



Giving a Hoot about Burrowing Owls in Manitoba!

2013 season update from The Manitoba Burrowing Owl Recovery Program

by Jessica Riach and Alexandra Froese

The Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*) is widely recognized as the small speckled ground owl with yellow eyes and long legs that nests underground. This charismatic little owl is one of Manitoba's most Endangered species.

The Burrowing Owl is listed both federally and provincially as Endangered. In Canada, Burrowing Owls are found in British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan as well as Manitoba. Currently, there are approximately 400 pairs of owls in Canada during the breeding season (April to September). In the last 30 years, the species population has dramatically declined. In 1982, there were 76 known pairs in Manitoba; in recent seasons, there have been less than five pairs detected in the province each year. Both British Columbia and Manitoba have reintroduction programs in place, and Alberta and Saskatchewan have several large-scale projects focused on Burrowing Owl research.

Burrowing Owls face many challenges, the first and foremost being able to

find suitable habitat. They like open grassland or grazed pastures and require a burrow for nesting. As they cannot dig their own burrow, they rely heavily on digging animals to do this for them. The decline in ground squirrel and badger populations has had a profound and negative effect on Burrowing Owl populations. The increasing conversion

(continued on page 8...)



Holly McCollough

**Six-week old
Burrowing
Owl fledgling**

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President's Corner

by Donald Himbeault

Gifts, old and new

Nature Manitoba has been the recipient of many gifts and donations throughout the years. The more sizeable gifts are often directed to specific purposes or activities at the request of the donor. One such recent donation led to the establishment of the Manitoba Bluebird Fund; this fund now provides an annuity to undertake activities aimed at stopping or even reversing the decline in the population of songbirds in Manitoba. More recently, the Paul Guyot Endowment Fund for Habitat received a gift of over \$22,000 from the estate of Edith Joan Williams to support the Tall Grass Prairie in Manitoba. Edith was President of Nature Manitoba, or Manitoba Naturalists Society as it was then called, in 1983. She was always a strong supporter of Nature Manitoba's work to establish the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve, hence her desire to support the ongoing efforts of this project.

With a 93-year history of undertaking important projects and activities aimed at supporting our natural environment, it is no wonder we can attract such gifts. Nature Manitoba has the resources and expertise to structure and administer these funds so that they will continue to operate according to their stated purpose for a very long time. However, this can also provide challenges at times, as who knows what the future will bring; such is the case for one particular donation made long ago.

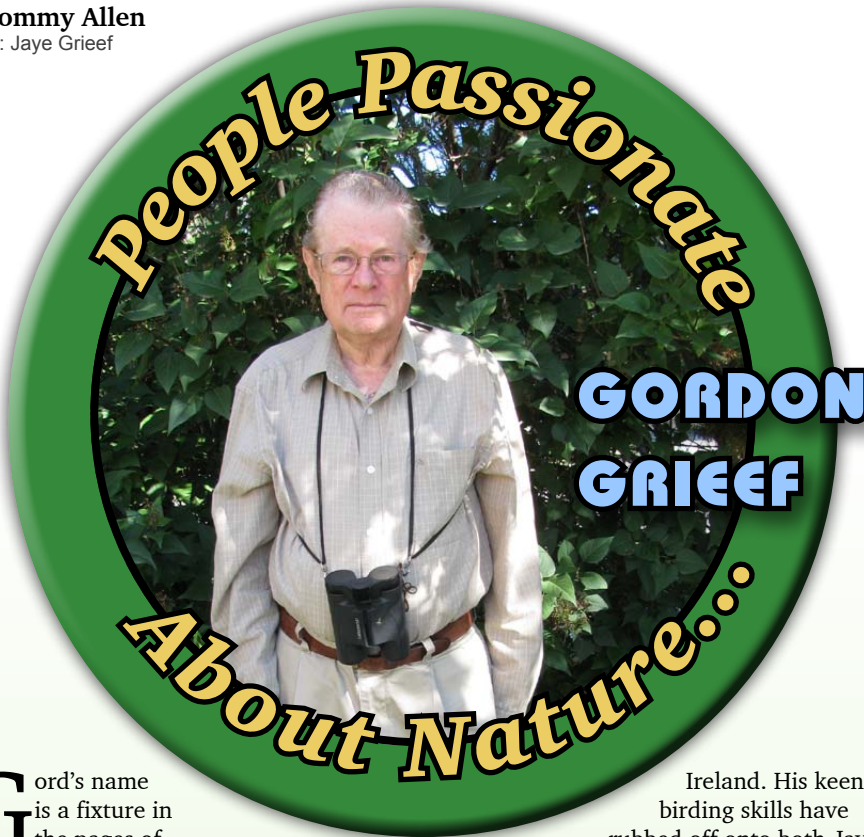
In its younger days (1926 to be exact), our organization received the gift of a parcel of land at Victoria Beach from the Victoria Beach Company Ltd. The property, which at the time was essentially in a wilderness location, served the organization well as a "field station" from which many field trips and scientific nature studies were based. With time, and as Victoria Beach grew to the village community it is today, the property migrated from its original purpose as a staging area for nature experiences to become more of a rustic cottage for vacationing. As reported in previous newsletters and AGM reports, the building itself has reached the end of its life, and after much consideration, the board decided that operating a rental cottage at that location no longer aligned with our mission. Therefore, we undertook to divest ourselves of the property. Unfortunately, certain structuring done at the time the gift was made has complicated things.

The land at Victoria Beach was given to us on condition that it "shall and will at all times be used for the purpose of the Natural History Society of Manitoba." And, probably because the organization was only a few years old and with a perceived uncertain future, a further caveat was placed on the land that should the Society be disbanded, the land was to be returned to the donor. These were both reasonable conditions given the circumstances at the time, but not foreseen was what should happen if the donor "disbanded", which did happen around 1968 when the Victoria Beach Company Ltd. ceased to exist. This and other facts have resulted in a legal conundrum that prevents us from selling the property directly. While we want to respect the intent that the gift be used for the purpose of the Society as wished by original donor (by using funds from the sale to create an endowment fund), I would not expect it was the intention of the donor to encumber us with a property that we could not use to serve our members in a manner consistent with our mission. We continue to search for a solution to this situation, so much so that it has even become a topic of shore-side discussions among board members during canoe trips.

In closing, I would like to again mention this wonderful ability of Nature Manitoba: with its enduring quality and focus on its mission, donors can create a legacy directed towards a particular goal, or simply support our organization's basic objectives in an enduring way. If such planning is in your future, please consider Nature Manitoba. We'll be here. And for a very long time.



"...this and other facts have resulted in a legal conundrum that prevents us from selling the [Victoria Beach] property directly."



Gord's name is a fixture in the pages of Nature Manitoba's newsletter – he has been compiling the Bird News and spreadsheet for 25 years, since 1988. His career was in mechanical engineering, but birding has been a passion since his childhood in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. His father worked there as a manager of a lumberyard, and inspired Gord to keep lists of the birds he saw starting at age 10, and Gord has continued to this day. He can now claim to have seen about 1460 species of birds worldwide!

Once Gord finished high school, he moved to Saskatoon to complete his degree in Mechanical Engineering. His first job was in Labrador City, Newfoundland, but he hated the rainy weather and moved back to the prairies soon after. He worked shortly in Regina, then was drawn to Winnipeg to work at Swift Canadian Company, managing utilities at a meat packing plant. A few years later he began work with SMS Engineering, where he spent 35 years until his retirement in 2002.

Throughout his career, he kept birding (or "traveling") whenever he could, including with his wife, Jaye, and later their two daughters, Susan and Paula. They have travelled throughout Canada and the world; twice to Australia and New Zealand, Europe, Ecuador, around 40 U.S. states, and just returned this summer from

Ireland. His keen birding skills have rubbed off onto both Jaye (who said she had no choice) and Paula, who is currently a resident naturalist at Oak Hammock Marsh.

Gord is unsure how he found out about the MNS in the late '60s, but he started going to the meetings then held at the Manitoba Museum. Before his involvement with the MNS he did most of his identifying through books, so the in-person guides of the MNS' birding excursions helped improve his skills. He soon started leading trips of his own in the 1980s. He also started compiling sightings for the MNS Bulletin, which still keeps him busy with about 10 emails per day, plus continuous online conversations through the ManitobaBirds Yahoo group. He served on the Manitoba Avian Research Committee which has produced various field guides and checklists over the years.

Some of his favourite birding places are Oak Hammock Marsh, St. Ambrose (now inaccessible due to high-water and storm damage), Delta Marsh, and some of the city parks such as Assiniboine and King's Park. Golfing is also a great excuse to go birding, he says. Nowadays, he recommends

using some of the new apps to help identify birds, rather than carrying books in the field, and recommends The Sibley e-Guide and National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America.

"He can claim now to have seen about 1460 species of birds worldwide!"

Welcome New Members!

June 15th, 2013 – Aug. 14th, 2013

Edith Allec

Mayssam Amiri

Karen Clements

Lemez Gordana

Diana McMillan

Jeff Pugh

Jennifer Reaburn

Karen Smith

David Spector

Our Giant Garage Sales and Donating Items

Our spring garage sale was a success and we are already looking forward to next year's.

Please keep in mind that we can pick-up and store smaller items prior to that. Just call the office and we will arrange a pick-up.

