

Newsletter of the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan



ROOTS

Vol. 30 No. 3

Fall 2025



Lance-leaved Stonecrop

Sedum lanceolatum

Photo credit: Chet Neufeld

President's Message Beckett Stark, NPSS President

With the warm days of summer (and fall) behind us I'm sure you're asking: Beckett, how can I stay engaged with native plants during Saskatchewan's long winter?

Start Native Plants - This is the perfect time to start native seeds in pots outdoors as many species need an extended cold / moist period to germinate. Check out our up-to-date Native Plant Material and Services Supplier List at https://www.npss.sk.ca/rsu_docs/documents/native-plant-material-and-services-supplier-list-2025.pdf if you need seeds.

Plan Your Native Plant Garden - Design a native garden bed online at <https://www.nativegardenplanner.com/> with the species you have winter sown. Pen and paper work great also!

See Native Plants With Two Eyes - Learn about native plants from both western science and Indigenous knowledge perspectives. I recommend the audiobook for Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer (<https://saskatchewan.overdrive.com/media/2854558>), free field guides on our website (<https://www.npss.sk.ca/info-resources/field-guides-and-floras>), or the excellent Flora of Saskatchewan fascicles (<https://www.npss.sk.ca/store/publications>).

Western Spiderwort Discovery at Douglas Provincial Park

Reed Lewko, NPSS Project Technician

At the beginning of June 2025, our NPSS team traveled to Douglas Provincial Park to collect plant litter (detritus) samples for a study conducted by Dr. Eric Lamb, a professor of Plant Sciences at the University of Saskatchewan. We hit the Sand Dune Trail in the hopes of finding some decent native prairie spots to collect litter, having no clue that what we would find would be so much more exciting than litter! We stumbled upon a previously unknown population of western spiderwort (*Tradescantia occidentalis* var. *occidentalis*) which is an S1 and COSEWIC listed as Threatened. Shoutout to Hilary Pinchbeck for making the initial discovery and identification.

While I had seen this plant previously in the provincial park, I had not seen it in these numbers – there were probably over 300 plants, many of which were in flower, spread out over two small, sandy hillsides. It is a very beautiful plant, but unfortunately its habitat is under threat. Western spiderwort tends to thrive on partially stabilized sand dunes and blow-out areas. Some degree of drifting sand is important to its survival and its habitat is reduced by dune stabilization like many other rare plants that are sand-specialists, including smooth goosefoot (*Chenopodium subglabrum*), beaked annual skeletonweed (*Shinnersoseris rostrata*), and small-flowered sand-verbena (*Tripterocalyx micranthus*). It is very important that our sand dune complexes remain healthy to provide this important habitat. Some ways to prevent dune stabilization include proper grazing, prescribed burns, and invasive species management.

In addition to western spiderwort, we also found three very young bur ragweed (*Ambrosia acanthicarpa*; S2) plants and many Gibson's Big Sand Tiger Beetles (*Cicindela formosa gibsoni*; S3 and Threatened). If you are planning a trip to Douglas Provincial Park, I would definitely recommend checking out the dunes. It is about a 6km loop with minimal elevation gain and some incredible views.



Western spiderwort found during our surveys.
Photo by Reed Lewko

Roots 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

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.ca
Twitter: @NPSS_SK www.facebook.com/npss.sk

Membership Dues (Year End November 30th).

Individual \$30 Family \$45 Student \$15
Non-profit \$100 Corporate \$200
Life \$500 Please contact the NPSS office for info about the lifetime membership instalment payment option.

Get your photo on the cover of... ROOTS! Submit your Saskatchewan native plant photos for future cover consideration to: info@npss.sk.ca

Field Trips

This past summer, the NPSS hosted two field trips. While the sites were very different, they were both extremely diverse with exciting species to discover around every turn.

