been monitoring an area near Findlater where Salt Cedar was first detected and eradicated, to ensure that it doesn't return. These are high priority species for Saskatchewan, as both are listed as Prohibited species in the provincial Weed Control Act, and have not yet become widely established. These are big jobs and we cannot do this alone. Thankfully we have had great volunteer support this year and I sincerely thank each and every person who has helped us in achieving our goals!

We are also in the midst of planning for our upcoming annual general meeting and conference on February 6-7, 2015 at TCU Place in Saskatoon. This will be our 20th anniversary so we're pulling out all the stops! See the announcement in this newsletter for more details, and keep a close eye on our website for new developments.

Due to the high workload that the society is experiencing, we are also looking to hire a few contractors.

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These contracts would be ideal for those wanting to work their own hours, either after school or work for about 6 months, or full time for a few months. The work would mostly consist of data entry of various types, although some field work may be required. For more information on these contracts, see our website.

Finally, we are keeping busy with our new charitable status. We are now officially registered as a charity, and can issue tax receipts for donations received. We have also begun recent partnerships with Air Canada's Beyond Miles program, which allows Aeroplan points to be donated to the NPSS, and with One Percent for the Planet, a forum where companies pledge 1% of their gross revenue to charitable causes. We are also establishing a partnership with ChangeIt, a service that rounds up credit card purchases to the nearest dollar and gives the change to charities such as the NPSS.

We are working hard to continue the good work we do, and to expand our reach. I continue to sit on over a dozen active committees, and liaise with several other groups. I am also very active with schools across the province. One of the groups that I'm involved with, the Canadian Council on Invasive Species, has been particularly active lately as we have officially become a national non-profit organization. I am their current Treasurer, have created their new website, and am helping to organize the upcoming Weeds Across Borders conference in Ottawa (details can be found in the Events listing).

Of course we cannot do all of this work without you. Our membership is our greatest asset - you help support the society with your time and money, and for that I thank you. If you ever have any comments or questions about the NPSS or native plants, please let me know. *

NatureCity Festival a Perennial Favourite



From May 24-31, Wild About Saskatoon, a collective of over 80 organizations including the NPSS, hosted its second annual NatureCity Festival in Saskatoon. The festival is designed to connect people with the natural world through various interactive events, and also to raise awareness about the importance of living in harmony with nature.

Building on the momentum of a successful festival in 2013, the schedule for the 2014 NatureCity Festival was even more ambitious. Over 60 events were held across the city beginning with a warm-up event at the Saskatoon Farmer's Market, followed by a parade leading to the Roxy Theatre where the

first keynote speaker of the festival, Cam Collyer from the Evergreen Foundation, talked about why youth (and everyone else) needs nature. In the coming days, two more keynote speakers were featured at the Roxy Theater: Michelle Molnar from the Suzuki Foundation talked about the importance of wetlands, and Grant Pearsell from the City of Edmonton talked about the dramatic changes Edmonton has undergone to incorporate nature into its urban context. Both Michelle and Grant also hosted workshops on their respective topics to help Saskatoon become more proactive in conservation planning. New for this year was a special program just for schools, to help combat "Nature Deficit Disorder" in youth which attracted 420 students. The NPSS' first field tour of the year was also held in conjunction with the festival (see field tour article in this issue). Other events included birding, pond-dipping, river boat cruises, art exhibitions, geocaching and more! All told, it was another successful festival with over 1,500 people attending the week of events. Of course this couldn't happen without the many organizations, sponsors and volunteers that worked tirelessly to put it all together. For more information on the festival, nature in Saskatoon or Wild About Saskatoon, please see their website at www.wildaboutsaskatoon.org *

Upcoming Events

2014

Weeds Across Borders

October 14-17, 2014

Ottawa, ON

To register go to: <https://www.regonline.com/builder/site/default.aspx?EventID=1544147>

For more information visit

www.saskinvasives.ca

For questions, please contact: Gail Wallin, co-chair, Canadian Council on Invasive Species at (250) 305-9161 or gwallin@bcinvasives.ca

Long-Term Threats to the Saskatchewan River Basin Conference

October 27-29, 2014

Saskatoon, SK

For more information or to register, go to <http://www.skrivethreats.com/>

David Suzuki Blue Dot Tour

October 26, 7pm – 9pm

TCU Place, Saskatoon, SK

October 27, 7pm – 9pm

Conexus Arts Centre, Regina, SK

For more information, go to <http://bluedot.ca/events/>

2015

Native Prairie Restoration and Reclamation Workshop

January 28 & 29, 2015

TCU Place, Saskatoon, SK

Registration details will be available at www.pcap-sk.org throughout the fall. Contact Tara (PCAP) at (306) 352-0472 for sponsorship and trade show opportunities and other information.