Nature Manitoba's next Giant Garage Sale will be in the spring of 2014, but the date has not been set.

Do You Support the Ban on Cosmetic Pesticides?

The Provincial Government has announced they will introduce legislation banning cosmetic pesticides this fall, to come into effect at the end of 2014. The pesticide industry is sure to increase their pressure on the government to limit or delay a ban.

The government needs to hear from Manitobans – NOW is the time to contact your MLA with a simple phone call or email to express your opinion.

Phone numbers and e-mails for your MLA are available at: www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/members/alphabetical.html.

Encounters of the **NATURAL** Kind

Please send us
your short stories
(approx. 300-500
words) of interesting
encounters with
Manitoba nature.

Through the eyes of a child

by Roger Turenne

Ever since she was five years old, I've taken my now 10-year-old granddaughter Léa on a summer wilderness canoe trip. One of the highlights of the first trip was finding a baby turtle that she could hold in the palm of her hand. The sense of awe in her face as she gently handled that tiny creature was wonderful to behold. Naturally she wanted to take the turtle home with us. It was a teachable moment as I explained why the turtle would be much better off if left in its natural environment.

Every year she looks forward to our summer canoe trip and every year she tells the story of that encounter with the baby turtle, always hopeful that she will find another one.

Earlier this year she told me that she wanted a "real" canoe trip, not some namby-pamby two or three day outing. She was also hoping we would encounter some difficulties. We have a fonder memory of things, she explained to me with the wisdom of her ten years, if we overcome challenges to get them. She got her wish. Five days, tough portages, lots of rain, lots of bugs. But also beautiful lakes, sunrises and sunsets, marvelous discoveries, swimming, telling stories in the middle of the night, trying to beat *Pépère* at chess.

On the last day of the trip, I heard a yelp of delight on a portage landing. Léa had found a baby snapping turtle, barely 3 cm wide. The look on her face was the definition of pure happiness. I have experienced no greater joy in nature than to see it through the eyes of a child.



Léa (age 5) with her
first baby turtle.



Léa (age 10) with
her latest find.



A Pine Point Rapids Picnic by Canoe

by Jerry Ameis

You can get to Pine Point rapids by canoe by starting at the Betula Lake boat launch. The trip involves about 5.5 km of paddling (3 on the lake and 2.5 on the river) and is a fairly easy day trip. There are 4 short portages (the longest is about 50 m) but this depends on water levels. In low water, the second portage from the lake can be avoided by paddling through a chute or lining it. The last two portages before Pine Point present some difficulties as there are no well-defined trails, the rocky land dips up and down, and there are poor landings on the downstream side.

On June 23, twelve people [Jerry (leader), Amanda & Dustin Ameis, Les McCann, Alain & Cindy Louer, Don Himbeault, Fran Gropp, Ed Rajfur, Bernice Wiebe, Kathy Picard, and Byron Burvill] left Winnipeg on a day that promised to bring lots of rain. Twenty-one people had signed up for the adventure but 9 decided that they had other things to do that day.

We launched at a beach on Betula Lake and paddled northwest to the mouth of the Whiteshell River. The wind was from the northeast – not a good sign regarding rain. The good news was that the wind was light and did not create paddling “fun”.

At the first portage over a small water-level control dam, a surprise awaited us. I had checked out the trip a week earlier with my son, Dustin, to make sure spring water levels on the Whiteshell did not make portage landings dangerous or too difficult. We had found all was well on that front.

But in just one week, the river's water level had changed dramatically. It was over a metre lower, and large boulders now stood tall in the water. A week ago, they were only noticeable by ripples on the river's surface. Instead of doing a bit of fast water paddling at the first portage, we now had to be

“...in just one week, the river's water level had changed dramatically. It was over a metre lower...”

aware of the water depth to avoid kevlar kissing granite.

The second portage over flat rock went smoothly. The real fun started at the third portage (about 30 m). The way I had portaged a week ago was no longer possible. The channel had no water in it, and the downstream landing now involved a steep rock face. This also was the case at the fourth portage. What a difference a metre or so in river level can make.

We arrived at Pine Point in good spirits. A bit of difficulty and decision-making evokes a spirit of adventure. And so far, no rain. We had our picnic at the large rock shelf before the big drop in the river. Gulls were the only visible wildlife although we did see an eagle nest near the top of an aspen between the second and third portages. Shortly before 2 pm, the weather forecast came true. A five-minute cloudburst forced us to scurry for rain gear and our canoes that

were parked a short distance upstream. The rain eased up and we were sprinkled with a light shower as we journeyed back to the beach in Betula.

All in all, it was a great day. Good company, nice scenery, a bit of canoe-tripping excitement and challenge, and an enjoyable picnic at a marvellous natural setting that few people imagine can be reached by canoe.



Jerry Ameis

A Canary in a Coal Mine

The **Poweshiek skipperling** (*Oarisma poweshiek*), a prairie specialist found only in tall grass prairie habitat, made headlines in July because of its dramatically declining population. Stories appeared in a number of media outlets; the following is an edited version of an article written by Chinta Puxley for *The Canadian Press* published in the *Winnipeg Free Press* and the *Globe and Mail* on July 15, 2013.

A once-common prairie butterfly is now being called a “canary in a coal mine” because of a rapid decline that is prompting researchers from Canada and the United States to try to save it. The little brown butterflies, known as the Poweshiek skipperling, were once so plentiful that researchers didn’t even bother to count them. Now there are fewer than 200 left in Canada, most of them in Manitoba.

Cary Hamel with the Nature Conservancy of Canada said the butterfly’s rapid decline is a sign that the prairie grass ecosystem is at risk. “Butterflies are a bit of a canary in a coal mine. They’re really sensitive to changes in weather. They’re sensitive to changes in habitat loss. They’re sensitive to invasive species and land management...The fact that the Poweshiek skipperling and other

“This endangered butterfly is facing the real and immediate threat of global extinction, not only in Manitoba but across its entire range.”

– Erik Runquist, *Butterfly Conservation Biologist at Minnesota Zoo**

Courtesy of Nature Conservancy of Canada, photo by Mike Dembeck



prairie butterflies are all declining should really have us stand up and take notice that something is going wrong with our native prairies.”

Since the butterfly is primarily found on land owned or managed by the Conservancy, the organization is doing all it can to ensure the creature’s survival, Mr. Hamel said.

(continued...)

Poweshiek Skipperling Facts

Compiled from an article on The Nature Conservancy of Canada website and other sources.**

Appearance: The Poweshiek skipperling is a small, brown and orange winged butterfly, no bigger than a toonie. [*Prairie Ponders*, a leaflet published by the Critical Wildlife Habitat Program, adds that it “has hooked antennae and a heavier, hairier body compared to other butterflies. The undersides of the hind wings have distinctive whitish-silver lines that make it stand out from all other types of butterflies.”]

Life Cycle: The adult butterfly is active for approximately three to four weeks, usually from late June to mid- or late July. The female lays eggs on host plants in the tall grass prairie; the eggs hatch in nine to ten days. The Poweshiek skipperling goes through seven larval stages. In the first phase, the caterpillars feed on the leaves of the host plant and eventually hibernate in the leaf litter. They then emerge in spring to feed and form a chrysalis (pupal stage). The adult Poweshiek emerges in late June or early July; there is only one generation per year. Adults are often found on Black-eyed Susans – their favourite food plants.

Range: In Canada, this species occurs in southeastern Manitoba’s tall grass prairie, in limited areas near Tolstoi, Stuartburn and Gardenton. The closest population in the

United States is about 100 kilometres to the south, appearing in only a handful of sites in Michigan, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota and North Dakota.

Conservation status: The Poweshiek is listed as threatened under the federal *Species at Risk Act* and endangered under the *Manitoba Endangered Species Act*. The species’ numbers have dropped dramatically in the past few years throughout North America; currently fewer than 200 individuals exist in Canada on 17 fields in southeastern Manitoba.

According to another article published in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on July 16, written by Oliver Sachgau, the worldwide population is “about 1500...While that number may seem high, for an insect it’s ‘still almost zero,’ according to Erik Runquist at the Minnesota Zoo.”

In recent years, NCC staff have been closely monitoring Poweshiek numbers on NCC owned or co-managed properties in the Manitoba Tall Grass Prairie Preserve (TGPP). Following wildfires that burned across much of the TGPP, NCC’s biologists returned to the sites to study the impact of the burns on the species. They found that the Poweshiek had declined, both inside and out of the burn areas. NCC has committed to continuing to monitor the populations and the impact of land management practices on the Poweshiek’s habitat.

**<http://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/what-we-do/resource-centre/featured-species/poweshiek-skipperling.html>

It has partnered with researchers at the University of Winnipeg, the University of Michigan and the Minnesota Zoo to keep the fluttery creature alive.

Richard Westwood, professor of Environmental Science and Studies with the University of Winnipeg, said the Poweshiek skipperling once would have thrived from Canada all the way down to Texas – just like the original tall grass prairie. But that habitat has shrunk dramatically. “(The butterfly is) being confined to these very, very small remnants in comparison with the vast areas of prairie that used to exist before.”

