



Native Plant News

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www.npss.sk.ca

Summer 2017

NatureCity Festival Celebrated Water in the City of Bridges

From May 23-28, 2017, the NPSS and over 40 other organizations came together to celebrate nature in Saskatoon for the fifth annual NatureCity Festival. This year's theme was "We are Water: Explore our Prairie Waterscape" – quite fitting for a city perched on the banks of the South Saskatchewan River.

The festival drew thousands of people to over 60 events throughout the week, including musical events, nature walks, river cruises and canoe tours, workshops on bee and birdhouse building, presentations, and so much more! This year's festival also featured specialized children's programming for school groups and other youth activities. Some of these events included a maze in the woods, nature grandparenting, tipi building, nature poetry, and a pop-up playground.

For our part, the NPSS lead a guided botanical hike of Saskatoon's Small Swale, a natural area under increasing pressure from development. It was a fantastic day and we saw dozens of wildflowers blooming. More about this in our summer field tour article.

The festival also featured a keynote speaker. Maude Barlow, celebrated water activist, engaged a crowd of hundreds about issues facing Canada's water reserves, including long-outdated water laws, unmapped and unprotected



PHOTO BY BRANIMIR GJETVAJ

Keynote Speaker Maude Barlow.

groundwater reserves, agricultural pollution, industrial-waste dumping, boil-water advisories, and the effects of deforestation and climate change.

New for this year, the festival introduced "Taste Our NatureCity", where 8 local restaurants created nature-

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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:

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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inspired signature dishes featuring local ingredients which were served during the festival (they were delicious!). 9 Mile Legacy Brewing Company also created a NatureCity Ale, which incorporated Saskatoon's water profile in its flavour.

Also new for this year, the festival hired 2 coordinators, Myriam Ullah and Brit Macdonald, which allowed festival founder and previous coordinator Candace Savage some much needed time to tackle other projects. Brit and Myriam did a great job and their hard work was evident in the quality of the events and the response from the public.



PHOTO BY BRANIMIR GJETVAJ

Exploring Chappell Marsh.

The NPSS is one of the founding organizations of the festival and continues to be a key organizer. Planning has already begun for next year's festival, which promises to be another great one! If you have never participated in the NatureCity Festival, you're missing out on a great opportunity to interact with nature on so many levels. Even if you're not from Saskatoon, it's worth a drive in and an overnight stay to take part in all the festival has to offer.

Many thanks to all who made the festival a success with their donations of time, materials and money. Once again, EcoFriendlySask, Affinity Credit Union, Saskatoon Nature Society and SaskEnergy provided funding. For 2017, the festival also saw new financial contributions from SaskWater, SaskOutdoors and Saskatoon Co-op. For more information on the festival and to learn about all the partners and sponsors, please go to www.wildaboutsaskatoon.org *

Plant a Tree to Celebrate National Forest Week

September 27, 2017 is National Tree Day, which falls in the middle of National Forest Week. While Saskatchewan is known as one of the “Prairie Provinces”, more than 50% is covered in forests. Even in prairie areas, trees exist in coulees, along waterways, and in farmyards and urban areas. Saskatchewan has over a dozen species of native trees, each with a unique role to play in our ecosystems. Trees provide shelter and food for wildlife, contribute to our economy, cool our cities and purify our air. Did you know that one large tree can produce enough oxygen for up to 4 people per day? Or that approximately 100 trees capture one ton of carbon dioxide annually? Trees are amazing! Here are some other interesting facts:

- Saskatchewan’s provincial tree is the White Birch (*Betula papyrifera*).
- Saskatchewan is home to the largest* and oldest* species of tree, the Trembling Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*).
- Time spent in forests can actually improve your health; Dr. Shimi Kang, a medical doctor in British Columbia, prescribes her patients time in nature to reduce stress and speed healing.
- Forests enhance learning and development; there is a movement that has established forest kindergartens, where 3-5-year-olds spend their days learning almost exclusively outdoors.

