



Native Plant News

Vol. 19, No. 3

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Fall 2014

Another Successful Year for Rare Plants and Ranchers

2014 was the third year for our Rare Plants and Ranchers project, and its popularity (and successes) continue to grow. The program aims to assist landowners who have plant species at risk on their land by creating site specific beneficial management plans. These plans contain recommendations that not only benefit the plant species at risk, but the ranch as well. Of course there is a lot of preparation that goes into one of these plans. First, willing landowners are contacted and arrangements are made to meet them at which time they are interviewed to find out more about their ranching operation and their knowledge of the

rare plants (and animals) on their land, and what potential threats they might know about. We also spend a great deal of time on their land, sometimes weeks, collecting data such as range and riparian health, counts and mapping of plant species at risk (and incidental sightings of other rare species), native plant cover and community composition, and potential threats to the species at risk such as invasive species. The data is then compiled and analysed and a management plan for species

at risk is produced, tailored to their ranching operation. The plan contains a number of recommendations, and the NPSS matches the rancher for every dollar they spend on implementing these recommendations, although many of the recommendations don't cost anything to implement. The result of the program is better species at risk stewardship and enhanced communication with the stewards, increased knowledge about species at risk, and healthy, sustainable ranches



PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

Small-flowered Sand-verbena with its tiny white tubular flowers and its salmon pink fruits.



PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

One of the properties near Outlook that was surveyed in 2014.

and species at risk populations.

In 2014 we added 6 new stewards to our program, bringing the total to 17 participating stewards. Looking at the acreage we dealt with this year, we were obviously involved with some large ranches. In one case, two neighbouring ranchers owned the better part of two townships or about 46 square kilometers! Not being one to shy away from a challenge, we took them both on and spent about half of the summer on those two properties alone (and still only covered a small percentage of the total acreage). In fact, surveying all

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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
Family \$45	Corporate \$200
Student \$15	Life \$500

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

President's Report

I hope that everyone was able to enjoy what seemed to be the little bit of summer we got this year! As we moved into fall, the leaves were changing so fast! I do enjoy Mother Nature's colours, if not the temperature, so much!

I hope you were able to attend at least one of the NPSS tours provided this summer. Tours were provided in Saskatoon at the Small Swale, around the Hudson Bay area, the Frontier area and near Regina at Big Valley. Once again we've had good turnout despite weather conditions in some cases. Many thanks to the organizers and the attendees of these tours as without your commitment our tours could not be as successful as they are! I look forward to seeing some photos of these events at our AGM scheduled for February 6 & 7, 2015!

I cannot forget our volunteers who regularly come out and help out at our tradeshow, surveys, clean-up days and so much more. The efforts of one person are not taken lightly but when many hands come together we are so much more effective. Thank you for your help!

I would like to welcome Jacey Bell to the NPSS Board of Directors; I look forward to working with her and getting to know her better through our Society! I must say a huge thank you as well as farewell to our long time board member and board secretary, Sarah James as she has recently stepped down from the NPSS board. Her dedication and commitment to NPSS was much appreciated and I do hope we still see her at some of our events.

I do not want to seem like a broken record but we are still struggling in our search for new board members. If you or anyone you know might be interested in serving on the Board for a term (or two!), please contact myself or Chet for more information.

Happy Fall! 🌟



A Life Well Lived

It is with sadness that we announce that BJ Bodnar passed away on May 28, 2014 at the age of 24. BJ Bodnar was a local naturalist and a visionary. He traveled the globe, participating in many projects, and accomplished a great deal in his short time on earth. The benefits from his good work will continue long into the future. For his efforts, he was nominated as one of Canada's Top Twenty Under Twenty in 2008. He was once again honoured this year at the Youth In Motion Awards Ceremony on June 5th in Toronto. Our thoughts go out to his parents Ken and Betty Ann, and all of his friends and family. 🌟

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Ph: (306) 668-3940 E-mail: info@npss.sk.ca

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of the properties took the better part of the summer. Program activities were centered around three communities in 2014; Elbow, Outlook and Cabri. Most of the habitat was sand dunes and river valleys, but we also surveyed some of the nicest knob and kettle mixed grassland that I've ever seen.

We were able to revisit some known plant species at risk populations, and also found new populations of plant species at risk and provincially rare plants. This year we surveyed for and found Small-flowered Sand Verbena (*Tripterocalyx micranthus*), Slender Mouse-ear-cress (*Transberingia*



PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

Smooth Goosefoot population along South Saskatchewan River.

bursifolia ssp. *virgata*), and Smooth Goosefoot (*Chenopodium subglabrum*). We also found provincially-rare plants such as Beaked Annual Skeletonweed (*Shinnersoseris rostrata*), Bur Ragweed (*Ambrosia acanthicarpa*), and Prickly Milkvetch (*Astragalus kentrophyta*), among others.

