

THE SAGEBRUSH CHRONICLE



The Ord's kangaroo rat is a special little rodent living in the sandhills of southeast Alberta. This endangered species possesses unique adaptations for living in desert habitat. Sadly the population has seriously declined and biologists are working diligently to save this species. Learn about Ord's kangaroo rat biology and their cool adaptations, and the current conservation work in Alberta.



Sandi Robertson is a provincial wildlife biologist, and the recovery lead for Ord's kangaroo rat and several other grassland species. She has dedicated over twelve years of her career to the Ord's kangaroo rat.

Tuesday, May 28, 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: Sandi Robertson's Presentation on the Ord's Kangaroo Rat

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

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](#)

Saturday, May 18 at 8:15 PM: Full Moon Walk.
Meet at the Nature Centre for a stroll through the lovely twilight and watch the moon rise over the cliffs.

Sunday, May 26: Spring Flower and Bird Count.
See notice on bottom right of this page.

Thursday, May 30: 1:30 PM: Co-op Community Spaces Prairie Viewpoint Opening. The viewpoint has been rebuilt with funding from the Co-op Community Spaces. Representatives from Co-op will be here to celebrate. We would love to have a great turn out of GN Members and friends.

Wednesday, June 5: Walk & Wheel on the West Access Trail: An evening event. Details will be announced.

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.

The Medicine Hat Spring Bird and Flower Count is happening on Sunday, May 26. If you have done the count before let Marty know if you will be available. If you have never done the count or are new to the club this is a great way to try something first-hand. Contact Marty at (403) 529-6225 or marty.drut@natureline.info for details.

Member's Corner

Another Very Successful Chicks and Bunnies Easter Weekend Event at the Nature Centre!

The Nature Centre Staff has again pulled off another remarkable event for children and adults over the four day Easter Weekend. This event attracted about 4000 attendees. **Thank You** for the amazing organization, and active production of this event. Also a very hearty **Thank You**, to the many volunteers, who put in so many hours to ensure that this event would be another resounding success.

We have received five new memberships this past month. **Genevieve Mathieu and Ivan Zigmunic** have joined with Genevieve having participated in a number of our bird counts and is now keen to learn about native plants. Also **Don and Elaine Zimmer** have joined and a number of us have met them during some of the neighbourhood walks. The other joiners wish to remain anonymous at this time. Regardless we hope that membership in our Society will be a very rewarding experience.

Volunteers Needed

The Grasslands Naturalists will have a table set up at the Farmer's Market on the following Saturday's: May 25th, June 22nd, and September 21st. The hours of the market are from 9 am to 1 pm. If you can help out on any of these days please call Angela at (403) 526-1350.

An Easy Job: Volunteers are also Needed for the GN Monthly Meetings and Coffee Time Committee

We need a small group of people to make sure that we can all enjoy our monthly meetings. Rather than expecting one person to take on the job I am suggesting that a committee could share the duties. Even if you are away for a particular meeting someone else would be available. I will provide an orientation and it is all very straight forward.

Interpretive Program Staff are not always available to unlock the building or to put the coffee on. Those of you who regularly attend the meetings could easily help out by coming a bit early. And maybe if you haven't been attending this would be a good encouragement to come out more often.

Call Corlaine at (403) 529-6225.

Litter Clean-up Day submitted by Angela Turner

Grasslands Naturalists had a very successful litter clean-up in Ranchlands on Saturday, April 13th. There was an excellent turn out of 15 people (Simonne Flynn, John Slater, Milt Spitzer, Dan Schiebelein, Brooklyn (from SEAWA), Holly Mackie, Betty Rainville, Val Felesky, Faye Felesky, Sheila McLeod, Grant McLeod, David Gue, Martha Munz-Gue, Ian Turner, and Angela Turner). A total of 25 to 30 bags were collected as well as a TV, sprinkler hose, house siding, and lots of cardboard. The Ranchlands residents must be very pleased with their much cleaner neighbourhood.

In addition Hugh and Dee Armstrong and Dave McKenzie picked up 30 lbs. of dog poop and 3 trash bags full along the off leash trail above Police Point Park.



Photo by Ian Turner

President's Message -May 2019

Although we have had a cold past month, we can safely say spring has arrived. Crocuses are out, Buffalo-Bean and many other early spring wildflowers have bloomed. Birds are starting to show up. The bluebirds are making nests in the boxes and I think I saw an eaglet poke its head out of the nest two days ago.

A year ago in this message I reported that, "Renovations have begun! If all goes well they may be done, including the Prairie Viewpoint, by the end of July." Well, we didn't quite make that deadline but, except for the A/V and new chairs, things are done and we plan on having the official unveiling of the Prairie Viewpoint the afternoon of May 30th and the grand re-opening of the renovations June 21st. So circle these dates and make sure GN has a good response. Thanks.

A big thank you to Gerry Ehlert, Marty Drut and Rob Gardner for a very successful Invasive Species Workshop! (see the report in later pages)

The spring Neighbourhood Walks have been well attended so far but as happens weather or unforeseen circumstances can cause some changes to the schedule. Watch for email announcements.