On July 5, 2025, we conducted a plant bioblitz with the goal recording 100 different plant species. We also hoped to revisit a large population of elephanthead (*Pedicularis groenlandica*; S2), a very rare and beautiful plant in Saskatchewan whose flowers look like tiny elephant heads. The land, located near Rosthern, SK, was historically settled by Metis people and is currently owned by the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan. We were met by Jason Demerais, from the Metis Guardians program, who led us out to the site. The property is several sections in size and is composed of sandy uplands vegetated with grasses and aspen patches, shrubby slopes that lead to a large and meandering wetland bordered by sedge meadows, and the shore of the South Saskatchewan River. Twenty-two participants explored as many habitats as possible, compiling all of the plant species they could find. In total, we found 150 plant species, including our target species, elephanthead. Other provincially rare species found included granular sedge (*Carex granularis*; S2), porcupine sedge (*Carex hystericina*; S2), sand millet (*Dichanthelium wilcoxianum*; S1), and plains rough fescue (*Festuca hallii*; S3). While not rare, many western red lilies (*Lilium philadelphicum*) were found, including a few that were an incredible 1 meter tall! We only scratched the surface of this amazing place with our field tour and there is almost certainly dozens of additional species waiting to be discovered if more time is spent exploring.

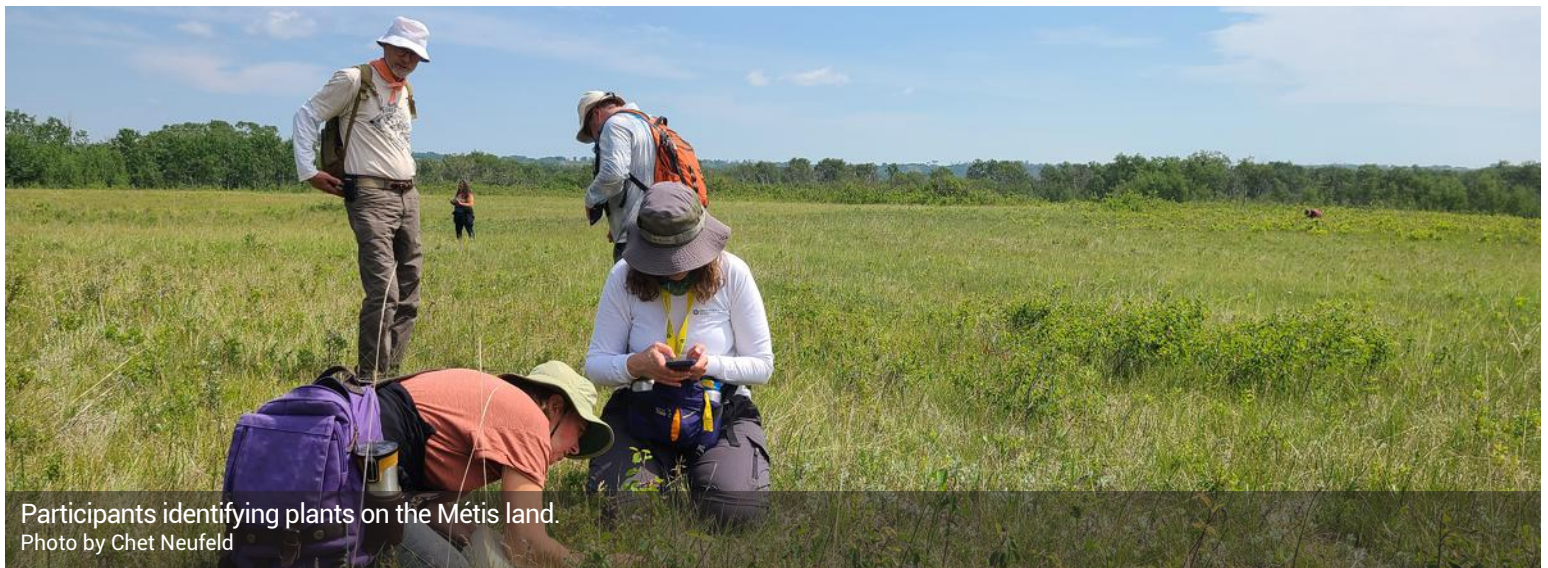
Thank you to Jason Demerais and the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan for allowing us onto the land and for their continued good stewardship.

