

THE SAGEBRUSH CHRONICLE



The Wild and Not So Wild Life of Rajasthan, India

By Ian Wallis and Wendy Blackwell

Within India's "Golden Triangle", a popular tourist route featuring the famed sites of Delhi, the pink city of Jaipur and the Taj Mahal at Agra, lie a number of National Parks and preserves. The Bird Nuts, Wendy Blackwell and Ian Wallis, will show photos of their visits to three of these areas in February, 2109: the National Chambal Sanctuary, a section of the Chambal River which is home to endangered Indian Skimmers and Gharial Crocodiles; Keoladeo National Park at Bharatpur, once a rajah's private hunting preserve, now managed wetlands and wintering grounds for multitudes of birds; and the varied terrain and wildlife of Ranthambore National Park, where Ian was able to fulfil a long-held wish to search for tigers in the wild.



Tuesday, April 23, 2019 at the Nature Centre

7:00 to 7:45 PM: General Meeting

7:45 to 8:00 PM: Socializing

8:00 to 9:00 PM: The Wild and Not-So-Wild Life of Rajasthan, India

Executive

President	Hugh Armstrong armstrongg.h@telus.net	526-1003
Vice-President	Phil Horch phorch@telus.net	529-5918
Secretary	Betty Rainville brainville@telus.net	527-4949
Treasurer and Memberships	Eileen Cowtan ecowtan@hotmail.com	526-1264
Past-President	Dave McKenzie naturist@telus.net	527-1701
Directors at Large	Ian & Angela Turner ianang@telus.net Linda Fisher sweetgrass@gmail.com	526-1350 548-7706

The Sagebrush Chronicle is published ten times a year by Grasslands Naturalists. **Submissions of writing and artwork are welcomed but must be edited for publication. Deadline: the 10th of each month.** If you would like to advertise in the Chronicle, more information is available from the editor. Submissions are to be sent to: milton.spitzer@gmail.com (403-528-3120). Do not imbed photos in articles but **do send** them separately.

The Society of Grasslands Naturalists encourages the study, conservation and protection of all components of the natural world. The Society provides educational opportunities, assists in the collection and provision of species data, acts as stewards of the environment, discusses environmental topics and organizes member activities. The Society also manages the Medicine Hat Interpretive Program.

General Meetings: 4th Tuesday, Sept. - May **Board Meetings:** 1st Tuesday Sept. - June

To join Grasslands Naturalists and/or send a tax-deductible donation, write:

Grasslands Naturalists
Box 2491
Medicine Hat, AB T1A 8G8

Contact info: Nature Centre 529-6225

Annual Membership Dues: Eileen Cowtan

Individuals \$20
Families \$25
Organizations \$25

Donations to Grassland Naturalists and Interpretive Program are another great way to support local nature and nature education. Tax receipts are issued for all donations over \$10. Your generosity is greatly appreciated!

EDITORIAL DISCLAIMER

The opinions expressed by the authors in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the editor and the Grasslands Naturalists. The editor reserves the right to edit, reject or withdraw articles submitted. While due care will be taken of all manuscripts, photos or artwork submitted, GN cannot be held responsible for any loss or damage to such articles.

GN Website:

<http://www.natureline.info/gn>

GN Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/GrasslandsNaturalists/>

You must be a Facebook member to view most of it.

MH Interpretive Program

(Managed by Grassland Naturalists)

Based in Police Point Park Nature Centre

Open Year Round

Tuesday to Sunday: 9:00AM to 5:00PM

Washrooms are on a timer and are open from 7:00AM to 8:00PM daily!

To get up to date information on what is happening at the Nature Centre call the:

Nature Line at (403) 529-6225

Also find us on Facebook and Twitter
[policepointpark](https://www.facebook.com/policepointpark)

Easter in Police Point Park- 4 Days of Fun

Good Friday, Saturday and Easter Sunday public hours are from 10 to 4; Monday from 10 to 2. Volunteers make this wonderful weekend possible. If you haven't already signed up for one or more shifts, please call 403 529-6225. There are lots of different jobs. We depend on your support

Medicine Hat's Most Unwanted Invasive

Species Workshop: May 4

Register soon for this day of information and ideas. Speakers and updates, ideas for landscaping and lots of good discussion will make this an interesting day. Preregistration will allow the organizers to order enough refreshments and will reserve your space. **Phone 430 529-6225.**

For additional Interpretive Program events stop by the Nature Centre or give them a call.

The Nature Centre is selling water bottles with the GN Logo for \$14.50 including GST. Check them out.