We are in the process of converting our websites -GN and MHIP- so they will be more responsive to cell phones. This should be finished by the end of July. Also, we have registered grasslands-naturalists.org as our domain name. So nobody else can now use that name.

At this month's Board meeting it was decided to nominate SEAWA as an organization for this years Community Spirit Environmental Award. They have done a lot of great work towards riparian recovery and restorative education and, we thought, were deserving. If you have someone you think should be nominated you have until May 31st to submit a nomination.

Eileen was able to get the AGLC Financial report done and in on time. It balanced and and was already accepted. Well done and thank you Eileen!

Don't forget to get your name in to Dave McKenzie for the Casino dates -June 6-7. He has already received our license so we are good to go!

Enjoy the month of May and take in the great outdoors!

Hugh



Candid Photos from one of the Tuesday Nature Walks. Taken by Len Moser

Upcoming Events, Field Trips and Announcement

Grasslands Naturalists and Nature Centre Events:

Tuesday, May 14 at 10:00AM: Neighbourhood Walk at Connaught Pond. Led by Brooklyn Neubeker of SEAWA who will describe the restoration project along Connaught Pond. Meet by pond between the College Residences and Connaught Pond (which borders Connaught Golf Course).

Saturday, May 18 at 8:15 PM: Full Moon Walk. Meet at the Nature Centre for a stroll through the lovely twilight and watch the moon rise over the cliffs.

Tuesday, May 21 at 10:00 AM: Neighbourhood Walk along the Northeast Crescent Heights Storm Water Pond. View the vegetation removal from the pond area that the City did last year. The pond is an attractant for a variety of bird species. Meet at the Northlands Coop Liquor Store. Led by Elaine Spitzer.

Sunday, May 26: Medicine Hat Spring Bird and Flower Count: See bottom right hand corner of page 2 of this issue for details.

Tuesday, May 28 at 10:00 AM: Neighbourhood Walk along the Northeast Crescent Heights Coulee Trail. Meet at the 2nd Ave. Palliser Airshed Monitoring Station across from McCoy High School. Led by David Gue, Martha Munz Gue and David McKenzie.

Tuesday, May 28 at 7:00 PM. Monthly Meeting of GN followed by a presentation on the Kangaroo Rat by Sandi Robertson.

Thursday, May 30 at 1:30 PM: Grand Opening of the Co-op Community Spaces Praire Viewpoint. See page 2 for more details.

Tuesday, June 4 at 10:00 AM: Neighbourhood Walk at the Saamis Archaeological Reserve: Meet at the Teepee. Leader TBA.

Wednesday, June 5: Walk and Wheel on the Police Point Park West Access Trail. An evening event with details to be announced.

Tuesday, June 11 at 10:00 AM: Neighbourhood Walk along the Northwest Crescent Heights Coulee Trail along McCutcheon Drive. Meet at the beginning of McCutcheon Drive (East End). Led by Dave McKenzie and Martha Munz Gue.

Tuesday, June 18 at 10:00 AM: Neighbourhood Walk in the Ranchlands Environmental Reserve: Led by Ian and Angela Turner. Meet at the furthest northeast end of Ranchlands Boulevard NE.

Friday, June 21: Grand Opening of the Nature Centre Renovations. Details will be announced in the June Chronicle.

Tuesday, June 25 at 10:00 AM. Neighbourhood Walk along the "Tangle" on the south side of the South Saskatchewan River. Meet in Harlow near the Trans Canada Highway Bridge. More details in the June Chronicle.

Other NON GN Events and Announcements

May 18 and 19: Brooks May Species Count: Count areas will be assigned on Friday evening, May 17 at the Brooks Legion. Contact Bob Parsons at vintagebob2@gmail.com for more information.

Exciting Sightings by R. Frew

Spring avian migration peaks in May; and is greatly anticipated by avid birders, as it brings an influx of songbirds, waterfowl, and shorebirds to nest in our region, and/or passing through on their way to their boreal or arctic tundra breeding grounds. On April 29th/30th Southeastern Alberta was hit with a freak blizzard which delayed the emergence of foliage and the insects necessary for migrating songbirds. Surprisingly, on May 4th Milt Spitzer reported the first of several odd migration sightings, involving the appearance of an unusually high number and diversity of grebe and duck species on a stretch of the South Saskatchewan River which flows through the City of Medicine Hat. This and other recent exciting sightings are documented below:

On May 4th, Milt Spitzer reported 6 species of ducks including a pair of **Canvasback**, 4 **Blue-winged Teal**, and 7 **Ruddy Ducks**. Also in the mix were 3 species of Grebe including 11 **Western Grebes**, 3 **Horned Grebes**, and 8 **Eared Grebes** all on the river at Strathcona Island/Police Point Parks. Later, Colton Prins identified a **Clark's Grebe** among a group of **Western Grebes** near the Trans Canada Bridge. Several other GN birders made similar observations along the same stretch of river, with up to 30 **Western Grebes** and 1 **Clark's Grebe** tallied. A most unusual migration phenomenon!