We are currently writing the beneficial management plans for this year's stewards, and will have them delivered soon. Meanwhile, we have already begun to collaborate with this year's stewards to help implement some of the beneficial management practices that will be contained in the plans, and continue to work with stewards from previous years to ensure that their plan is working and that their needs are being met.

I have been struck by two things this field season. For one, I can't believe I get paid to go out and look at beautiful natural areas! Secondly, I am grateful for all of our ranchers and how accommodating they were. I couldn't have dealt with better people and they really care about the land.

While we are currently working with Nature Saskatchewan's Rare Plant Rescue stewards, we will work with anyone that has plant species at risk on their land. If this applies to you and you're interested or if you know of someone that would be a good fit for our program, please feel free to contact me. There is no cost to participate and we do all of the work. In fact, we have match funding available for qualified purchases, so you may even save a little money!

This has been one of our most successful projects to date, and we have just received word that we were granted an extra \$16,000 of top-up money for 2014 by Environment Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program to help deliver our program faster and more effectively, benefitting both the species at risk and the stewards. We will use half of the top-up money to match fund stewards, and have used the other half to hire short term contractors to assist with data entry. We have also recently applied for another three year's worth of funding and are hopeful that our proposal will be successful. However, if we are not funded we are committed to continue working with our current



PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

Smooth Goosefoot.

participants to ensure that we are achieving our goals.

This project was undertaken with the financial support of Environment Canada (Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk) and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment (Fish and Wildlife Development Fund). *

Upcoming Events

2015

Native Forage Establishment Webinar

January 14, 2015 • 12-1pm (SK Time)

Please register at:

<https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/409623130>

If you have any questions, contact Nadia Mori at (306) 946-3219.

Alberta Aquatic Invasive Species Summit

January 14-15, 2015

Telus Conference Centre at
120 9th Avenue SE, Calgary, AB

Space is limited so an RSVP is REQUIRED by November 1, 2014. Please RSVP as soon as possible to Tanya Rushcall:

Tanya.Rushcall@gov.ab.ca
or call (780) 644-4647.

Native Prairie Restoration and Reclamation Workshop

January 28 & 29, 2015

TCU Place, Saskatoon, SK

For details or to register, go to <http://www.pcap-sk.org/upcoming-events-workshops/2015-nprw>
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.

Rare Plant Rescue: Adventures in the Field

By KIRSTEN MARTIN

Rare Plant Rescue Coordinator, Nature Saskatchewan

After joining Nature Saskatchewan last fall as the Rare Plant Rescue Coordinator, I was looking forward to the 2014 field season all winter long, excited about what neat plants I would see – and I wasn't disappointed! Our



PHOTO BY KRISTEN MARTIN

A tiny Dwarf Woollyhead plant (circled in yellow) in its ephemeral wetland habitat.

searching and monitoring efforts for our target species, eight federally-listed plant species at risk in southern Saskatchewan, took Beth Dolmage, our summer intern, and I to some of the most beautiful native prairie pastures in Saskatchewan. And it was a successful summer – in total we located over 50 new occurrences of plant species at risk. We also got the chance to visit with many of our current and potential participants, which was very enjoyable as always.

Our field season began with Slender Mouse-ear-ress (*Transberingia bursifolia* ssp. *virgata*) searches in the Burstall area at the beginning of June; a few weeks later than usual due to the cool, wet spring. Unfortunately, it did not appear to be a good year for this biennial species, as we were unsuccessful in locating any new occurrences. We did run into a few rattlesnakes though, which always livens things up! We continued our searches for Slender Mouse-ear-ress in the Lucky Lake and Birsay area for

the remainder of June, and again we did not locate any new occurrences. This trend continued with our monitoring efforts as well, with this species only being found at one of nine sites we checked where plants had been found in previous years. During our searches, we did, however, come across two new occurrences of Prairie Dunewort (*Botrychium campestre*; S1), which is one of our provincially-rare target species.

Hoping for better luck, we switched gears at the beginning of July and headed down to the Consul area in southwestern Saskatchewan to search for Dwarf Woollyheads (*Psilocarphus brevissimus* var. *brevissimus*) with staff from the Saskatchewan Conservation Data Centre. Our hopes were not dashed; we found 15 new Dwarf Woollyhead occurrences!