Member's Corner



GN is indebted to those members who have stepped up to serve on the executive. Returning members are:

Hugh Armstrong: President

Betty Rainville: Secretary

Eileen Cowtan: Treasurer

Dave Mackenzie: Past President

Ian and Angela Turner: Directors at Large

Linda Fisher: Director at Large

Thank you **Phil Horch** for stepping up as the Vice President. A big "thank you" to **Anne Bernhardt** who has stepped down from the executive after many years of service.

Welcome to the newest members to GN: **Pearl Dubourt** and her son **Paul**. Pearl and her brother Ken Meyer from Calgary participated in the Manyberries field trip.

A sad farewell to **Dwayne Myers** who has moved to London, Ont. The photo at right was submitted to the Medicine Hat News by Rob Gardner and was published in the Friday, April 5 edition.

The caption Rob submitted with the photograph was: "Dwayne Myers, dean of the Medicine Hat News volunteer photo department, caught in a rare moment without a camera hiding his nose. Thanks, Dwayne, for your hundreds of beautiful photos and their amusing captions. We will miss you!"

President's Message -April 2019

Well, spring has arrived and the Pelicans, Herons and Meadowlarks are back. The misnamed "Gophers" are out, and all we need is some yellow dandelions to make it official!

This year's AGM- March 26th- was shortened to make time for another excellent film from Rick Andrews. Thank you to everyone who let their name stand for the Board positions and Committee Chairs, and especially to Phil Horch for letting his name stand for Vice-President. Now Anne can take a well deserved break! When you are asked, please get involved with some of our Committees.

Easter "Chicks and Bunnies" weekend is coming up and, as always, we need many volunteers so phone the Nature Centre and sign up.

Keep April 13th open as we, GN, in conjunction with the city wide Litter Blitz are Registered to be picking garbage in Ranchlands. This year Ian and Angela Turner are heading up the Clean-up for GN. We are actually a week early but the following weekend is the big weekend at the Nature Centre and volunteers are needed there. Dee and I will be leading the "poop pickin" along the Police Point Off Leash Dog Walking trail at the same time.

This year our Neighbourhood Walks are going to try switching back to Tuesday mornings, so when the dates are announced keep that in mind. Don't forget the Invasive Species Workshop May 4th at the Nature Centre. Gerry and Marty have put together a very good program. As you can surmise from this message, I will be around for another year as the President of this fine organization.

Cheers, Hugh

Upcoming Events, Field Trips and Announcement

Grasslands Naturalists and Nature Centre Events:

Saturday, April 13: Litter Clean-up Day in the Ranchlands Area beginning at 09:30 AM. Meet at the intersection of Ranchlands Blvd. NE (take the second Ranchlands Blvd. NE turn-off of Parkview Drive NE) and Ranchlands Crescent NE. The City is providing garbage bags and vinyl gloves. If you'd rather use gardening gloves bring your own. Also if you have garbage pick-up claws bring them as well. (Note: this litter clean-up day is not to be confused with the City's clean-up blitz which is being held the following week but this conflicts with our big Easter Weekend Events at the Nature Centre.

Tuesday, April 16: First Neighbourhood Walk of the Season (This year walks are being held on Tuesday Mornings): 10:00 AM: Crocus Walk 1 along East Glen Trail; 10:00 AM. Meet on East Glen Drive near East Glen Avenue SE.



< First crocus of the season seen and photographed by John Slater on April 8 along the Ross Creek Nature Trail.

Friday, April 19 to Monday April 22: Easter at the Nature Centre: 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM (Monday 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM). Volunteers for a variety of jobs are desperately required. Call the Nature Centre at 403 529-6225.

Tuesday, April 23: Neighbourhood Walk at 10:00 AM: Crocus Walk 2 along East Glen Trail: Meet on East Glen Drive near East Glen Avenue SE.

Tuesday, April 23: 7:00 PM: Monthly Meeting and Presentation.

Saturday, April 27: Annual Field Trip to Sauder's and Murray Reservoirs: 8:00 AM to about 1:00 PM. Led by Phil Horch. Meet at the A&W along Gershaw Drive.

Tuesday, April 30: Neighbourhood Walk at 10:00 AM: Meet at the Lorne Holden Ball Diamond in Kin Coulee. Gerry Ehlert will lead this walk and will include an exploration of the wetland and pond and then a walk up Ajax Coulee.