On July 19, 2025, we headed out to Box H Farms, owned by the Hoimyr family, near Gladmar, SK. Here, we explored a portion of over 3,000 acres of gorgeous native prairie. Though the climate is some of the driest found in Saskatchewan, the grassland is carefully managed to maintain its diversity and productivity. We toured two



Elephanthead.
Photo by Candace Neufeld

areas of the farm that were several kilometers apart, though with similar knob and kettle topography. The hilltops were covered in



Participants identifying plants on the Métis land.
Photo by Chet Neufeld

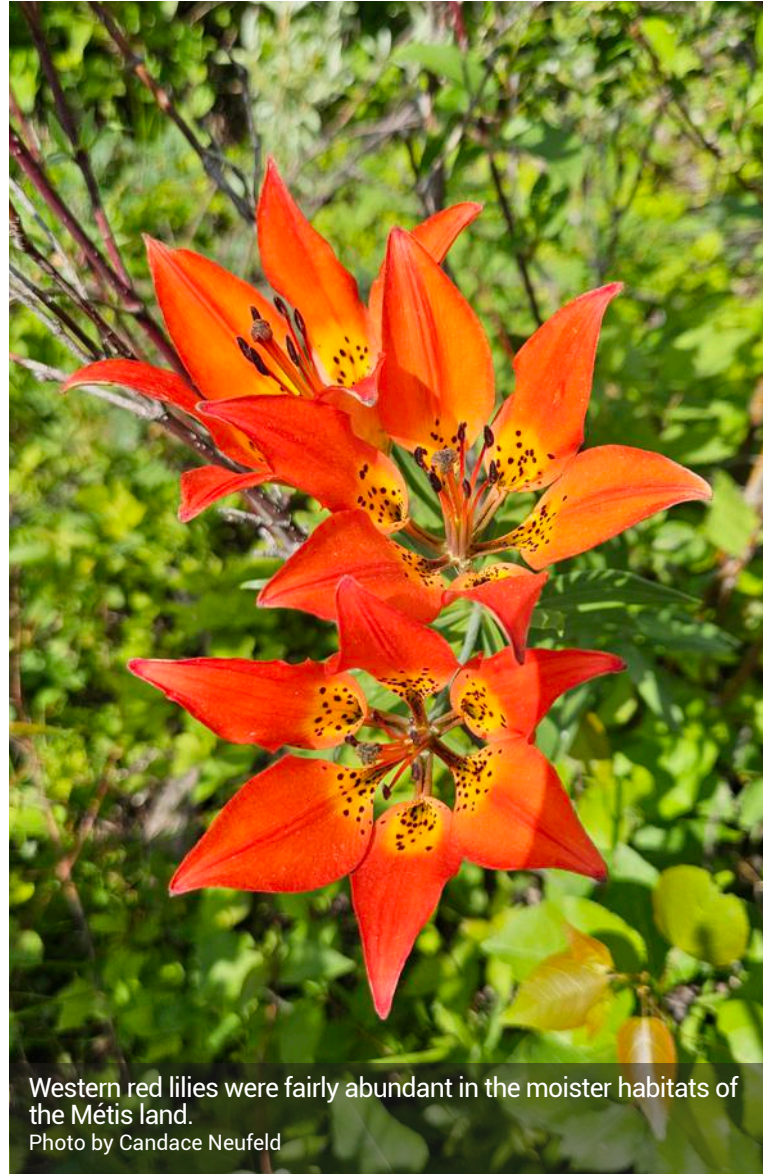
only the hardiest prairie plants, while the slopes and low spots afforded a little more moisture for other species. Many of the basins were filled with saline areas, offering yet another habitat for specially adapted species to occupy. Again, we conducted a bioblitz with the goal of finding as many plant species as possible, and again, we were not disappointed. Participants found well over a hundred plant species, including provincially rare species such as Spanish clover (*Acmispon americanus*; S3), low whitlowwort (*Paronychia sessiliflora*; S3), white milkwort (*Polygala alba*; S3), and what is thought to be the furthest eastern occurrence of few-flowered oatgrass (*Danthonia unispicata*; S2) in Saskatchewan by several hundred kilometers. We also found a rare species of lichen called blushing scale (*Psora decipiens*; S3). We compiled our observations with some that the Hoimyr had previously made for a total of 199 species! Again, we only explored a tiny fraction of their land, and more species undoubtedly remain to be found.