PHOTO BY KRISTEN MARTIN

Close-up of a cluster of Dwarf Woollyheads plants.

Although I knew from the name that this species was small, I was not prepared for just how small; many of the plants we found were less than 1 cm tall! This may have been due to the ephemeral wetlands, where this

species is typically found, being fairly dry this year. Usually when we conduct rare plant searches, we walk side by side in straight lines back and forth across a search area, until we have completely covered the habitat we are searching. However, some of the Dwarf Woollyheads we were seeing the first day of searching were so small that we were not even able to see them while standing up! Our search methods quickly switched to crawling around the wetland on our hands and knees, with our noses in the grass, hoping to catch a glimpse of these rare plants. Who would have thought that kneepads would be a requirement for rare plant searches? Interestingly, we noted that Dwarf Woollyheads were often found in wetlands where two other species, Marsh Cudweed (*Gnaphalium palustre*; S5?) and Rocky Mountain Pincushion-Plant (*Navarretia saximontana*; S3), were also present. Other interesting rare plants that we came across during our searches for Dwarf Woollyheads were One-spiked Oat-grass (*Danthonia unispicata*; S2), and Carolina Foxtail (*Alopecurus carolinianus*; S1).

From Consul we moved on to Eastend, where we spent some time searching for Tiny Cryptantha (*Cryptantha minima*) on the hillsides surrounding the Frenchman River. This species tends to be associated with river valleys, but so far in Saskatchewan it has only been found near the South

Saskatchewan River close to the Alberta border. Unfortunately, our searches did not reveal any new occurrences of this species. However, with plenty of suitable habitat left to search, it is possible that we might find it in future years, especially since the range of this species in the United States extends up to the Montana-Saskatchewan border.

We then headed north, up to the shores of the South Saskatchewan River, north of Gardiner Dam. Here we monitored occurrences of two of our other target species: Small-flowered Sand-verbena (*Tripterocalyx micranthus*) and Smooth Goosefoot

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Healthy Habitats Project Update

This year the NPSS embarked on a new project, with the aim of improving certain important or at risk habitats across Saskatchewan. This multi-component project included involvement in a nature festival, wetland restoration through invasive plant control, monitoring surveys for another species of invasive plant, bioblitzes during our summer field tours, and planting native shrubs and flowers. As you read in the summer newsletter, the NatureCity Festival and field tours all went extremely well. Since that time, however, we have completed the other components of the project.



PHOTO BY C. NEUFELD

Flowering Rush - pretty, but a dangerous invader.

Once again the wetland restoration project through the removal of Flowering Rush (*Butomus umbellatus*) was successful, although not without problems. For one, the water level has been higher than normal for the past few years which submerges the flowering rush, making them hard to see and also to reach. This year, the water level was a full meter higher than even the highest level that we had previously seen, and the flooding that was prevalent in other parts of the province was also present in our wetland; the landowner reported to me that the access road to the wetland had actually been underwater for a time this spring. Not only was the water deeper, but the shoreline had also stretched out horizontally by several meters in places. Due to this, detecting, accessing and removing the plants was more difficult. In some situations, we were working in waist-deep water and there were a few times when we bent over to pull up a Flowering Rush plant and had the water come in over the top of our waders! Another more insidious problem that we were unaware of is that Flowering Rush rhizomes and bulblets can go dormant if conditions dry up. Because water levels in 2014 were reaching ground that had been high and dry for years, it was reactivating Flowering Rush plants that we didn't know were there. We also had a problem of the human-caused variety. A careless mower from the local Rural Municipality ran over about 80 of the bags of Flowering Rush that we had picked,



Flowering Rush plants and patches (pink) with the 2014 waterline (turquoise) compared to the waterline in 2013 (blue).

scattering plants and creating an extra day of work that was needed to clean it up. However, for all of the issues we faced, we had incredibly positive results. Volunteer support was fantastic this year, which is crucial for the success of this project as it is very labour intensive. We had dozens of volunteers contribute over 100 hours of their time to the removal of Flowering Rush, including the students of Imperial School and employees of the Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area, both who are long-term supporters of this project. It was due to these volunteers that we were able to map the shoreline of the wetland and all occurrences of Flowering Rush, as well as removal all of the Flowering Rush that was found. The removal is done entirely by hand with nothing more than a shovel, so it is incredible to think that together we removed a staggering 5 tons of material from the wetland! Of course we know from past experience that about 30% of what we removed will come back next year, and the proportion of re-emergence will likely be higher due to the difficulties experienced with removing them from the high water, and also from the fact that we are now tackling some of the most well-established



PHOTO BY CINDY CANTELON

Imperial High School students pose for a photo after a morning of removing Flowering Rush.

patches, but we will not stop until we have eradicated this plant. Flowering Rush is considered a Prohibited weed in Saskatchewan which is the highest



2014 Saltcedar search transects.

level of importance, and it only occurs in Saskatchewan at this single wetland near Watrous, SK so eradication is a top priority.