Saturday May 4: Invasive Species Workshop at the Nature Centre: 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM. This workshop is being conducted by Gerry Ehlert and Marty Drut. The workshop is free but please register at eventbrite.ca by May 1 so that food and space needs can be determined. Lunch will be provided to those attending the full workshop.

Tuesday, May 7: Neighbourhood Walk at 10:00 AM; Gerry Ehlert is leading this walk beginning at the top of Ajax Coulee down to Seven Persons Creek. Meet at 12 Street and Bullevant Crescent SW.

Saturday, May 11: Field Trip to the Brooks Area (Birding Trail 13): 07:00 AM to about 4:00 PM. Led by Milt Spitzer. Meet at the Northlands Co-op Liquor Store. Bring a lunch. We will visit Kitsam Reservoir, Lake Newell and have lunch at Kinbrook Island PP. If time permits we will visit Kininvie Slough.

Tuesday, May 14: Neighbourhood Walk TBA.

Sunday, May 26: Medicine Hat Birds and Flowers May Species Count. Details to be announced in the May Chronicle.

Other NON GN Events and Announcements

May 18 and 19: Brooks May Species Count: Details will be in the May Chronicle or you can contact Bob Parsons at vintagebob2@gmail.com for more information.

Judy Anderson submitted a very interesting article concerning Ron and Cathy Linowski's search for Tiny Cryptantha, Dwarf wooly head, and Smooth Goosefoot. This article can be found at:

https://www.mhc.ab.ca/NewsandEvents/Stories/2019/April/LinowskiResearchProject?platform=hootsuite#.XKdx_GuY30U.mailto

The 2019 Community Spirit Awards Nomination deadline is May 31. If you know of a worthy person in the Environmental Category and wish to nominate them follow the process at:

<https://www.medicinehat.ca/Home/Components/news/3843/30>.

Exciting Sightings

With the spring (vernal) equinox on March 20th/21st, the lengthening of daylight hours, and the thawing of our wetlands, sloughs, and reservoirs, we are seeing our first signs of spring migration. On March 4th, Dan and Mark Schiebelbein reported their exciting sighting of more than 2000 **Snow Buntings** on the north side of the Wildcat Trail, about 2 kilometers west of Michelle Reservoir. By mid-April bunting flocks are heading north to their breeding grounds.

Tundra Swans have been observed flying over and/or stopping at various locations including ~400 swans reported at Cavan Lake by Phil and Annalora Horch on April 2nd. Swan sightings can also include **Trumpeter Swans**, which may be part of a small breeding population established near Grande Prairie. This species is larger, and lacks the yellow spot in front of the eye of the tundra swan.

Golden Eagle: Photo by Bob Frew



The first sighting this spring of a **Ferruginous Hawk** was reported on March 14th, when Ben Verner, Milt Spitzer, and Bob Frew observed a single bird along RGE Rd. 63 south of Manyberries. Other raptor sightings on that date included a **Prairie Falcon** along HWY 889, and two **Golden Eagles** at Saint Margaret's Church on Eagle Butte Rd. in the Cypress Hills.

During the maintenance of bluebird boxes along The Carol Porter Bluebird Trail on March 22nd, Milt Spitzer reported the sighting of three male **Mountain Bluebirds** near Saint Margaret's Church on Eagle Butte Rd. This early migrant is a harbinger of spring in the Cypress Hills.

Accipiter species reported at Police Point Park included a **Northern Goshawk** on March 22nd and a **Cooper's Hawk** on March 31st. This latter species has bred successfully in the park in previous years. The male usually arrives in the first week of April, and is joined by the female a week or so later.

The songs and sightings of **Western Meadowlarks** were being reported by a number of GN birders in the latter part of March. This species is much welcomed as a harbinger of spring in the grasslands.

Activity has returned to the heronry directly across the river from Police Point Drive NE, with up to fifty **Great Blue Herons** tallied as of April 9th.

The distinctive drumming, along with sightings of **Pileated Woodpecker(s)** at Police Point Park has been reported on numerous occasions in March and April. Is this species breeding in our river valley?

Dan Scheibelbein reported a **Townsend's Solitaire** perched on a large poplar tree along a walking path across from his NE Crescent Heights residence on April 7th, and also a second sighting on a spruce tree in his backyard on April 8th (possibly the same bird). This species breeds in the Rocky Mountain and foothill regions, and has been observed in small numbers in spring and fall in the grasslands, however they can be easily missed. The species is gray in colour, has a distinguishing white eye ring, buffy wing patches, and white tail patches.