Thank you to Mark and Laura Hoimyr of Box H Farms for their incredibly warm hospitality and the care they've taken to ensure that the prairie continues to thrive.

For both field tours, our rare species observations were submitted to the Saskatchewan Conservation Data Centre (SKCDC), which



A patch of harebells in the sandy uplands of the Métis land.
Photo by Chet Neufeld



Western red lilies were fairly abundant in the moist habitats of the Métis land.
Photo by Candace Neufeld



Tour participants botanizing along one of Box H Farms' saline wetlands.
Photo by Candace Neufeld

will enable a better understanding of provincially rare species distribution and lead to more effective management. Those who use the iNaturalist app can add their rare species observations to the SKCDC's project.

Curious to know what else we found? Species lists from both properties we toured can be found on our website.



A view of Box H Farms prairie with tour participants barely visible in the distance.

Photo by Candace Neufeld



NPSS members Sarah Vinge-Mazer and Candace Neufeld botanize on the Box H Farms land.

Photo by Chet Neufeld



Low whitlowwort.

Photo by Chet Neufeld



Spanish clover.

Photo by Chet Neufeld

Project Update - Flowering Rush Control on Gainsborough Creek

Elijah Stempien, NPSS Project Technician

The Gainsborough Creek, running south from Bellegarde into the Souris River, is a beautiful example of the kinds of riparian habitats we need to protect. Winding through pastureland, grain, and canola fields, this creek is a picturesque example of Saskatchewan's natural spaces. Since the discovery of the flowering rush (*Butomus umbellatus*) infestation here in 2023, the NPSS has been hard at work containing and removing it from this water system. Over three weeks, our team

controlled flowering rush to prevent it from spreading downstream. We walked 18 kilometers of the creek and made great progress in removing the riparian invasive, surveying until we found the end of the population. Along the way, we found several rare species, including northern leopard frogs (*Lithobates pipiens*; S3 and Special Concern), western painted turtles (*Chrysemys picta bellii*; S3), and devil's beggarticks (*Bidens frondosa*; S3). With autumn descending, we were greeted by countless sandhill cranes and Canada geese making their way south – exemplifying the importance such ecosystems have for migrating birds. We also came across many other interesting species, such as big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), and beavers. This was a great reminder of why we need to protect the natural spaces we have and the progress we can make when we put our minds to it!

This project was made possible through funding from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment's Fish and Wildlife Development Fund, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and donors like you.