Making matters worse, the Poweshiek skipperling is a bit of a “homebody” and can’t travel to a different part of the ecosystem if it is threatened, Prof. Westwood said. “If you have something catastrophic happen to that particular prairie – it gets farmed or grazed too heavily or wildfire comes along and destroys the habitat or wipes out the species – it’s pretty well finished in that particular area,” he said. “You don’t get movement between these isolated areas.”

Prof. Westwood said researchers are cautiously optimistic the species can be saved with the right mixture of education and intervention. Some farming practices and wildfires that are particularly devastating to the species could be prevented.

As a kind of insurance policy, the Minnesota Zoo has collected eggs from some of the females and will be hatching them in a controlled setting. Erik Runquist, butterfly conservation biologist with the zoo, said the goal is to breed a stable population before eventually reintroducing the insects into the wild.

The butterflies are very vulnerable and have been particularly battered by poor weather this year, Dr. Runquist said. he zoo wants to help kickstart the population by treating the butterflies like any other endangered species, he said. “If you think of tigers, there are only 3,500 wild tigers in the world. Most of the tigers that are in zoos are part of a managed, co-operative breeding program focused on maintaining large, genetically robust populations...We want to do the same thing with the butterflies.”

**quote from http://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/who-we-are/news-room/news-releases/poweshiek_skipperling_research.html*



Donna Danyluk

Nature Conservancy opens Tall Grass Prairie Interpretive Centre

On July 15, the Nature Conservancy of Canada’s Manitoba office officially opened the Weston Family Tall Grass Interpretive Centre near the town of Stuartburn. Located on a 160-acre property, the centre includes interactive displays and exhibits, meeting space, a prairie garden, hiking trails and a picnic shelter. The facility is open seasonally and provides programming for school, youth and community groups.

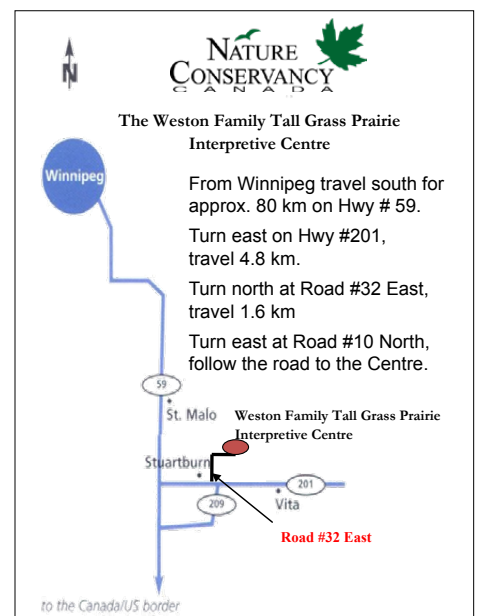
Current hours are Wednesday to Sunday (and Holiday Mondays) from 8:30am to 4:30pm until September 2. After that, the facility is available for booked tours, facility rentals, community events, and school and youth group programming. So if you are reading this before the end of August, the Labor Day weekend will be your last chance for a drop-in visit this year, but keep the Centre in mind for a trip to the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve next year!

The Centre can be reached at 204-425-8118, or visit www.natureconservancy.ca/manitoba for more info.



Richard Westwood searches for Poweshieks

Courtesy of Nature Conservancy of Canada, photo by Mike Dembeck



Young Burrowing Owl, 2 weeks old and weighing 110 grams

Colin Froese



Giving a Hoot about Burrowing Owls in Manitoba!

2013 season update from The Manitoba Burrowing Owl Recovery Program

(...continued from page 1)

of pastureland to cropland is of great concern for the species, as it fragments and reduces suitable habitat.

Several other factors limit the owls' survival including road development and vehicle traffic, energy exploration, weather events, predation and migration. More roads and vehicle traffic make the owls more susceptible to being struck and killed by cars/trucks as the owls hunt near ditches and roadways. Energy exploration destroys habitat and creates excessive noise pollution from generators and oil derricks, disrupting the owls' hunting abilities (they use both sound and sight to hunt).

Weather also plays an important role in the success of adults and young. Cool, wet seasons result in less insects and rodents for them to eat. It also increases the risk that their burrows will flood. On the other hand, drought is not ideal either, as it also reduces their food supply. A natural challenge faced by most species is predation. The Burrowing Owl's small size and their ground-dwelling habit makes them easy prey for hawks, badgers, larger owls and foxes, to name a few.

Burrowing Owls migrate over 2,500 kilometers south to the Gulf of Mexico. Little research has been done in Canada on the specific path that Burrowing Owls take to the Gulf. Small-sized, lightweight satellite GPS trackers have not yet been developed that can be used on these small owls. Some research has been done in Colorado using geolocator devices that record light at an interval. However, they do require recapture of the owl to retrieve the data. As Manitoba's population is small and return rates have been low over the last decade, ideally we would like to wait to

install GPS trackers that do not require recapture and can be used to remotely access migration information. As high mortality is suspected for young in their first year, information from GPS tracking systems will allow researchers to better understand the challenges both first year and adult migrants face along their long journey to the Gulf. As these special little owls face a variety of challenges, cooperation among programs across Canada, U.S. and Mexico are very important to reverse the staggering decline of Burrowing Owls in Canada.

Recovery Program Unique

The Manitoba Burrowing Owl Recovery Program (MBORP) was established in 2009 by Alexandra Froese as part of the thesis work for her master's degree. Since 2011, The Assiniboine Park Zoo, Turtle Mountain Conservation District and Manitoba Conservation have committed to continuing the program, which aims to increase public awareness and education about Burrowing Owls, as well as to increase the overall population in Manitoba.

This year the program has five pairs of nesting Burrowing Owls spread out between sites near Deloraine, Medora and Broomhill, with a total of 44 eggs this season. It is unlikely that all of these eggs hatched; generally 90% hatch and 70% of young survive under ideal conditions (lots of food available, no predation, etc). Hatching began July 14th and continued into early August.

After they hatch, the young will stay in the burrow for two weeks before they emerge. At five weeks of age, they are fully grown and can fly; it is at this time we will band all the young for identification, determine their sex by taking blood samples, and remove some of the young and bring them to Assiniboine Park Zoo in Winnipeg for next year's breeding and release. Assiniboine Park Zoo is an important partner in the program as they not only house the owls over the winter but they also provide in-kind support of veterinary services throughout the season including blood sampling to determine sex before brood reduction.



Alexandra Froese

Release pen and artificial nest burrow

MBORP is unique among other Burrowing Owl programs across the country, as it uses many techniques not used in other programs. First, only successful breeders are released in order to increase nest site philopatry (the tendency of an adult to return to same area to breed). This has been shown to increase returns rates in many species. Second, once a nest is established in the pen constructed for this purpose (see photo), the pair is released when there are more than 3 eggs in the nest, as this increases pair bonding and encourages further nesting. This allows them to forage for insects and small rodents freely, and the female generally will continue to lay eggs in the established nest.

Third, 24-hour monitoring cameras are used at all burrow entrances, and lastly, a portion of the young from each family group are removed and held over the winter at the zoo (not on display) and paired/released the next year. This technique of brood reduction is beneficial, as the young that are removed do not have to migrate in their first year, where high mortality rates are suspected. As well, young left in the wild have less competition for food, giving them a higher chance of survival.

Want to know more about Burrowing Owls or the Manitoba Burrowing Owl Recovery Program?

Get your Burrowing Owl fix and see videos direct from the burrow by visiting www.mborp.ca. Here you can link to all of our social media sites including our Facebook page: Manitoba Burrowing Owl Recovery Program, Blogger at buowls-coocoo.blogspot.ca, Twitter @giveahoot_mb.

Want to Help? Report any Burrowing Owl sightings to our Hoot line at 204-807-4668. MBORP is a non-profit organization supported through private and public funding. We accept donations through Assiniboine Park Zoo or Turtle Mountain Conservation District. See www.mborp.ca on how to donate!

Jessica Riach is Field Assistant and Alexandra Froese is Project Manager with MBORP.



Jerry Anderson

Order of the Buffalo Hunt: A Final Tribute to Robert Taylor

On August 6, Premier Greg Selinger awarded one of the province's highest honours to long-time Nature Manitoba member and well-known wildlife and nature photographer Robert Taylor. On August 15, Robert passed away at St. Boniface General Hospital at the age of 73.

In a statement in a Manitoba government press release about the award, Premier Selinger said: "For over half a century, Robert Taylor has made us aware of the stunning natural beauty that is literally at our doorstep in this province and of our northern giant the majestic polar bear. He has also travelled throughout the world capturing the wonder of this planet and the wildlife it contains. All of us owe Robert a sincere thank you for his lifetime of accomplishments."

In an August 16 posting "in memory of Robert Taylor" on ManitobaBirds, Christian Artuso wrote "...whether you know him from his outstanding photography, his books, his pioneering work in shining the spotlight on Manitoba's phenomenal wildlife viewing opportunities or his phenomenal contribution to ecotourism here and abroad (especially East Africa)... Bob's many and diverse achievements resonate far and wide and his passing is a great loss for us."

We will be preparing a tribute to Robert Taylor for our next issue; if you have any stories or memories about Bob that you would like to share, please send them to editor@naturemanitobanews.ca.



Robert Taylor

This family portrait of a group of Burrowing Owls was taken by Robert Taylor several years ago in southwestern Manitoba.