NPSS Annual General Meeting and Conference

February 6-7, 2015

TCU Place, Saskatoon, SK

Registration details will be available soon at www.npss.sk.ca. Contact Chet Neufeld at (306) 668-3940 or info@npss.sk.ca for more information.

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.

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the biggest patches of Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*) that I've ever seen.

In the afternoon it was off to Greenbush Bog, where we were treated to still more provincially rare plants such as the tropical looking and extremely rare Dragon's Mouth Orchid

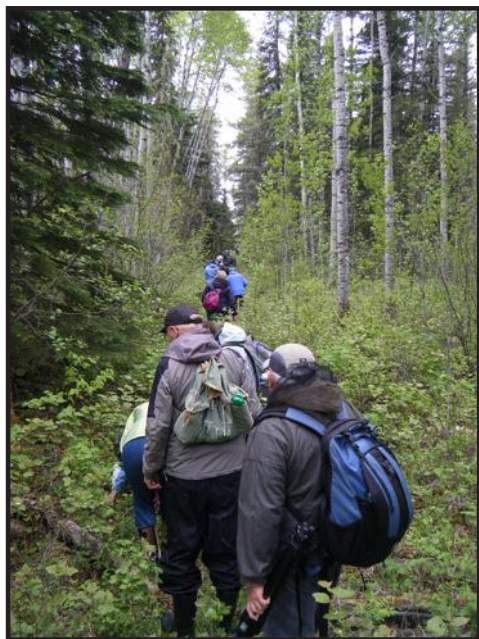


PHOTO BY C. NEUFELD

Participants explore the boreal forest near the Fir River Road.

(*Arethusa bulbosa*), Fringed Milkwort (*Polygala paucifolia*), Linear-Leaved Sundew (*Drosera linearis*), and English Sundew (*Drosera anglica*), as well as the more common Round-Leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*). Sundews make up for the relative lack of nutrients available in a bog by capturing small insects in their sticky



PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

Northern White Violet (*Viola macloskeyi*) at Brockelbank Hill.



PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

Dragon's Mouth Orchid (*Arethusa bulbosa*) at Greenbush Bog.

leaves. By far the most common carnivorous plant in the bog though, was the Pitcher Plant (*Sarracenia purpurea*), which carpeted the bog by the thousands. In addition to looking at the plants, participants also had fun jumping up and down on the floating vegetation, which gave the sensation of bouncing on a giant waterbed.

Saturday saw the group travel to a nearby dry Jack Pine (*Pinus banksiana*) forest to see the rare Sand Cherry (*Prunus pumila*), and a healthy population of rare Ram's-Head Lady's-Slipper (*Cypripedium arietinum*). Later, we drove out to Brockelbank Hill in the Porcupine Hills. Here we were treated to great vistas (you can

see into Manitoba) and more rare plants, including Nodding Trillium (*Trillium cernuum*), Wood Anemone (*Anemone quinquefolia*), and more rare violets: Downy Yellow Violet (*Viola pubescens*), Great-Spurred Violet (*Viola selkirkii*), and Sweet White Violet (*Viola blanda*). And while everyone was dazzled by the beautiful rare plants, they were equally impressed with the rest of the forest which

has an almost prehistoric look to it, helped by shoulder high Ostrich Fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*). The trees are taller here than in a typical northern forest and the whole place is lush with an incredibly diverse plant community.



PHOTO BY CANDACE NEUFELD

Ram's-head Lady's-slipper Orchid (*Cypripedium arietinum*) near Hudson Bay, SK.