Gainsborough Creek.
Photo by Elijah Stempien



Surveying Gainsborough Creek.
Photo by Elijah Stempien



Removing flowering rush from Gainsborough Creek.
Photo by Elijah Stempien

Project Update - Flowering Rush Control on Cutarm Creek

Elijah Stempien, NPSS Project Technician

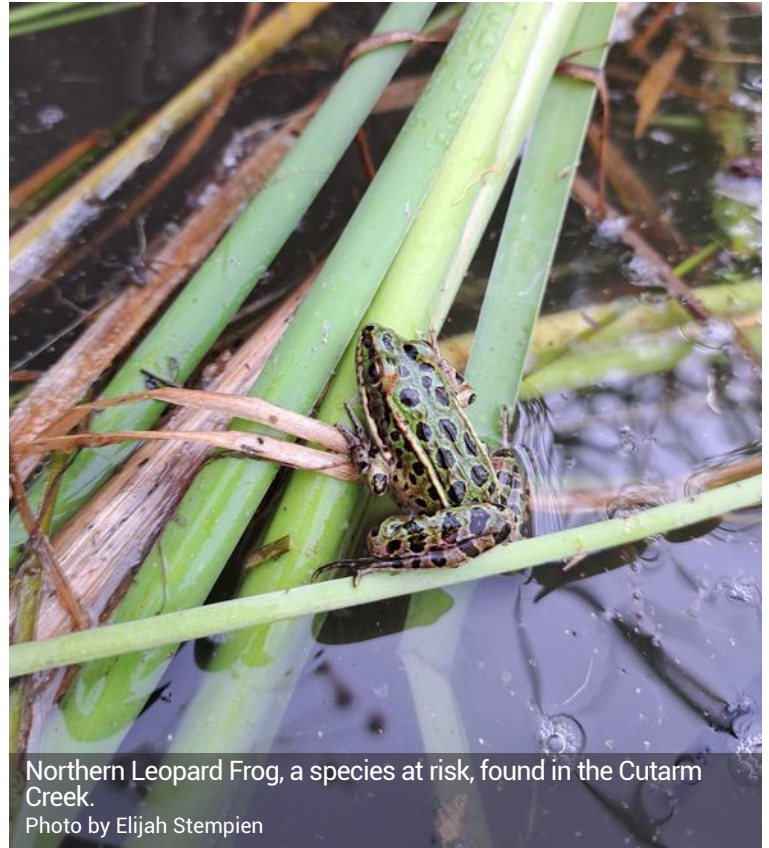
An important focus for our flowering rush (*Butomus umbellatus*) control project is the beautiful Cutarm Creek. Located in southeastern Saskatchewan, it winds through pastureland and canola fields, with the steep banks of the valley host to lush woodlands of poplar (*Populus sp.*), bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*), chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), and round-leaved hawthorn (*Crataegus chrysocarpa*). Our team worked hard to remove flowering rush wherever we found it – walking, wading, and kayaking along the meandering waterway while keeping an eye open for this invasive weed. The slow, muddy creek is prime habitat for the flowering rush, and we worked to prevent its spread downstream. While kayaking, we found ourselves portaging countless beaver dams, and witnessed all other kinds of wildlife, including muskrats, western painted turtles (*Chrysemys picta bellii*; S3), northern leopard frogs (*Lithobates pipiens*; Special Concern and S3), and eastern kingbirds. Meeting with locals and landowners, we had the chance to talk about the threat flowering rush poses to our native ecosystems and the best ways to tackle it. In total, we surveyed 14 kilometers on the creek,

and although there is lots of work to be done, we left the creek in a much better state than we found it!

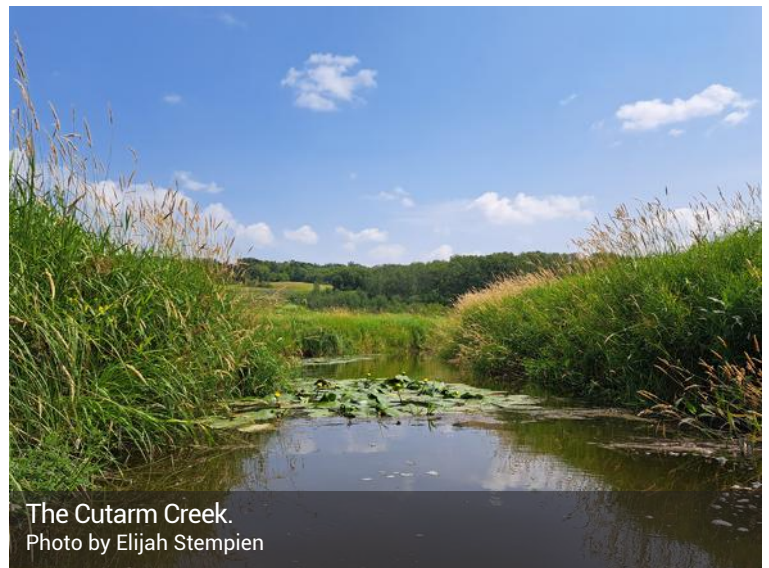
This project was made possible through funding from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment's Fish and Wildlife Development Fund, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and donors like you.