There have been **Common Loon** sightings on The South Saskatchewan River at Strathcona Island Park, at Sauder Reservoir, and at Rattlesnake Lake, between April 26th and May 5th. On April 30th Dan Schiebelbein heard a loon calling on the river while at Police Point Park. Likewise, Bob Frew also heard and observed two loons on the river calling while at Strathcona Island Park on the same day. The iconic call of the Common Loon is usually associated with remote northern lakes.

While photographing waterfowl from a blind at Murray Lake on April 25th, Dan Schiebelbein observed and photographed a pair of **Western Grebes** performing their unique "Rushing" courtship ritual. Later, at a slough near the TWP Rd. /RGE Rd. 71 intersection, Dan observed 11 **White-faced Ibis**. This latter species now appears to be well established in various parts of Southeastern Alberta. At this same slough on May 3rd Dan also observed ~15 **Black-necked Stilts**, and > 20 **American Avocets**.



This Wonderful Photograph was taken by Dan Schiebelbein

Red-breasted Mergansers have been reported by several GN birders; 15 were seen on Sauder Reservoir on April 20th, and 5 on April 27th. Red-breasted Mergansers have also been sighted on the South Saskatchewan River including 3 by Phil and Annalora Horch while birding at Strathcona Island Park on May 5th. There is a brief window of opportunity to see this species in our region during migration.

On April 30th the day following the blizzard in Medicine Hat, a visiting birder from Edmonton reported a **Red-shouldered Hawk**. This is an eastern buteo species, which also occurs in California. According to an Albertabird report the hawk was seen perched on a lamp-post alongside the westbound lane of HWY1, near the Trans Canada Bridge on the south side of the South Saskatchewan River. The sighting is possibly a first for Alberta; unfortunately, attempts by local birders to locate or photograph it were unsuccessful.

Several **Broad-winged Hawks**, our smallest buteo, were also reported on the days preceding and following the above mentioned blizzard including sightings on April 29th and 30th at Police Point Park. This buteo is usually seen during migration.

A **Long-billed Curlew** was observed foraging on a pasture along TWP Rd.112 near RGE Rd. 52 on April 30th by Bob Frew, and again on May 3rd near the same location (possibly the same bird). Two other curlews landed on an adjoining pasture along TWP Rd.112 but closer to Eagle Butte Rd. This species is our largest sandpiper.

Yellow-rumped Warblers are usually the first of the warbler species to arrive in Southeastern Alberta, the first reported sighting was made on April 24th at Police Point Park, and further sightings have been made by several GN birders. These were followed by several **Orange-crowned Warbler** sightings by different GN birders between April 29th and May 5th. Colton Prins reported a **Nashville Warbler** in Connaught on May 5th. The Nashville Warbler is considered a vagrant in the prairie region. Bob Frew had a brief look at a singing **Tennessee Warbler** at Police Point Park on May 8th.

There were two interesting reports of sparrow species; one a **Swamp Sparrow** observed by Colton Prins at Police Point Park on April 29th, and also an unconfirmed report of a **Golden-crowned Sparrow** in Southridge on May 2nd.

Barry and Judy Anderson reported a **Swainson's Thrush** sighting near the pond in the Connaught area on May 8th. In spring this is our most common and detectable thrush, and can be identified by its buffy eye-ring. Colton Prins also had a few Swainson's Thrushes and at least one **Gray-cheeked Thrush** at Hillside Cemetery on May 8th.

A sighting of an **Arctic Tern** at Murray Lake Dam previously reported by other birders was followed up on by Colton Prins, who was able to get the tern in his scope just before sunset right off of the dam on May 7th. The Arctic Tern is a rare migrant in Alberta,

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

Results of Invasive Species Workshop May 4, 2019 Nature Centre

First my many thanks to Marty Drut and Rob Gardner, without their leg work and steady support help this workshop would not have been possible. Special thanks to Dave Genio and Keziah Lesko-Gosselin, City of Recreation and Parks for their council and resources. Also, many thanks to Martha Gue, Hugh Armstrong, David Gue for the Audio Visual, and Anne Bernhardt representing the Horticulture Society. Thanks to Martha who donated her beautiful pottery bowls as presenter and learning table thank you gifts.

Total attendance was 50; 39 participants while the others were volunteers. Many liked to hear there is a reporting app called ED map that you can put on your phone and report sightings of endangered species. See <https://abinvasives.ca/invasive-species/edmaps-alberta/>. Participants appreciated GN's wildflower and AllSC and partnership's Grow-me-Instead Brochure. Shaw TV did a youtube of the presentations, and the Medicine Hat News did an interview with Rob Gardner about the workshop.

Evaluation Questions	Stats
Liked/Disliked?	32/39 gave two thumbs up 5/39 one thumbs up
What did you like?	32/39 liked presentations 34/39 liked learning tables
Next Steps?	More awareness and Community action follow- up (agencies, citizens, and organizations)

Thanks to our sponsors Horticulture Society, SEAWA, Blondies, Windmill and Butterfly House, Rob Andreas with Animal World, and Rod Wilson with Royal Le Page. Also for the MH News, Bruce Penton support for putting in the invasive species short story articles. And to the Chamber of Commerce, Connaught Golf Course, Copy Works for helping advertise the workshop.





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: _____