The densely planted flowerbeds in a stunning 3-acre garden. The property also included a large vegetable and herb garden and a large meditative labyrinth made from a decorative grass.

ONGT is Back!

by Julia Schoen

Our Natural Garden Tour returned with a bang on July 6 after having taken a break for a year. The plan was to have a small team take over the job of organizing the garden tour. And the plan worked just fine: our team managed its new job well in 2013.

We were blessed once again with good weather on the tour day. The morning even managed a few breezes and some cloud cover, a welcome change after the high heat and humidity of the previous several weeks.

Feedback from the 320 patrons has been consistently positive. Our ticket sales were down a bit from previous years, owing, no doubt, to a loss in momentum from the year off. But we expect those numbers to rebound in 2014 for another wonderful tour which will take place on July 5. We think the shift in date from late July to early July has worked out well.

This year, visitors had three huge properties, all on the same road (McCreary), to explore. The Demonstration Gardens at FortWhyte Alive, our community property, proved to be an accurate illustration of what was written on the ticket... "It is a place where people, plants and wildlife come together to share in all the wonders of nature."

The one repeat garden from 2011 was even lovelier this year with its massive dense plantings even fuller two years later. The surprise here was the stunning courtyard swimming pool area which had since been added to the property. The country cottage garden just down the road was praised by many for its wild beauty and the feeling of freedom that it evoked. Flowers, vegetables and even a labyrinth carved out of a planting of ornamental grass – this yard had it all.

The five "normal"-sized yards provided a variety of landscaping styles well appreciated by our visitors. In Waverley Heights, the gardener had surrounded her house with full colourful beds overlooking the peaceful vista of the man-made Twin Lakes. In old Richmond West, visitors discovered an intriguing secret shade garden with so many charming seating areas it was hard to keep track of them! In new Richmond West, visitors found a yard outlined in the back with a "fence" of towering evergreens, full flowerbeds, two pond features and a small waterfall.

And finally, from the small charming yard with gigantic ferns and attractive limestone patio and garden edging to the whimsical rustic refuge with mostly native plantings, both in St Norbert, the southern reach of the tour was a fine way to begin (or end) the tour day.

Our thirteenth garden tour brought in \$4800. This is funding much needed for Nature Manitoba's ongoing needs. Thank you to all who support this summer event.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to all those whose efforts helped to make ONGT 2013 such a success, including Dianne Beaven, Donna Danyluk, Alain Louer, as well as former Nature Manitoba Treasurer Sean Worden, who encouraged us back in 2011 with his appeal to "keep the tour going!" As usual, we also thank all of those who sold tickets, volunteers who helped at the gardens and, finally, of course, the gardeners for sharing their vision of beauty with the members of Nature Manitoba and the public.

Thank you to: Gerard Bzdel, John Tinkler & John Phelps, Deloris Long, Heather & Alex Kraubner, Fay & Stan Croall, Samantha Braun, Brenda & Jack Adams, and Minna Goulet at FortWhyte Alive with her team of gardeners led by Annette Bell.

ROGER'S RANT



... on making a mess of Pimachiowin Aki

by Roger Turenne

Much has been written these past several months about the difficulties the Pimachiowin Aki project has had in obtaining a UNESCO World Heritage Site designation. There is also much confusion as interested parties are putting their own spin on the issue in pursuit of separate agendas. So let's try to sort it out.

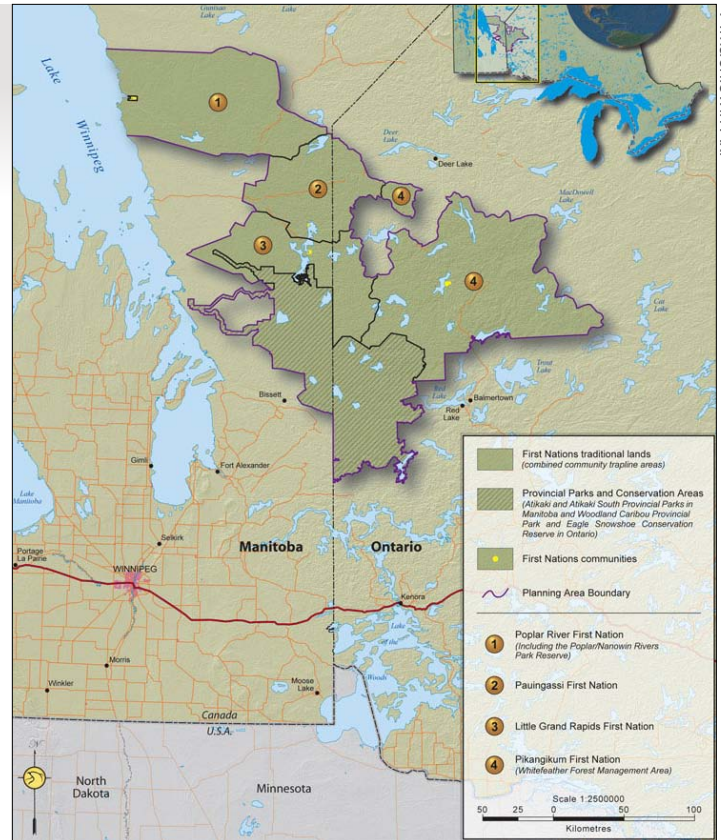
First it needs to be said that Pimachiowin Aki is an extremely worthwhile project in its own right, irrespective of whether it ever gets UNESCO's seal of approval. As explained by project leaders Gord Jones and Sophia Rabliauskas at a Nature Manitoba Discovery Evening in November 2009, it seeks to protect over 33,400 square kilometres straddling the Manitoba-Ontario border, a protection that would apply not only to the land but to the living culture of the peoples who have inhabited this land for centuries. It seeks to achieve ecological protection while at the same time provide a good living for the First Nations who inhabit the land. Five First Nations are involved in the project – four from Manitoba and one from Ontario.

Many seemed surprised this past June when the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO decided to postpone a decision on designation for a year. They should not have been. Dealing with UNESCO is not as straightforward as one might think – it's not just a matter of filling out the proper forms and preparing a substantial brief based on UNESCO's guidelines. UNESCO receives more applications for World Heritage status than it is prepared to grant. The criteria are rigorous and the competition is stiff. And, even though politics is not supposed to play a role, I know from first-hand experience that it does. As fate would have it, I was Canada's representative on the UNESCO Executive Board in the spring of 1970 when the World Heritage program first came up for discussion. From that experience, I knew that Pimachiowin Aki was going to be a tough sell.

In Manitoba the project has been politicized from the get-go, most notably when the provincial government used the proposed UNESCO designation as a reason to route the Bipole III transmission line on the west side of the province. An extra billion dollars to give an indirect, perhaps even unnecessary, boost to the project? That strained credibility from the start. No, Pimachiowin Aki was used as a fig leaf to cover up other reasons for the west side routing. There may well be sound reasons for this routing (including the near impossibility of reaching a viable agreement within a reasonable time with up to 16 First Nations on the East Side) but the UNESCO bid is not one of them. Especially not since the same government is promoting construction of an all-weather road up the East Side. This road constitutes a greater threat to the integrity of the region than a transmission line and is potentially even more damaging to the UNESCO bid.

Fortunately the province seems to have abandoned this line of argument, but it still continues to refer to Pimachiowin Aki as the "proposed UNESCO World Heritage project". Technically that is correct, but it gives the impression that UNESCO designation is the be-all and end-all, the sole reason why money is being expended

“... forget about the perceived affront and concentrate on the uniqueness of the project. Otherwise you're toast.”



on the project. What happens if UNESCO turns it down, as indeed it may? There doesn't seem to be a plan B. This project should proceed regardless of UNESCO's decision. If it does ultimately get UNESCO's seal of approval, then that will be icing on the cake.

And what to make of the Pimachiowin Aki leadership's reaction to the UNESCO delay? They are upset because UNESCO has asked them to demonstrate the superiority of the proposal. In response, misinterpreting the intent of the UNESCO request, they are stating that as aboriginal peoples, they are not "superior" to anyone else. Talk about shooting yourself in the foot! The whole point of UNESCO's World Heritage program is to identify unique sites around the world. They also started a petition, which is a complete waste of time as a means to influence UNESCO. To them I say: forget about the perceived affront and concentrate on the uniqueness of the project. Otherwise you're toast.

Then we have the opposition Conservatives, who officially support the project, questioning "whether Manitoba will ever see a return on the millions of dollars it has already spent on the bid." By overselling the UNESCO aspect of the project, the government will have unwittingly handed the Opposition a political issue if the bid is turned down. Count on the Opposition to use it.

Enough already with the political spin and real or feigned hurt feelings! At this stage of the game there is only one thing to do and that is to give UNESCO whatever it wants and hope for the best. But stop talking about the UNESCO designation as the ultimate objective. The ultimate objective is, and should have been from the start, the protection of the last best piece of intact boreal forest in the country and the cultural and economic development of the people who inhabit that land and live in harmony with it.

Roger Turenne was Deputy Permanent Delegate of Canada to UNESCO from 1969 to 1971.

OUTDOOR activities

To receive weekly updates of outdoor activities, send an email to triplist@naturemanitoba.ca.