Why not celebrate all the benefits that trees give us by planting a tree on National Tree Day. Tree Canada has started a National Tree Day Challenge, where you can plant a real or virtual tree to win prizes. More on Tree Canada, their challenge and the benefits of trees can be found on their website at www.treecanada.ca

* Scientific research conducted on Trembling Aspen in the United States has determined that a particular clone in Utah (composed of 47,000 stems covering 43 hectares) had the greatest biomass of any tree species (6,000 tonnes), and although each stem was relatively young, the clone itself has existed for millennia (some Trembling Aspen clones have existed for up to 8,000 years!). The NPSS did a feature story on the discovery in our Summer 2009 issue of Native Plant News and can be found in our newsletter archives here:

<https://www.npss.sk.ca/info-resources/npss-newsletter>. *

Weed Warriors Wanted!

Help the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan search for invasive salt cedar (*Tamarix spp.*). This is a very nasty plant that currently only exists at this site in Saskatchewan but threatens to invade our beautiful natural areas across the province if it's not stopped.

Salt Cedar Survey - Findlater, SK

September 28 - meet at 10 am at the intersection of highway 11 and highway 2 NORTH, just southeast of Chamberlain.

To register for this event, please contact:
Chet Neufeld at (306) 668-3940 or
e-mail info@npss.sk.ca



Salt Cedar.

PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

Upcoming Events

Nature Saskatchewan Fall Meet

September 29-30, 2017

Elbow, SK

For more information, go to
www.naturesask.ca

Alternative Management Practices for Rangelands in the Northern Great Plains

October 4-5, 2017

Bismark, ND

For more information, contact
Breana Kiser

Phone: 701-541-7050

Email: breana.s.kiser@ndsu.edu

Webinar - Updates to the Prairie Mitigation Guide

October 18, 2017

Presented by Peter Joyce,
SK Ministry of Environment

For more information, go to

[www.pcap-sk.org/
communications/pcap-speaker-series](http://www.pcap-sk.org/communications/pcap-speaker-series)

Foothills Restoration Forum Annual Fall Information Session

November 16, 2017

Claresholm, AB

For more information:
corpirate@shaw.ca or
(403) 563-8925

Native Prairie Restoration/Reclamation Workshop

February 7-8, 2018

Saskatoon, SK

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.



Rare Plants & Ranchers Update

By NATASHA MACKINTOSH
NPSS Project Coordinator

This summer has been very busy so far. I was lucky to spend the months of June and July working, and getting slightly lost, in some beautiful sand-dune complexes in the south-western portion of the province. It has been serene to work in such a large area of intact native prairie, and I even had the pleasure of sitting down for a coffee with some of our participating ranchers to talk about prairie conservation and their plans for continued land stewardship.

Searches for plant species at risk on semi-stable sand dunes on these properties have resulted in the discovery of 4 new occurrences of Smooth Goosefoot (*Chenopodium subglabrum*), a federally listed “Threatened” species. One of these newly found occurrences is being sustained by the ground disturbance from cattle traveling to and from a water source, which is maintaining an open, sandy area. The open, sandy soil is a habitat requirement for Smooth Goosefoot. This is a great example of how cattle grazing can be used as a tool to help species at risk.

Several new occurrences of provincially rare species, Small Lupine



PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

Natasha Mackintosh in good spirits, even though the temperature was nearly 40 degrees in the dunes.

(*Lupinus pusillus* spp. *pusillus*), Beaked Annual Skeletonweed (*Shinnersoseris rostrata*), Sand-dune Wheatgrass (*Elymus lanceolatus* ssp. *psammophilus*), and Tumble Grass (*Schedonnardus paniculatus*), were

found as well. Unfortunately, this year does not appear to be a good year for Slender Mouse-ear-cress (*Transberingia bursifolia* ssp. *virgata*), federally listed as “Threatened”, or Small-flowered Sand-verbena (*Tripterocalyx micranthus*), federally listed as “Endangered”. No plants were found in re-surveying of sites where they have been found in previous years. Although they are not present in vegetative form, their seeds are likely biding their time in the soil, waiting for a more favourable year.

Not only have I been finding species at risk plants, I have also come across some singing Sprague’s Pipit (*Anthus spragueii*) and a screeching Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*), both federally listed as “Threatened”. All rare species occurrences will be submitted to the Saskatchewan Conservation Data Centre, and will also be communicated to our ranchers in their beneficial management plans for species at risk. So far, this summer has been full of new experiences and great weather. I look forward to what the rest of the summer will bring. 🌱



PHOTO BY NATASHA MACKINTOSH

Smooth Goosefoot.