Please report your exciting sightings to Bob Frew: phone 403-526-4573, or e-mail robert.frew@shaw.ca.

Annual GN Field Trip to Manyberries Area



On March 30 eight participants (Ben Velnor (leader), Eileen Cowtan, Val and Fay Felesky, Ken Meyer, Pearl Dubourt, Milt and Elaine Spitzer participated in the annual trip to the Manyberries area. The weather was ideal, the wildlife viewing was marvelous, and the exotic tallies were remarkable.

The group, in 3 vehicles, travelled south along the Black and White Trail to Manyberries, then explored the range and township roads southwest of Manyberries stopping at a ranch before heading back to the Hat along the Wildcat and Eagle Butte Roads.

A total of 24 bird species were noted with exceptional views of Ferruginous Hawks (7 in total). Other notable sightings included: Tundra Swan (30), six species of ducks, Northern Harriers (2), Great Horned Owls (4), several Mountain Bluebirds and the true harbinger of spring five Western Meadowlarks. We did observe 9 Sharp-tailed Grouse, two displaying in a field before our usual lek. There were only 6 on the lek which were only displaying half heartedly. The ninth was observed on a telephone pole along the Black and White Trail.



Five species of mammals were observed including many Mule and White-tailed Deer, a small herd of Pronghorns, three coyotes and of course the ubiquitous Richardson Ground Squirrels.

The strangest sightings were at a ranch site where we observed two pot-bellied pigs (so heavy their bellies were dragging on the ground, two guard geese, 3 border collies, a dozen peacocks, five guinea fowl, domesticated ducks and a variety of exotic chickens.

Thanks Ben for again leading this fascinating spring trip.



Nature Alberta meeting March 30 (Part 1) and April 3 (Part 2) Highlights

Submitted by Angela and Ian Turner

1. Following are the highlights from the **Nature Alberta Policy Statement on the Conservation of Large Carnivores in Alberta**
(ie. **grizzly bears** – sport hunting of grizzlies was discontinued in 2006 and grizzlies were listed as threatened in 2010 by the AB government, **wolf** – a plan has not been updated since 1991, approximate population of 7000, two wolf control programs are in place for a) bounty in municipal districts to reduce livestock depredation and b) Alberta government for a caribou recovery measures, **cougar** – the population is slowly expanding, and **black bears** – the population is stable)
 - goal is to sustain healthy populations
 - restore integrity of carnivore habitat (particularly Rocky Mountains and the foothills)
 - does not support bounties and other widespread control programs, but if not possible or appropriate (eg. public safety) then control efforts to be conducted in a way that is as humane as possible
 - supports complete ban on the use of pesticide strychnine
 - Nature Alberta's position is that there is no need to rehabilitate orphaned wildlife for conservation purposes
 - Nature Alberta does not categorically oppose rehabilitation programs, as long as efforts conform with strict protocols (ie. a detailed follow up for released individuals for one year with appropriate radio tracking device monitoring)
2. There is no longer funding to support **NatureWILD** publication for kids 12 years old and younger in conjunction with the Nature Kids program. A discussion was held to integrate this publication as part of the Nature Alberta magazine.
3. Concerning the **Nature Alberta magazine**, it was suggested to send one e-mail to one contact for each club. Then that person from each club could distribute the Nature Alberta magazine to their individual members that want to receive it electronically.
4. Everyone can subscribe to the monthly **Nature Alberta e-newsletter**. To do this follow these steps:
a) go to the Nature Alberta website (naturealberta.ca), b) click on the 'PUBLICATIONS' link in the top bar, c) scroll down to 'Nature Alberta e-News' and subscribe
5. **50th Anniversary of Nature Alberta is in 2020**
 - some initial planning has started
 - suggested to have a major event in Edmonton in October, 2020
 - suggested to have a field trip in each part of the province once per month in 2020 that is sponsored by the different clubs. Note: Could GNS hold a special field trip and what month would work best for us???
 - a letter outlining the plans and information concerning the 50th Anniversary will be mailed out to the Chairperson of each club
6. A **Strategic Planning Committee** was set up to work with the Executive Director (Brian) to build a plan for the next three to five years. They will meet later this month.
7. The **financial concerns** were mentioned again. The executive feels the outlook for grants does not look good over the next three to five years. More fund raising is needed.

Communications Committee Annual Report for 2018

The Communications Committee consists of: Eileen Cowtan, who sends out group emails to keep the GNS members up to date; Milt Spitzer, who produces the Chronicle newsletter each month; Paul Thibault, who updates and manages the GNS website; Tina Regehr, who updates and manages Facebook for GNS; and myself.