Mantario Cabin

Labour Day Canoe Trip

Sat. Aug. 31st - Tue. Sep. 3rd

Join the experienced and jovial trip leader Ray Nielsen for a weekend at our Mantario cabin. We will take three or four days for the canoe trip.

Cabin fees are applicable.

Contact Ray at ray56@mymts.net for more information. [Rate 5]

Hike Hunt Lake

Sun. September 8th

Join Roger on the picturesque and challenging Hunt Lake hike, which is close to West Hawk Lake in Whiteshell Provincial Park.

Phone Roger Sutherland at 204-451-1219. [Rate 3-4]

Canoe Netley Marsh

Sat. September 21st

Join Les McCann for an autumn canoe trip in Netley Marsh. This will be a follow up to last year's outing and we will explore a new section of the marsh. Suitable for novices, but expect a full day outing. We will try to accommodate enthusiasts who do not have canoeing equipment.

Contact Les at 204-895-8108 or lmccann2001@yahoo.com. [Rate 2]

St. Agathe Hike & Fall Dinner

Sun. October 6th

Hike around St. Malo Provincial Park and in the woods of St. Pierre-Jolys along the Crow Wing Trail, part of the TransCanada Trail, concluding with the fall dinner at St. Agathe.

RSVP after September 28 to Rose at rkuzina@mymts.net. [Rate 2-3]

Backpack Riding Mountain

Sat. Oct. 12th - Mon. Oct. 14th

Join Les McCann to hike the Baldy/Gunn Lake Trail. This is a 33km round trip trail to arguably the most scenic campsite in Riding Mountain. We plan to have a day at the campsite to explore the area without full packs.

Register with Les McCann, 204-895-8108 or lmccann2001@yahoo.com. [Rate 4]

Spruce Woods Hike & Fall Dinner

Sun. October 20th

Hike through Spruce Woods Provincial Park followed by the fall dinner at Carberry.

RSVP after October 5 to Rose Kuzina at rkuzina@mymts.net. [Rate 3]

Portage la Prairie Hike

& Fall Dinner

Sun. October 27th

Explore the Delta Marsh area and Portage la Prairie, then relax at the fall dinner.

RSVP after October 19 to Rose at rkuzina@mymts.net. [Rate 2-3]

Rae Trail Hike & Fall Dinner

Sun. November 3rd

Hike the Rae Trail along the Assiniboine River (ca. 12 km) and go to Glenboro for the fall dinner.

RSVP after October 25 to Rose Kuzina at rkuzina@mymts.net. [Rate 3]



Garner Lake Canoe Trip

Eleven members canoed to Garner Lake in mid-July for a four-day camping trip led by Jerry Ameis. See page 20 for a short article on the trip. Left to right: Yves Brunel, Ray Ingalls, Chris (Ray's grandson), Les McCann, Marilyn Hurrell, Jerry Ameis, Rick Hisco, Al & Cindy Louer, Dorothy (Ray's daughter), and Don Himbeault.

Eagle-Eye Tours

Birding Trip to India & Sri Lanka

Join Rudolf Koes on a 22-day Eagle-Eye Tours birding trip to Southern India and Sri Lanka.

February 10 to March 3, 2014.
Cost is \$7225. (single supplement \$710)

Check out Eagle-Eye Tours at

www.eagle-eye.com

or contact Rudolf Koes at 204-661-0763 or rkoes@mymts.net for more trip details and itinerary.

GREY HARES

Free on Wednesdays?

Join the Grey Hares for interesting trips and activities and good company.

Cycle Duff Roblin Parkway

Wed. September 4th

Cycle the new Duff Roblin Parkway Trail.
Daniela Rempel 204-633-0668. [Rate 2-3]

Hiking Tour of Mornington

Wed. September 11th

Cultural and Hiking Tour of Mornington, an estate in Baldur, MB and exploring the area including Ninette, MB. Deadline to register is Sept. 9th to facilitate planning, including possibility of an overnight stay.
Doris Orchyk at 204-837-6166. [Rate 1]

Tour of Sage Garden Herbs

Wed. September 18th

Tour Sage Garden Herbs, 3410 St. Mary's Road, south of Perimeter. For those interested, there is an option of a hike at La Barriere Park nearby following the tour (bring a lunch).
Pat Gray at 204-269-1765. [Rate 1]

Photo Tour of Whiteshell

THURSDAY, October 3rd

Drive through the Whiteshell with Al and Thelma Ross. Capture the vibrant Fall colours, get tips on photography, or just enjoy the trip! No hiking, an easy trip.

Al Ross at 204-853-2047. [Rate 1]

Cycle to St. Adolphe

Wed. October 9th

Cycle to St. Adolphe with lunch at an authentic Persian restaurant.

Marilyn Hearn 204-895-4659. [Rate 3]

Hike Tiger Hills

Wed. October 16th

Tiger Hills is south of Treherne (~18 kms).
Charles Begley at 204-233-8395. [Rate 3]

Tour of New Stadium

Wed. October 23rd

Tour of the new Investors Group Field,
Bryon Burvill 204-233-7904. [Rate 1]

Tour of Winnipeg Art Gallery

Wed. October 30th

There will be gallery admission and possible small tour charge. Book by Oct. 23.
Contact John Gray 204-269-1765. [Rate 0]

GENERAL RATING GUIDELINES APPLICABLE TO ALL ACTIVITIES

Rate 1 Novice: Typically 2 to 3 hours duration. Little or no experience required.

Easy terrain. Limited physical fitness acceptable. Weather not likely to be severe and normally we can retreat to shelter.

Rate 2 Intermediate: Typically 4-6 hours long. Some previous experience and skill desirable. Some steep or difficult terrain. Moderate physical fitness required. Seasonal weather normally not severe.

Rate 3 Advanced: Typically full day trip. Previous experience, significant skill and good physical condition required. Steep or difficult terrain. Sustained strenuous activity required. Weather not normally severe.

Rate 4 Advanced: Trip of several days duration with heavy packs, specialized equipment and skills. Effects of inclement weather and injuries more severe. Seasonal weather not normally severe.

Rate 5 Advanced: Trip of several days duration with heavy packs, specialized equipment and skills. Possible severe weather conditions – wind, cold rain, sleet – may halt trip and demand use of skilled survival techniques or make accidents or physical injuries life threatening. Aid or rescue is difficult to obtain.

BIRD OUTINGS

Annual Fall Hawk Watch

Sat. September 7th

Several groups for this outing have already been formed, but it may be possible to organize your own group. Call Rudolf Koes at 204-661-0763 to register your group or for more info.

Shoal Lakes/St. Ambroise

Sat. September 28th

Join Garry Budyk on this day-long outing looking for waterfowl, raptors, gulls and terns, late shorebirds and warblers and more. At this time of year anything is possible.
Call Garry at 204-667-1062 for information or to register.

Lake Winnipeg Beaches

Sat. November 2nd

Late fall is a good time to look for lingering waterfowl, raptors and gulls along the beaches of S.E. Lake Winnipeg. Winter passerines, such as Snow Buntings and redpolls, should also be present.
Call Rudolf Koes at 204-661-0763 for information or to register.

Winnipeg River Outing

Sun. December 1st

This is your chance to get a start on your winter list. We hope to see lingering waterfowl, such as Long-tailed Duck and Harlequin Duck, or rare gulls.
Call Peter Taylor at 204-753-2977 for details or to register.

The Winnipeg Christmas Bird Count will be held on Sun. Dec. 15th. Call Rudolf Koes at 204-661-0763 for details or to register.



Northern
Flicker

Dennis Swayze

PLEASE NOTE:

All those planning to participate in a trip must register with the leader beforehand, unless otherwise indicated. Space is often limited, so call early. If the leader cannot be reached, call the office at 204-943-9029.

As a member of Nature Manitoba you have the right to participate in all of our activities and programs, but you must provide a valid membership card. Trips are led by unpaid, non-professional volunteers.

Trip leaders may exercise discretion and decline to include any person. When registering you must rely on your own assessment of your ability to participate, based on the requirements of the trip as described in the trip rating guidelines and at www.naturemanitoba.ca.

By showing up it is understood that you acknowledged and are prepared and able to participate at the level indicated. You will be required to sign an Informed Consent and Liability Release Agreement in order to participate.

Participants must be prepared for inclement weather. Participants must have adequate clothing, water, food, must carry their own gear, and are responsible for ensuring it is in good working condition. See the Outdoor Activity section of our website for more details on the Trip Rating Guidelines.

BIRD NEWS

by Gordon Grief

This month's sightings table covers birds seen in June and July plus a few late reports from May.

A number of birders who went down to the southwest corner of the province to look for the specialties of the region found it difficult to locate some of the species. This was especially true of Baird's Sparrow and Mountain Bluebird. Numbers of most of the grassland birds appear to be continuing to decline.

Mike Conrad



Loggerhead
Shrike

Participants in the Manitoba Breeding Bird Atlas project are continuing to locate species in areas that were thought to be beyond the species normal breeding range. This is particularly true for the boreal forest area.

Rudolf Koes again led a birding course at the Churchill Northern Studies Centre and the group found a number species that have seldom been seen in Churchill. These included Trumpeter Swan, Clark's Grebe, American Avocet, Black Tern, Eastern Kingbird, Clay-colored Sparrow and Nelson's Sparrow.