Frontier Tour

This was another highly anticipated tour, and it wouldn't have been possible without local members Jack and Jan Wilkinson to show us around. Day one began with a trip to a nearby badland area at Valley-view Bible Camp where we explored the beautiful prairie and steep coulees. Many wildflowers were in bloom, but the real treat here was seeing Rocky Mountain Juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*) which is more commonly found in - you guessed it - the Rocky Mountains. This is an extremely rare plant (S1) in Saskatchewan as it is one of only three that are known. Looking somewhat out of place on a dry prairie landscape, this Rocky Mountain Juniper was a beauty - 14 feet tall according to our measurements, and jealously guarded by a porcupine that I hope doesn't girdle it! Aside from the diverse plant life, there were other interesting features to ponder, such as boulder-strewn hilltops and the wide valley that passes through the area. The vistas would've been even



PHOTO BY CANDACE NEUFELD

Participants explore the prairie near Frontier, SK.

grander had they not been blurred by the haze of over a hundred forest fires raging up north.

In the afternoon we headed over to

had been reported to occur at Tait's Lake in 1957). Tait's Lake sounds much wetter than it actually is, as most of the time it is a dry clay flat as it was when we visited it. Although we didn't find Short-flower Suncup here, it might still be there as the area was too large to search in a day. We did, however, find a new occurrence of Yellow Evening Primrose

(*Oenothera flava*), a rare plant (S2) in Saskatchewan.

From Tait's Lake the group headed west to the Eastend area. Although the

area is best known for its badlands and dinosaurs, it holds a local secret known as Pine Cree. This regional park is a sliver of a valley in an otherwise dry prairie, but once down in the valley you're immersed in a lush spruce forest. From there it was up to Jones' Peak to watch the sunset; a perfect way to end the day.



PHOTO BY SARAH VINGE-MAZER

Moment of rediscovery of Short-flower Suncup (*Taraxia breviflora*).

Tait's Lake to try and find Short-flower Suncup (*Taraxia breviflora*), a plant so rare in Saskatchewan that it hasn't been seen in almost 50 years (the species

The itinerary for day two had just one goal: find the occurrence of Short-flower Suncup that was reported in 1965. Details of the site were as

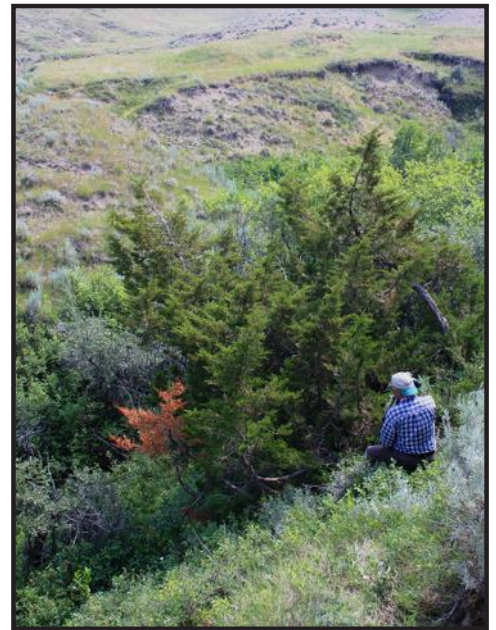


PHOTO BY CANDACE NEUFELD

NPSS member Glen Lee setting up to photograph the extremely rare Rocky Mountain Juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*) near Frontier, SK.

complete as they could be, but the exact location was still a mystery and the site was very remote. Starting from Val Marie, it took roughly 3 hours to get to the site with the last half of the trip being a prairie trail that would be impassible in anything but perfect conditions. At this point we were so far south in the East Block of Grasslands National Park that the American border was only 3 miles further south. It wasn't long before we found what we came for. After searching for a few hours, we finally found 13 Short-flower Suncup, with 1 blooming to aid in identification and make for some pretty nice photos. The last time anyone had seen this plant at this location was



PHOTO BY CANDACE NEUFELD

Short-flower Suncup (*Taraxia breviflora*) in the East Block of Grasslands National Park.



PHOTO BY CANDACE NEUFELD

Common Tickseed (*Coreopsis tinctora*) at Tait's Lake, SK.

in 1965 - almost 50 years ago! With this sighting, Short-flower Suncup is no longer a historical species in Saskatchewan. This also marks the second time in 2 years that we've been able to find species that haven't been seen in the province in decades (see the summer field tour article in the summer 2013 issue of the *Native Plant News*).