Flowering rush on the Cutarm Creek.
Photo by Elijah Stempien



Northern Leopard Frog, a species at risk, found in the Cutarm Creek.
Photo by Elijah Stempien



The Cutarm Creek.
Photo by Elijah Stempien

This issue's COVER PLANT

Lance-leaved Stonecrop - *Sedum lanceolatum*



Lance-leaved stonecrop is a succulent plant that is native to the western part of North America, ranging from Alaska to the western United States. In Canada, it grows from the Yukon to BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan. It is a highly drought-tolerant plant that thrives in gravels, rock crevices, rocky meadows, steppes, and arid, sandy areas. In Saskatchewan, it is designated as a rare species (S3), primarily found in the Cypress Hills region.

The genus name, *Sedum*, is derived from the Latin word "sedeo", meaning "to sit" or "to remain sitting," likely referring to how these plants often grow close to the ground or cling to rocks. Plants in this genus are commonly called stonecrops because they can thrive in rocky, nutrient-poor soils. The species name "lanceolatum" describes the lance-shaped leaves of this plant.

Belonging to the Crassulaceae family (commonly known as stonecrop family), which is characterized by succulent leaves adapted for water storage, lance-leaved stonecrop forms mats with rootstocks from which both sterile and fertile stems emerge. The sterile shoots are vegetative, bearing only leaves, and typically grow along the ground to form basal rosettes. The flowering shoots are erect stems measuring 3-15 cm, topped with a cyme. The flowers of lance-leaved stonecrop are star-like, featuring five sepals and five petals. The sepals are pale green to yellow-green, while the petals range from canary to golden yellow. There are ten stamens with yellow filaments and anthers. The leaves are stalkless, somewhat clasping the stem.

Plants within the stonecrop family are well known for their unique photosynthesis using the CAM pathway. Adapted to dry and cold environments, stonecrops open their stomata at night to capture carbon dioxide in the form of malic acid stored in vacuoles. During the day, they close their stomata to prevent water loss, while at the same time allowing photosynthesis to occur using the stored carbon dioxide and available sunlight.

In addition to its unique photosynthesis pathway, lance-leaved stonecrop serves important ecological roles. It attracts pollinators with its golden yellow flowers and the nectar produced in its nectar scales. Additionally, its leaves provide food for certain insects, for instance, the caterpillar of the Rocky Mountain Parnassian butterfly (*Parnassius smintheus*) which primarily feeds on the leaves of this plant, along with a few generalist species.

Lance-leaved stonecrop is a visually pleasing plant suitable for xeriscapes. It reproduces either by seeds or through vegetative divisions. The seeds are very tiny and light tan, contained in follicles. Although the seeds are considered non-dormant, seedlings grow slowly. Vegetative propagation is often faster and easier; it can be achieved through stem cuttings or leaves, which can take root and produce new plantlets in well-drained medium. However, caution should be exercised, as sedums favors drier environment and do not thrive in soggy soils. Plants should never be harvested from the wild. Luckily, there are a few native plant nurseries that provide plants and seeds of this species; refer to the NPSS website for a current list of sources.

This project was undertaken with the financial support of:
Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier de :



Environment and
Climate Change Canada

Environnement et
Changement climatique Canada



Flying Creek Trees



CanNorth
Canada North Environmental Services