Other good finds during June and July in the southern part of the province included Long-tailed Duck, Whimbrel, Arctic Tern, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Rock Wren, Yellow-breasted Chat, Field Sparrow and Lark Bunting.

*If you locate some unusual birds during the fall, be sure to post them on the **ManitobaBirds** Yahoo group or email them to me at ggrief@mts.net. If you do not have internet access, you can mail them to me at 31 Kara Cove, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2N 3C2.*

Species	#'s	Date	Location	Observers
Snow Goose	1	Jul 16 13	Whitewater Lake	G. Budyk, D. Dodgson
Snow Goose	8	Jul 21 13	Cartwright	J. & G. Grief
Trumpeter Swan	2	Jun 3 13	Hecla Island	R. Parsons
Trumpeter Swan	1	Jun 7 13	Churchill	R. Koes, L. Cocks, P. Douglas, E. Smith, L. Buelow-Smith
Trumpeter Swan	2	Jun 21 13	Marchand	G. Budyk
Trumpeter Swan	5	Jul 21 13	Richer	R. Parsons, L. Veelma, R. Parsons
Tundra Swan	1	Jul 14 13	Rosser	K. Gardner
Black Scoter	5,000+	Jul 5 13	Seal River	B. Chartier
Long-tailed Duck	1	Jun 2 13	Clear Lake	C. Cuthbert, J. Wells, Pennsylvania Audubon Group
Common Goldeneye	5,000+	Jul 5 13	Seal River	B. Chartier
Red-throated Loon	1	Jun 3 13	Hecla Island	R. Parsons
Red-throated Loon	1	~Jun 10 13	Churchill	R. Koes, L. Cocks, P. Douglas, E. Smith, L. Buelow-Smith
Common Loon	2	Jul 10 13	Rat River Mash	N. Butchard
Clark's Grebe	1	Jun 1 13	Whitewater Lake	D. Martin, B. Chartier
Clark's Grebe	1	Jun 7 13	Churchill	R. Koes, L. Cocks, P. Douglas, E. Smith, L. Buelow-Smith
Least Bittern	1	Jul 10 13	Rat River Mash	N. Butchard
Least Bittern	1	Jul 16 13	Whitewater Lake	G. Budyk, D. Dodgson
Great Egret	18	Jun 23 13	East Shoal Lake	C. McPherson, R. Methot
Great Egret	27	Jul 9 13	West Shoal Lake	L. Morash
Great Egret	34	Jul 21 13	West Shoal Lake	J. Weier
Snowy Egret	1	Jun 23 13	East Shoal Lake	C. McPherson, R. Methot
Snowy Egret	1	Jun 25 13	Whitewater Lake	R. Parsons
Cattle Egret	1	May 29 13	Lockport	D. Herst
Cattle Egret	1	Jun 4 13	Oak Hammock Marsh	T. Maconachie
Cattle Egret	8	Jun 29 13	Boissevain	R. & I. Porteous
Green Heron	1	Jun 28 13	Steinbach	D. Fast, m.ob.
Green Heron	1	Jul 13 13	Middlebro	B. Barnett
Green Heron	1	Jul 14 13	Gimli	C. McPherson, R. Methot
Black-crowned Night-Heron	34+	Jul 21 13	West Shoal Lake	J. Weier
Ferruginous Hawk	1	Jul 16 13	Lyleton	G. Budyk, D. Dodgson
Ferruginous Hawk	1	Jul 17 13	Pierson WMA	G. Budyk, D. Dodgson
Yellow Rail	5	Jul 18 13	Lyleton	G. Budyk, D. Dodgson
Yellow Rail	1	Jul 27 13	Richer	D. Martin, R. Methot
American Avocet	1	Jun 7 13	Churchill	R. Koes, L. Cocks, P. Douglas, E. Smith, L. Buelow-Smith
Whimbrel	2	May 29 13	Stony Mountain	P. Friesen, D. Epp-Tiessen, R. Boese
Red Knot	1	May 12 13	West Shoal Lake	K. Gardner

Species	#’s	Date	Location	Observers
Little Gull	9	Jun 7 13	Churchill	R. Koes, L. Cocks, P. Douglas, E. Smith, L. Buelow-Smith
California Gull	2	Jul 16 13	Whitewater Lake	D. Dodgson, G. Budyk
Black Tern	2	Jun 7 13	Churchill	R. Koes, L. Cocks, P. Douglas, E. Smith, L. Buelow-Smith
Arctic Tern	1	Jun 3 13	Hecla Island	R. Parsons
Pomarine Jaeger	1	Jul 3 13	Churchill	B. Chartier
Dovekie	2	Jul 9 13	Seal River	B. Chartier
Black Guillemot	1	Jul 4 13	Seal River	B. Chartier
Eurasian Collared-Dove	2	Jun 21 13	La Broquerie	G. Budyk
Eurasian Collared-Dove	1	Jul 20 13	St. Jean Baptiste	L. Blanchette
Eurasian Collared-Dove	1	Jul 16 13	Deloraine	G. Budyk, D. Dodgson
Eurasian Collared-Dove	2	Jul 25 13	Straithclair	J. Bradley
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	1	Jul 4 13	Blumenort	L. Blanchette
Black-billed Cuckoo	10	Jul 7 13	Brightstone	P. Taylor
Snowy Owl	1	Jun 15 13	The Pas	J. Kayer
Chimney Swift	15	Jul 21 13	Winnipeg	R. Staniforth
Red-bellied Woodpecker	1	Jun 8 13	Gimli	B. Chartier
Say's Phoebe	6	Jul 18 13	Coulter	G. Budyk, D. Dodgson
Eastern Kingbird	1	~Jun 10 13	Churchill	R. Koes, L. Cocks, P. Douglas, E. Smith, L. Buelow-Smith
Loggerhead Shrike	1	Jun 2 13	Lyleton	D. Martin, B. Chartier
Loggerhead Shrike	1	Jun 11 13	Ostenfeld	L. Jansson, R. Austin
Loggerhead Shrike	1	Jul 18 13	Lyleton	G. Budyk, D. Dodgson
Rock Wren	1	Jul 5 13	Darwin	P. Taylor
Northern Mockingbird	1	Jun 16 13	Powerview	G. Budyk
Golden-winged Warbler	1	Jun 7 13	Harwill	J. Smith
Golden-winged Warbler	2	Jun 7 13	Manigotagan	C. Artuso
Golden-winged Warbler	6	Jun 14 13	Harwill	D. Martin
Northern Parula	1	Jun 3 13	Winnipeg	Birding & Breakfast group at Fort Whyte Alive
Connecticut Warbler	7	Jun 6 13	Old 15 & Lewis Road	G. Budyk
Yellow-breasted Chat	1	Jul 19 13	Bradwardine	K. De Smet
Western Tanager	1	Jun 9 13	Snow Lake	C. Artuso, et al
Clay-colored Sparrow	1	Jun 1 13	Churchill	R. Koes, L. Cocks, P. Douglas, E. Smith, L. Buelow-Smith
Field Sparrow	1	Jun 25 13	Piney	D. Danyluk, I. Ward
Lark Bunting	1	Jun 1 13	Birtle	K. De Smet
Grasshopper Sparrow	1	Jun 16 13	Oak Point	A. Davis
Nelson's Sparrow	1	~Jun 10 13	Churchill	R. Koes, L. Cocks, P. Douglas, E. Smith, L. Buelow-Smith
Harris's Sparrow	1	Jun 8 13	Eden	R. de Mey
Dark-eyed Junco	1	Jun 11 13	St. Jean Baptiste	L. Blanchette
Northern Cardinal	1	Jun 2 13	Headingley	B. Shettler
Dickcissel	1	Jul 6 13	Steinbach	P. Douglas
Dickcissel	1	Jul 16 13	Whitewater Lake	G. Budyk, D. Dodgson
Dickcissel	2	Jul 17 13	Lyleton	G. Budyk, D. Dodgson
Dickcissel	2	Jul 17 13	Pierson WMA	G. Budyk, D. Dodgson



C. Artuso

Thank You All Vehicle Owners!

Due to your ongoing support of Manitoba's Important Bird Area (IBA) program, we are currently ranked 8th place in Shell Canada's FuellingChange promotion. Please continue to enter your receipts into the Shell Canada's FuellingChange program (see details below).

On Shell Canada's FuellingChange website, your gasoline receipts can be used to "vote" for a favourite conservation program. Nature Manitoba's Important Bird Area program can earn as much as \$50,000 for having the most votes.

By supporting Manitoba's Important Area Program, you will be helping volunteer caretakers monitor and report bird populations and identify threats within Manitoba's most critical bird habitat. Funding for Manitoba's IBA program will also be used to help conservation efforts in southwestern Manitoba, the last foothold for many threatened prairie bird species in Manitoba.

To vote, click on the \$50,000 tab on the fuellingchange.com website. Scroll down the page and look for the Important Bird Areas Caretaker Program – or look for the photo of western grebes (above left).