Big Valley Tour

On August 9, participants were treated to a tour of the Big Valley Complex, lead by Dale Gross of the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and also an NPSS board member.

NCC manages this property and we got exclusive access. The Big Valley Complex is located just north of Craven at the south end of Last Mountain Lake adjacent to the Valeport Wildlife Management Unit. The property includes 332 acres of native grassland, forested coulees and valley slope. The provincially designated Valeport Wildlife Management Unit, a large marsh at the south end of Last Mountain Lake, is listed by the Conservation Data Centre as a major concentration site for migratory birds. Though the weather before and during the event wasn't ideal, a few hardy souls made it out and we treated to some late summer

wildflowers including Blue Lettuce (*Lactuca tatarica* var. *pulchella*), Owl's Clover (*Orthocarpus luteus*), and many species of Goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.).

To see more photos of our field tours, visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/npss.sk>

The summer field tours held by the NPSS were part of a larger project called Healthy Habitats. A full article on our Healthy Habitats project will appear in the fall issue of the *Native Plant News*.

This project was undertaken with the financial support of Environment Canada. *

Going “BAWG”ing

By SARAH VINGE-MAZER
Saskatchewan Conservation Data Centre

The bog is a great place to inspire an appreciation for Saskatchewan's unique flora. This BAWG, however, is found indoors, advising on plant conservation issues (such as species ranking and taxonomy challenges) for the province. The Botanical Assessment Working Group (BAWG) was initiated by the Saskatchewan Conservation Data Centre two years ago and while we may not be well known, we have certainly been very busy.

BAWG recently met and has reassessed the provincial ranking for several species including Hairy Prairie-clover (*Dalea villosa* var. *villosa*), which was an S1 and is now an S2; Athabasca Thrift (*Armeria maritima* ssp. *interior*), which remains an S1S2 after reassessment; and Downy Paintbrush (*Castilleja sessiliflora*), which was an S5 and has been uplisted to a higher category of concern at S3S4. Since its inception, BAWG has reassessed the ranks of 20 plant species, and ranked over 300 other taxa that were previously unranked.

Why are these ranks important, and how are they determined?

Conservation activities are focused on species that have a rank of S1, S2 or S3, and avoidance or mitigation is required for these species during any development projects.

An assessment of each species is made following a standardized procedure, and includes consideration of rarity, trends, and threats. A higher S-rank (e.g. S5) indicates that a species is more common, more stable, and less threatened than a species with a lower S-rank (e.g. S1), which would indicate that a species is more rare, declining, facing a high threat level, or a combination of these factors.

Reassessment of species' ranks is an ongoing process and BAWG is always working on the next batch of species. You can help! Your observations can contribute to the evaluation of the status of wild species in Saskatchewan.

To learn more about the SK CDC, the work of BAWG, or to submit an observation visit our recently updated website at www.biodiversity.sk.ca.

Executive Director's note: The NPSS is a member of, and contributes to, the Botanical Assessment Working Group. *

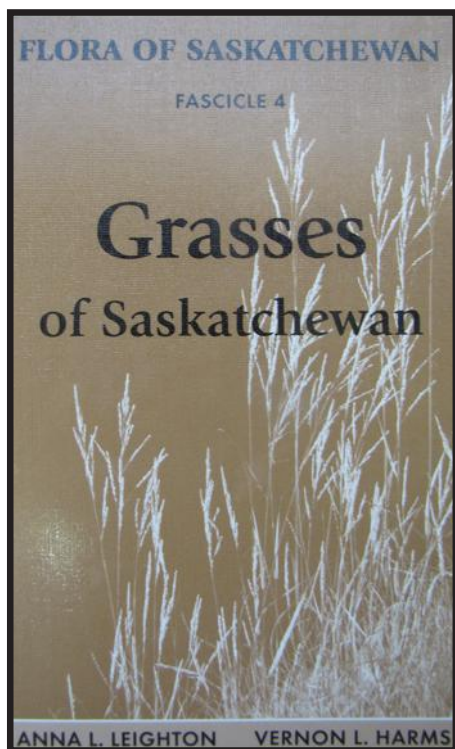
Searching for BIG/OLD Trees

Help Dave Sauchyn, a researcher at the University of Regina, in his quest to identify big or old trees. Dr. Sauchyn uses tree-rings analysis to re-create climate scenarios. If you know of big and/or old trees and can provide a location then Dave would love to take a core sample. He will cut cookies from downed dead trees.