The other invasive plant that this project involved was Salt Cedar (*Tamarix spp.*). This species is also considered Prohibited and is only known from 3 places in Saskatchewan, two of which still have active populations. The site the NPSS is involved with is near Findlater, SK and we have been monitoring it for several years since it was initially discovered.



PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

One of three Salt Cedar plants found in 2014.

The original population was eradicated but annual surveys by the NPSS have been conducted to ensure that no more exists. We are committed to annual

surveys for 5 years past the date of the last sighting. We found a single plant in 2012, and felt confident that we had seen the last of it. However, our survey in 2014 turned up 3 new plants which resets the 5 year clock on our surveys. These plants appear to have been from the original infestation, but were likely missed due to their small size up until now and the fact that the area they were found in was covered in tall weeds which likely helped to hide them. The plants were reported to the local weed inspector, who eradicated them the next day. Once again we had good volunteer support which enabled us to search a large area and map the plants we found. Thanks to the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure for their continued support on this component.

Last but not least, we were involved in 3 different native plantings. The main planting took place at the junction of highways 2 and 11 just south of Prince Albert. Over a year of planning went into this initiative, and involved students from Saskatchewan Polytechnic (SIAS). They developed a digital elevation model, designed a planting plan, and helped install the native shrubs and wildflower seedbeds. The areas with the wildflowers and shrubs were also mapped by the students so that their establishment can be monitored and so that road crews can avoid them. Thank-you so much to the students and staff of Saskatchewan Polytechnic for their tremendous support of this project, and for being long-time partners of the NPSS. Thanks also to the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure for their

approval to pursue this project on one of their intersections, guidance from the environmental and engineering departments, and also for sending out one of their permitting officers for the day.

The other two native plantings occurred in Saskatoon, SK. One took place during the NatureCity Festival in May, where we planted approximately 500 wildflowers around the city. The other planting event was an initiative of the Naturalized Areas department of the City of Saskatoon, but they asked for our assistance and how could we say no? Together, we planted around 1,000 wildflowers in Heritage Park and Donna Birkmaier Park which will serve as “biodiversity islands” and will hopefully spread their seed through the rest of the parks. Thanks to the City of Saskatoon for involving us in their initiative, and to SaskPower Shand Greenhouse for providing the native wildflower plugs that were planted during the NatureCity Festival, and also for the 300 native shrubs that were installed at the highway junction



PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

Helping out at the City of Saskatoon's biodiversity island planting event.

near Prince Albert. SaskPower Shand Greenhouse has been a long-time financial and in-kind supporter of the NPSS (and they currently supply us with our President as well!) and we appreciate their valuable partnership. I should also mention that Blazing Star Wildflower Seed Company provided the wildflower plugs that the City of Saskatoon used, as well as hundreds of packets of wildflower seeds distributed during the NatureCity Festival.

This project was undertaken with the financial support of Environment Canada (EcoAction). 🌱

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(*Chenopodium subglabrum*). We were very pleased to find plants at 12 of 13 Small-flowered Sand-verbena occurrences that we checked, and all four Smooth Goosefoot occurrences that we checked. We also came across several new occurrences of both species on the quarter sections we were monitoring, which was a pleasant surprise. Further, on a search of an adjacent quarter section, we found an abundance of new occurrences of both of these species. One particular highlight was a huge occurrence of Smooth Goosefoot; we counted over 2,300 plants! It took us a full morning's work to count and map it out, but it is always nice to see rare plants doing so well. We also came across three new occurrences of



PHOTO BY KRISTEN MARTIN

Small-flowered Sand-verbena's bright green leaves, small white flowers, and peach-colored winged fruits make it stand out in its sandy, shoreline habitat.

Beaked Annual Skeletonweed (*Shinnersoseris rostrata*; S2) during our searches and monitoring.