Since World Water Day is in March a table was set up at the Medicine Hat Public Library for the week. The Riparian Health Assessment display was set up as well as various rack cards and brochures from the club were available for the public to view. A table was set up at the Farmer's Market three times, once in each of the months of May, June, and September. Since we are a non-profit society there was no charge, so this was a great way to advertise our club.

GNS Rack cards and Wildflower brochures were distributed to various locations in the city --- Tourist Office, Esplanade, Medicine Hat Public Library, Medicine Hat Lodge.

Advertising was placed in the Medicine Hat News to notify the readers of our monthly meeting and guest speaker. This free advertising was in the "Events Calendar" on the Monday edition of the paper.

The name tags to be used at the regular meetings has been well received. New names have been added as necessary. Now everyone knows who everyone is!

Thank you to all the members on the Communications Committee for your hard work and dedication.

Angela Turner: Communications Chairperson



Dwayne Myers is in London, Ont. and naturally his attention has turned to the Cardinal.



More
exotics
from
Many-
berries





Grasslands Naturalists

Box 2491, Medicine Hat, Alberta T1A 8G8



Membership Form for 2019

Name* _____ Name of 2nd Family Member ** _____

Address* _____ Membership: Individual \$20/year _____

City / Province* _____ Family \$25/year _____

Postal Code* _____ Organization \$25/year _____

Telephone+ _____ Donation _____ Tax Receipt Available

Email++ _____ **Total Enclosed** _____

Preference for receiving Chronicle newsletter*:

Post or Email or Neither

Current and recent Chronicles can be viewed and downloaded from the Grasslands Naturalists website www.natureline.info/gn

* Required information. ** Required information for family membership.

+ Optional Information. For phone number(s), please note if it is a residence, cell phone or business number.

++ Information required if you wish to receive the Chronicle or Nature Alberta Magazine by email.

Informed Consent for Field Trips

I may wish to participate in field trips and events organized by Grasslands Naturalists.

I affirm that as a participant I am prepared to stay with the group and follow the directions of the coordinator. If I choose to bring my child(ren)/ward(s), I will ensure they also stay with the group and follow the directions of the coordinator and activity leader. I affirm that, knowing my personal state of health, I feel that I am mentally and physically capable of participating in the trips and events that I choose to attend.

I acknowledge that I am aware of the inherent risks, hazards, and dangers associated with activities arising from my participation in trips and events which may result in injury to me or result in my death.

Therefore, in consideration of my participation in these trips and events, for myself, my heirs, my executors, my administrators, and my successors, I voluntarily assume all risks and hereby waive all my rights against Grasslands Naturalists and unconditionally release and discharge the Grasslands Naturalists, its members, directors, officers, its affairs and its coordinators from all manner of activities, causes of action, suits, claims and demands for damages due to personal injury, death, loss or damage to property, expenses or otherwise which may or shall arise in any way as a result of my participation in the above trips and events.

Signature of Member

Signature of 2nd Family Member

Date: _____ Date: _____



Grasslands Naturalists
 Box 2491, Medicine Hat, Alberta T1A 8G8



Consent Form

Consent to the Use and Distribution of Personal Information

Grasslands Naturalists (GN) collects personal information subject to *Alberta's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP)*. GN may, subject to your consent, wish to make some personal information public through, for example, its Chronicle, Website, Facebook page or newspaper article. Please indicate your consent to the following release of information and note any specific exclusion of a consent such as for children.

	Yes	No	Exclusion
Name	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Residence telephone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Cell phone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Business phone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Email address	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Residence address	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Pictures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

As a GN Member, you can receive, free of cost, an electronic version of the quarterly Nature Alberta Magazine. To receive the magazine, GN must supply your email address to Nature Alberta so that it can email you the magazine. Please indicate your consent to receiving the electronic version of the Magazine by email from Nature Alberta. Yes No

Beyond the above consents, GN will not distribute personal information to a third party without your consent unless such information is required, by law, to be released to a federal or provincial government agency in order, for example, to maintain GN's non-profit organization status.

Consent to Receive Emails Related to Commercial Activities

GN may wish to send you emails to promote some of its commercial activities including those provided by its *Club* and *Interpretive Program*. Please indicate your consent to receiving such information. Yes No

Modification of Consents

You may modify any of the above consents, at any time, through a written request to the member of the GN Executive responsible for Memberships.

Signature of Member

Signature of 2nd Family Member

Date: _____

Date: _____