Dave is seeking data to contribute to a better understanding of the nature, causes and consequences of climatic variability in the western Canadian interior in support of planning and policy for the adaptation of energy and renewable resource industries to climate change. Contact information and information on his research is available at http://www.parc.ca/research_professors_sauchyn.htm. *



Grasses of Saskatchewan Now Available!



The Flora of Saskatchewan's 4th fascicle, the Grasses of Saskatchewan, is now available for purchase from Nature Saskatchewan! This book is a great achievement for the Flora of Saskatchewan Association and will be an asset to every naturalist, whether an amateur or professional.

All books that need to be delivered, or purchased via invoice or credit card can be ordered through Nature Saskatchewan. Cash and cheque are also accepted. Please contact them at (306) 780-9273 for more information, or email info@naturesask.ca. They will also be available soon through the Nature Saskatchewan website store at <http://www.naturesask.ca/store/en/publications>

Books are also available by contacting Sarah Vinge-Mazer at (306) 787-7039 during business hours (for

pickup only, cash [exact] or cheque only). Pickup is in Regina at the Ministry of Environment building at 3211 Albert Street. Please contact Sarah in advance of coming to the building.

Please note that all four Flora of Saskatchewan fascicles can be purchased at a bundle price of \$80.00. The purchase price for the Grasses of Saskatchewan is only \$29.95.

Please forward this notice to your colleagues, family and friends to help us spread the word!

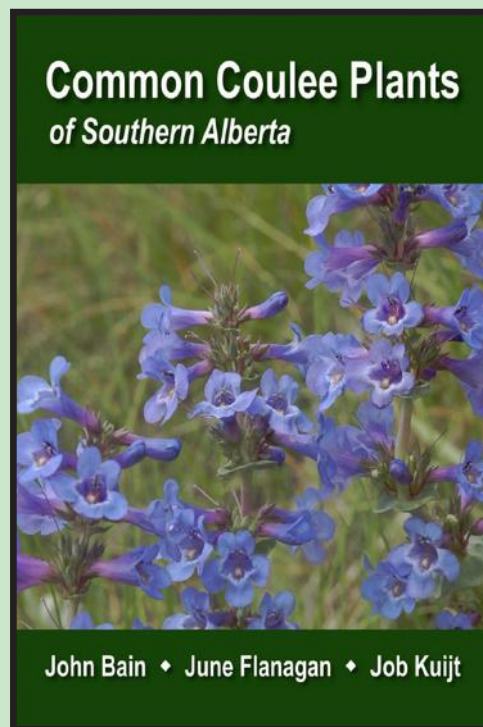
For more information on the Flora of Saskatchewan project, please visit the Association's website at <http://www.naturesask.ca/extras/flora-of-saskatchewan-association>. Inquiries regarding the Flora of Saskatchewan project can be directed to floraofsask@gmail.com. *

New E-book: *Common Coulee Plants of Southern Alberta*. Second Edition.

John Bain, University of Lethbridge biology professor, and June Flanagan, Lethbridge botanist, author and photographer, teamed up to revise Job Kuijt's popular guide to some of our most beautiful and interesting native prairie plants in this new full colour electronic edition. Download your free copy and discover what's blooming in southern Alberta this season!

- ✎ **more than 100 prairie species**
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NPSS AGM

Save the Date!

Plan now to attend the upcoming NPSS annual general meeting and conference on February 6-7, 2015 at TCU Place in Saskatoon. 2015 will be our 20th anniversary and we're pulling out all the stops! We have an exciting lineup of speakers, including a keynote speaker from "Working Dogs for Conservation", a non-profit organization in Montana that uses detector dogs to search for rare and invasive plants. We will hear about these amazing dogs and the fascinating work that they've done on numerous interesting projects around the world in the last decade. We'll also have other interesting speakers, as well as a few other surprises that you'll just have to see for yourself. Registration will open soon, so keep checking our website (www.npss.sk.ca) for further details. See you there! *

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