We finished off the field season with a trip to Estevan to visit our stewards down in the southeast part of the province, and to monitor the Buffalograss occurrences on their land. For this trip we were joined by Brooke Howat, a volunteer who is pursuing Environmental Science studies at Lakeland College. Again, this was a successful trip, and it was great to see Buffalograss thriving with livestock grazing. While walking to and from sites, we also came across eight new Buffalograss occurrences. Other interesting species we came across were Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*; S4), Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea angustifolia* var. *angustifolia*; S3) and Whorled Milkweed (*Asclepias verticillata*; S1).

In addition to our rare plant finds, we were also happy to welcome five new participants into the Rare Plant Rescue program. These landowners are now part of a community of 80 Rare Plant Rescue participants. Together, their excellent stewardship is helping to conserve over 103,000 acres of habitat for rare and at risk plants in Saskatchewan. By allowing us to search for and monitor the rare plants on their land, these landowners are also helping us to understand more about the distributions and populations of Saskatchewan's rarest plant species. If you, or someone you know, has native prairie habitat and is interested in learning about how they can be a 'Steward of Saskatchewan' and join the Rare Plant Rescue program, please feel free to give me a call at (306) 780-9417 or email me at rpr@naturesask.ca. We would love to hear from you! *

Registration Form

AGM Registration deadline is Feb. 1, 2015.

Mail this form & payment by cheque to:
Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan
P.O. Box 21099
Saskatoon, Sask. S7H 5N9

You can also register online
at www.npss.sk.ca

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Registration Fees:

Friday Keynote Address and Wine and Cheese
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NPSS Member	\$50
Non NPSS Member	\$60
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Special dietary needs: _____

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Individual 1-Year Membership	\$30
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Non-profit Organization 1-Year Membership	\$100
Corporate 1-year Membership	\$200

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

Please note that the member rate is applicable only to PAID members. Memberships purchased at the time of registration entitles individual to membership rates.

For More Information Contact:
Chet Neufeld, NPSS Executive Director
Phone and Fax: 306-668-3940
email: info@npss.sk.ca
Website: www.npss.sk.ca

The 20th Annual NPSS AGM is quickly approaching. This year it is being held on Feb. 6 and 7 at the TCU Place in Saskatoon, Sask. There will be a keynote address, film screening and reception on Friday night and the AGM will be held during breakfast on Saturday morning followed by a variety of interesting presentations. If you only wish to attend the annual general meeting portion of the weekend without breakfast, there is no charge. We hope to see all of you there!

As a reminder, the board decided at a meeting in spring 2006, that resolutions that are sensitive and pertaining to complex issues, including any directive not strictly that of the NPSS or pertaining to its activities, must be submitted in writing to the NPSS Board of Directors a minimum of two weeks prior to the AGM. The resolution must include adequate background information for Board review and a clear indication of why the proposed resolution should come from the NPSS.

Renew Your Membership on Time and Win a Prize

Well, it's that time of the year again. For those of you paying by the year, your NPSS membership fee is now due.

Just go to our online store at our website (www.npss.sk.ca) and pay with any major credit card. It's fast, easy and secure. Please note there is a small surcharge added to memberships purchased online to cover internet banking fees. However, if you still want to mail a cheque you can do that, too.

Do you want to avoid having to remember to pay altogether? Why not buy a lifetime membership. It's cheaper, in the long run, and you can pay in installments if you can't afford, or don't wish to pay, a lump sum. All those who renew their memberships by December 12, 2014 (online or postmarked) will be entered to win "Blue Grama", a new book by Saskatchewan author Heather Peat Hamm.

Thank you to for supporting the NPSS in 2014 with your membership dues and donations of time, labour and money! We are extremely grateful that we are your charity of choice.

NEW FOR THIS YEAR - As we are now a registered charity, your donations to the NPSS are now tax deductible. *



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Name: _____ Postal Code: _____

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Please indicate if you would prefer to receive the *Native Plant News* electronically (if yes, make sure to include your correct email address), otherwise a paper copy will be sent to you.

Even if you wish to receive a paper copy of the newsletter, please provide your email address, as we will use it to send you event reminders and contact you at short notice.

Return this form and your payment ASAP to ensure your membership continues for another year or to begin your membership with the society.

- _____ \$30 for 1-year Membership
- _____ \$45 for 1-year Family Membership
- _____ \$15 for 1-year Student Membership
- _____ \$100 for 1-year Non-profit Organization Membership
- _____ \$200 for 1-year Corporate Membership
- _____ \$500 for Lifetime Membership (this can be paid by installments – call us for details)
- _____ Donation (Tax deductible. The NPSS gratefully accepts donations which will be directed toward our membership activities and conservation programs.)

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