MB IBA Part-time Coordinator Job Posting

The Manitoba Important Bird Area Caretaker Program, a partnership of Nature Manitoba, Bird Studies Canada and Nature Canada is seeking a part-time coordinator to run this program in Manitoba, with the assistance of a volunteer steering committee. The coordinator will be responsible for running the EcoAction-funded "Manitoba Grasslands Bird Conservation Initiative" within the larger IBA program. Application deadline is Sep. 27th, so visit our homepage for a link to the full job posting before then:

www.naturemanitoba.ca



Interlake Atlassing: Northern Hawk Owls in a Surprising Southern Nest!

by Skip Shand

While atlassing on June 10, just west of Highway 8 near Winnipeg Beach, I spotted a familiar profile on the wires ahead. Familiar in Churchill and the boreal, that is, but totally unexpected in early summer in a southern broadleaf Parkland/Farmland locale. Sure enough, Northern Hawk Owl it was, and actively hunting! A quick call to Bonnie Chartier confirmed that the summer sighting was indeed unusual. Was there a possible nest site nearby, she wondered, reminding me of my Atlassing agenda? Well yes, I was standing right beside a swampy patch of broken poplars, and now I heard feed-me cries coming from the top of a 14-foot snag. The adult owl flew in at that moment, delivering a fresh vole to three very visible and very hungry young who were clearly close to fledging! I immediately made a second breathless call to Bonnie, who quickly passed on the word to owl guru Jim Duncan, and I had a terrific find for my Atlas square!

Over the next few days, the owlets left the nest to explore the surrounding tangle of logs and snags, while still being fed by the single adult. It's not unusual for the female to depart soon after the young hatch, leaving Dad to bring home the bacon (or the mouse, in this case), which was probably the situation here. Jim and Patsy Duncan visited the nest site twice (they live nearby) and successfully banded all three young, a process I was privileged to witness. It is possible that the adult was a lingerer, one of the 70-odd Northern Hawk Owls banded by the Duncans last winter, but this was never established. I left the family of owls in peace after those first few days, but occasionally spotted the hunting adult from the car as I cruised by. The last such sighting, made with Peter Douglas, was on July 10.

So I've had my version of one of the special bonuses of involvement in the Breeding Bird Atlas project: an exciting and unexpected northern entry in my southern Interlake breeding data, and some great photo ops to boot.



Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup:

Your Local Community Needs Your Help

Your shorelines need your help! The Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, presented by Loblaw Companies Limited, is the ideal opportunity for Canadians to help clean Canada's waterways and shorelines (any point where land meets water), ensuring their health for the wildlife and communities that depend on them.



Over the last 20 years, this national conservation initiative of the Vancouver Aquarium and WWF has removed more than one million kilograms of litter from our shorelines. If left on our shorelines, this litter would have had a serious impact on the health of our oceans, lakes and rivers – as well as our communities.

Join us for the 20th anniversary of the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup by organizing or participating in a shoreline cleanup from September 21-29, 2013. Register today at ShorelineCleanup.ca or call 1-877-427-2422.

The 2012 Dirty Dozen

Most Common Items Found During Shoreline Cleanups

1.	Cigarettes/Cigarette Filters.....	416,955
2.	Food Wrappers/Containers	98,835
3.	Plastic Bags.....	69,790
4.	Caps, Lids	69,725
5.	Plastic Beverage Bottles, 2 litres or less	38,202
6.	Beverage Cans.....	37,210
7.	Cups, Plates, Forks, Knives, Spoons	34,458
8.	Straws, Stirrers.....	32,338
9.	Glass Beverage Bottles.....	29,198
10.	Paper Bags.....	28,315
11.	Tobacco Packaging/Wrappers.....	16,997
12.	Building Materials	16,280



After banding the Peregrine chicks, we returned a couple weeks later to outfit the chicks with transmitters.

Dennis Swayze

Winnipeg's Peregrine Falcons

by Dennis Swayze

The Radisson Hotel Peregrine Falcons (1 male, 1 female, going by size) are up and flying in downtown Winnipeg. This pair did not get banded this year due to the location of their nest and timing.

The Brandon chicks (2 male, 1 female) have been banded and fitted with transmitters, and all three have fledged without incident.

The West Winnipeg chicks (3 females) have also been banded and fitted with transmitters, and have fledged and all appear to be flying well.

As of the middle of August there has been no reports of chicks in trouble, all appear to be doing well.

The Manitoba Peregrine Falcon Recovery Project blog: www.species-at-risk.mb.ca/pefa/blog/



Red-winged Blackbird flies past a Great Blue Heron

Dennis Swayze



An Eastern Kingbird harasses an Osprey

Dennis Swayze



Great Horned Owl and its owlet

Dennis Swayze



A polar bear followed by her three cubs in the Kaskatamagan Wildlife Management Area in northeast Manitoba.

Kaskatamagan Polar Bear Den Survey

by Martin Zeilig

One of the world's leading authorities on polar bears has expressed concern about the recently released results from the first year of a new three-year survey on polar bears in the Kaskatamagan Wildlife Management Area (KWMA), located in northeastern Manitoba between the mighty Nelson River and the Ontario border.

The survey, which began in January 2013 and will continue through 2014 and into 2015, found that females are leaving their maternity dens much earlier than anticipated, many of them without any cubs in tow.

"This is potentially quite concerning," said Edmonton-based biologist Dr. Ian Stirling, author of the book *Polar Bears – the Natural History of a Threatened Species* (Fitzhenry & Whiteside 2011) during a telephone interview. "We should continue to monitor this. Long-term monitoring is critical because it tells you what the underlying trend is, which can be confused with the normal variability that can occur between years."

The Kaskatamagan Polar Bear Den Survey is funded by the York Factory Resource Management Board, Fox Lake Resource Management Board, Nunavut Department of Environment, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and Manitoba Conservation and

Water Stewardship (CWS). According to Darryl Hedman, Regional Wildlife Manager with Manitoba Conservation's Northeast Region, the objectives of this project will be to delineate the distribution and abundance of females from the western Hudson Bay sub-population of polar bears that do den within the KWMA.

Ian Stirling, a former research scientist with the Canadian Wildlife Service and an adjunct professor at the University of Alberta, has studied the behaviour, population, ecology, and predator-prey relationships of polar bears for over 40 years. He has also worked with Darryl Hedman on other polar bear surveys along the Hudson Bay coastline. "We have known for a number of years that the occasional bear, those without enough fat, will leave the denning area in January in

Wapusk National Park (near Churchill)," he said. "We do know that there's been a long-term decline in the body condition and reproductive rate and survival of young bears. It's been going on slowly, but steadily over the last 30 years." Over the period from 1980 to 2007, the average weight of a pregnant female has declined by about 40 kilograms.

He also suggested that the population currently being surveyed, as well as other polar bear populations, are being af-

“Over the period from 1980 to 2007, the average weight of a pregnant female has declined by about 40 kilograms...”

“...the most disturbing observation of the 2013 surveys was the number of polar bear tracks in late January when they are still supposed to be in the den...”

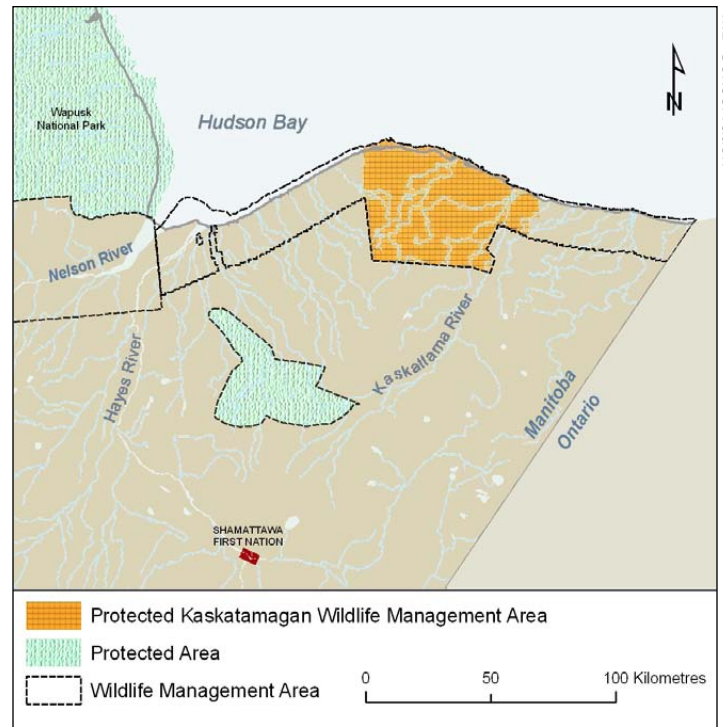
ected by global climate change. “It’s telling us what to watch with climate change in the future, and what management techniques might be applied (to maintain the polar bears).”

Hedman noted that surveying the Kaskatamagan region for three consecutive years will provide CWS with baseline data of female polar bears that use this area for denning. “Polar bears will keep their cubs sometimes until two and a half years of age, subsequently they may only den every three years,” he said, adding that while considerable den information is already known from north of the Nelson River within Wapusk National Park, there has been minimal survey work east of the Nelson River in the KWMA.

“This survey is designed to be able to sample all females that may choose this area to den. The long-term expectations and aspirations of completing this three-year project will be to establish baseline data for this region of northeastern Manitoba, and how any adverse effects of climate change and an extended ice-free period may impact the females and cub survival.”