NPSS Celebrates Canada's 150th Birthday by Getting Outside!

What better way to celebrate Canada's 150th birthday than by immersing yourself in a piece of it? That was the thought as the NPSS hosted its field tours this summer.

We kicked things off on May 28, 2017 by leading a botanical hiking tour of Saskatoon's Small Swale. This tour was one of the events of the NatureCity Festival mentioned in this newsletter. The Small Swale is an ancient drainage channel carved out by receding ice that still flows into the South Saskatchewan River within the city limits. Although it has been subdivided by various land uses and tenures, there are still very intact and highly functioning areas that remain. However, current development is putting increasing pressure on these areas, so the NPSS wanted to create awareness of this and to explore the biodiversity. The NPSS chose an exceptionally diverse quarter section of rolling, grassy hills and shallow wetlands to visit and we weren't disappointed!



PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

Goldenbean at the Saskatoon Small Swale.



PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

Three-flowered Avens at the Saskatoon Small Swale.

Due to the early, warm spring, there were dozens of wildflower species in bloom, including Early Blue Violet (*Viola adunca*), Three-flowered Avens (*Geum triflorum*), Early Cinquefoil (*Potentilla coccinea*), Goldenbean (*Thermopsis rhombifolia*), Prairie Crocus (*Anemone patens*), Moss Phlox (*Phlox hoodii*), Saskatoon (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), Prairie Onion (*Allium textile*), Reflexed Rock Cress (*Boechera retrofracta*) and many others. The wetlands had a no less stunning display of colour, with Saline Shooting Star (*Dodecatheon pulchellum*), Mealy Primrose (*Primula incana*), Northern Bog Violet (*Viola nephrophylla*) and several species of flowering Sedges (*Carex* sp.) putting on a show.

In addition to the many beautiful wildflowers, the bird life was also abundant. Dozens of species of songbirds were seen, as well as many species of waterfowl on the wetlands. However, the highlight of the bird life was the sighting of a Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus excubitorides*)

perched on a Round-leaved Hawthorn (*Crataegus rotundifolia*). This robin-sized bird of prey is a Threatened species in Canada, and uses thorny shrubs like Hawthorn to impale and hold its prey because its talons are too weak to do so. The sighting was reported to the Saskatchewan Conservation Data Centre, and the NPSS will continue to work with the City of Saskatoon and the Northeast Swalewatchers to ensure that such a diverse and fragile landscape is afforded protection.



PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

Mealy Primrose at the Saskatoon Small Swale.

The NPSS had initially planned to host a June and July field tour, but opted to hold both tours during Native Prairie Appreciation Week in June. The first of these tours was in partnership with the Meewasin Valley Authority (MVA), and explored the Northeast Swale on June 21, 2017. While the NPSS has held tours here in recent years, this year we visited different areas and had a different focus. Renny Grilz, Resource Management Officer with

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PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

Standing in the regrowth from the prescribed fire conducted in the Northeast Swale this past spring.

the MVA, toured participants through areas recently burned as part of their management program, which uses prescribed fire and grazing to maintain prairie health. In this case, fire was used to reduce shrub encroachment into the prairie, and to remove a thick thatch layer that had built up which would otherwise start to suffocate the prairie. Participants could compare areas that had been burned as recently as this



PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

One of the Western Red Lilies found in the area of the Northeast Swale that was burned this spring.

past spring with areas that had been burned several years ago. Although the ground of the most recently burned

area was still blackened, the vegetation had already started to recover to the point where some grasses and sedges were almost knee high and some forbs were flowering. Perfectly adapted to fire, the Western Red Lily (*Lilium philadelphicum*) responded well and several could be found blooming. Thanks to Renny and the MVA for the tour!

The second tour was the closing event for Native Prairie Appreciation Week and was done in cooperation with the Society for Range Management (SRM). Nadia Mori, normally a NPSS board member, had to switch hats and represent the SRM. We toured Biddulph Prairie, a pasture owned by the University of Saskatchewan and used



PHOTO BY NADIA MORI AND CLAUDE ECKINGER

Chet Neufeld talks about sand dune ecology at Biddulph Prairie.

for research purposes. Biddulph Prairie is half a section of stabilized sand dune complex bordered by Canadian Forces Base Dundurn to the east, and by the Whitecap Dakota First Nation to the south. The land is surprisingly diverse, having numerous small sand blowouts, aspen groves, shrubby areas, wetlands and a deep ravine with a spring at the bottom. It was this last habitat that interested people the most, as although it was only a short walk



PHOTO BY NADIA MORI AND CLAUDE ECKINGER

Participants explore Biddulph Prairie.

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PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

Western Jewelweed (not flowering at Bidulph Prairie during our visit as it flowers much later in the season).

down the hill from one of the driest areas on the property, at the bottom of the ravine one would never know that they were in a sandhill complex. The ravine bottom was filled with towering Trembling Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*),

Manitoba Maple (*Acer negundo*) and Green Ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*), and covered in a forest understory of shrubs and forbs that weren't found anywhere else on the property, such as Wild Raspberry (*Rubus idaeus*), Low Bush Cranberry (*Viburnum edule*), Veiny Meadow Rue (*Thalictrum venulosum*), Wild Sarsaparilla (*Auralia nudicaulis*) and Creamy Peavine (*Lathyrus ochroleucus*) among others. Along the stream in the ravine were masses of American Brooklime (*Veronica americana*) and a carpet of small Western Jewelweed (*Impatiens noli-tangere*), a provincially-rare plant (S2S3). Back in the stabilized sand dunes the flora was no less impressive. There were Prairie Onion (*Allium textile*), Star-flowered Solomon's-seal (*Smilacina stellata*), Picushion Cactus (*Mamillaria vivipara*), Scarlet Guara (*Guara coccinea*), Shrubby Evening Primrose (*Oenothera serrulata*), Slender Beardtongue (*Penstemon procerus*), Hairy Umbrellawort (*Mirabilis hirsuta*) and Lance-leaved Psoralea (*Psoralea lanceolata*) among many others.

In addition to botanizing, participants viewed an international research project on climate change of which Bidulph Prairie was one of dozens of sites around the world. All in all, it was a great day and a great way to



PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

Slender Beardtongue.

end Native Prairie Appreciation Week. Many thanks to Dr. Eric Lamb of the University of Saskatchewan and Nadia Mori and Rachel Turnquist of the Society for Range Management. *



PHOTO BY CHET NEUFELD

Pincushion Cactus.

Saskatchewan Master Naturalist Program to Explore Prairie Ecosystems

Register now for the upcoming field trip on Wednesday, September 27, 2017 to the Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area! This day trip forms part of the Prairie Ecosystems module of the Saskatchewan Master Naturalist Course. We will tour the area and learn about the species and processes that make up the various habitats. We will also engage in discussions about managing prairie for biodiversity, the role that biologists and the public play, and the role of protected areas regarding conservation and outreach. Additionally, we will learn about the projects and programming taking place at Last Mountain Lake, such as the challenges and opportunities of their native prairie restoration program.

The prairie habitats at Last Mountain Lake are just some examples of many different types that we have in Saskatchewan, each of which we will explore in detail in the Prairie Ecosystems module.

Transportation from Saskatoon is provided and we will leave from the Canadian Wildlife Service (115 Perimeter Road) at 8 am sharp. You are also welcome to drive yourself – the day will commence at the Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area visitor's centre at 10 am.

This day trip is the outdoor component (Part 1) of the Prairie Ecosystems module. A classroom component (Part 2) will be offered this winter. Both components are needed to complete the Saskatchewan Master Naturalist Program. Don't worry if you can't make it this time, as we will continue to offer both components of the Prairie Ecosystems module in the coming months and years, and will locate them in various communities across the province.

Space will be limited to the first 30 people to register. Please wear appropriate outdoor clothing and bring your own lunch and drinks.

To register, go to:

<https://www.npss.sk.ca/store/events/saskatchewan-master-naturalist-tour-for-prairie-ecosystems-module> *

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