Darryl Hedman is being assisted in the survey by fellow wildlife biologist Vicki Trim. He explained that flight lines are along the Hudson Bay coast, flying east from the Nelson River to the Ontario border. Each time a polar bear track is encountered an inland trek by helicopter is made to determine the den location. “All polar bears, polar bear tracks, and den locations that are encountered are given a GPS waypoint for further analysis,” he said.

He said that the most disturbing observation of the 2013 surveys was the number of polar bear tracks in late January when they are still supposed to be in the den, as well as the number of females (based on track sightings) without cubs.



They located at least nine maternity dens. “We also found that the longest distance traveled by a female inland to dig a den was approximately 100 km inland towards Ontario.”

“As to why these bears are coming out of the dens prematurely – it is too early to speculate. But this sub-population is one of the most southerly located populations circumpolar wide. It may already be under physiological stressors due to the effects of a longer ice-free period on Hudson Bay because of the effects of climate change.”

The polar bear was listed as a species of Special Concern in November 2011 under the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). Hedman observed that it’s too early to tell whether this survey will lead to any change in the status of polar bears in Canada (to threatened or endangered). “Whether it leads to up-listing by SARA I cannot say at this time,” he said.



Photos: Darryl Hedman



Paddling up the Garner on the way to Garner Lake.



Les finally caught a fish, a nice 10-lb Northern Pike.

Garner Lake: Still Rantable?

by Jerry Ameis

In mid-July, eleven Nature Manitoba members (see page 12 for a group photo and names), went on a four-day canoe trip to Garner Lake, at the north end of Nopiming Park. From the launch at Beresford Lake, the journey to Garner took about four hours of paddling, mostly in creek and river waters. There are no portages, although some beavers valiantly try to build dams on the Garner River, but

motorboat traffic continues to overwhelm their efforts.

Luckily we did not have to camp at the beach (my back-up plan), as one of the two large islands in the south end of the lake had enough camping area for our nine tents. The beach was the site of a bachelor party to which we were invited. The problem would have been a lack of reliable taxi service back to our island campsite.

The weather was great with some shower action on day two. The worst we endured was the morning of day three – the mosquitoes were ferocious, with no wind to blow them away and the air was humid. A three kilometre paddle to the beach for some swimming and relaxing made up for that.

There was little sign of Roger's rant about Garner Lake except at the beach – toilet paper everywhere. Unfortunately Manitoba Resources cannot do much about that area because the beach lies in Ontario's Woodland Caribou Park.



In Angelina di Santo's lush vegetable garden on the Grey Hares' Garden Cycle Tour on July 24. The morning began with 20-minutes of light rain and then dried up beautifully for the rest of the trip.

Invasive Species:

Himalayan Balsam

Impatiens glandulifera, Family: *Balsaminaceae*.

Other names: Policeman's helmet, Indian Touch-Me-Not, Ornamental Jewelweed, Pink Peril, Poor Man's Orchid.

by the Invasive Species Council of Manitoba (ISCM)

Himalayan Balsam is a tough and colourful garden plant which has escaped and been found colonizing riverbanks in the Fort Garry area of Winnipeg. It has also been detected in gardens and alley ways in the Wolseley and East/North Kildonan areas. There is an opportunity to limit or prevent it from taking over other stream banks by getting rid of it or reporting it.

Himalayan Balsam is from the same genus as the colorful *Impatiens* (also known as Busy Lizzies) but grows much taller – up to 2 meters high. Preferring moist areas Himalayan Balsam often colonizes river banks, but has been found in many other areas. Dense stands suffocate other plants so when it dies away in the winter, river banks are left bare and are more liable to erode.

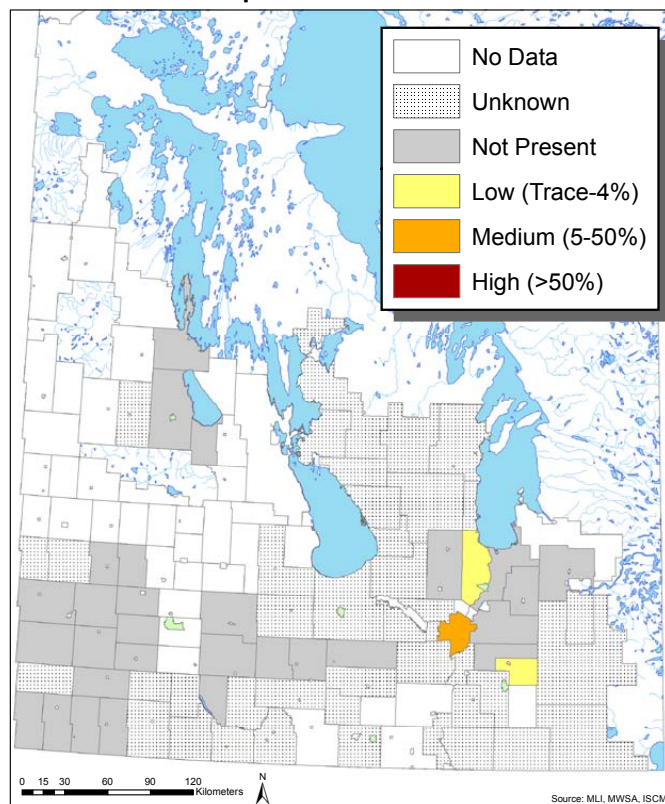
This flower produces copious amounts of nectar and is thought to draw pollinating insects away from native plants, reducing pollination of the latter. A single plant can set about 800 seeds, 12 to 14 weeks after flowering. The seed capsules react to the slightest disturbance, causing the five



Paul A. Graham

Photo by Paul A Graham

Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) Infestation in Manitoba Municipalities in 2011



 Invasive Species Council of Manitoba
www.invasivespeciesmanitoba.com
(204) 232-6021

*An estimate is based on the % of sections (640 acres) infested within a RM

segments to split along their length, curl up and twist explosively, projecting the contents up to 7 meters away. Himalayan Balsam will start to seed by mid to late August, producing small, black, spherical seeds that remain viable for about 2 years. They require cold stratification for germination which occurs in February or March and the seeds are buoyant so they can travel along waterways to infest new areas, even germinating under water.

Control

The main aim in controlling this invasive plant is to prevent it from setting seed. It is easily uprooted and cutting below the lowest node or at soil level should prevent it from re-sprouting. Cattle and sheep graze and trample the top growth in pasture settings.

Disposal

Make sure to properly discard all plant pieces in thick plastic bags and transport them to a sanitary landfill site or incinerator. Composting is not an appropriate means of disposal as this may result in further distribution. Remember that humans spread invasive plants by taking seeds from one place to another on clothing, tires, equipment, etc.

To report this plant or other invasives, please go to the ISCM website at www.invasivespeciesmanitoba.com. More information on Himalayan Balsam is available from Langley Environmental Partners Society at www.shim.bc.ca/invasivespecies/_private/himalayan_balsam.htm.

DISCOVERY EVENINGS 2013-2014

Nature Manitoba's Discovery Evenings are held at **Le Centre Culturel Franco-Manitobain**, 340 Provencher Blvd, in St. Boniface.

All programs will be held in **Salle Antoine-Gaborieau** (2nd floor) **except** for the Dec. 9th "**A Year in the Life of a Wildlife Photographer**" presentation, which will be held in Salle Pauline Boutal (main floor).

Programs start at **7:30 pm except** for the March 17th A.G.M. which starts at 7:00pm.

Admission is \$2 for members / \$3 for non-members. Members must show member card.

For more information, call the Nature Manitoba office at 204-943-9029 or email info@naturemanitoba.ca.

Monday, October 7, 2013

CFB Shilo: A History of Natural Resource Monitoring

Sherry Punak-Murphy,
*Base Biologist, Canadian
Forces Base Shilo*

CFB Shilo is a vitally important training base in Western Canada. The unique nature of this area has been recognized for almost a century, and with proper care and management will sustain military training for many decades to come. That military training at CFB Shilo, as well as with other military land holdings throughout Canada, has resulted in natural habitats that are relatively undisturbed and can support plant and wildlife communities in relatively pristine condition. Sherry will discuss the history of natural resource management and research at CFB Shilo and provide a glimpse into an area that is restricted to all except military personnel.

Monday, October 21, 2013

Orchids to Birds: Survey Projects at the Manitoba Tall Grass Prairie Preserve

Christie Borkowsky, Biologist,
Manitoba Tall Grass Prairie Preserve

The Manitoba Tall Grass Prairie Preserve is home to a vast array of species, several of which are considered at risk both federally and provincially. Two species highlighted will be the Western Prairie Fringed-orchid and the Small White Lady's-slipper, both listed as Endangered. Extensive efforts have been made to document occurrences and track their response to prairie management activities such as prescribed fire and rotational grazing. The second part of the presenta-

tion will look at a unique bird banding project that is part of an international program monitoring trends in the North American bird community. Started in 1996, more than 1800 birds from 61 species have been banded at the Preserve for the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program. A significant shift in the Preserve's bird community has been observed over the 18 years since the project began. One never knows what might show up in the mist nets, which is one of the reasons Christie thoroughly enjoys heading out to the banding site at 5:30am!

Monday, November 4, 2013

Moose Biology 400: The Ecology & Management of a Boreal Icon

**Dr. Vince Crichton, retired Manager of Game, Fur
and Problem Wildlife, Manitoba Conservation**

Moose have played a significant role in Manitoba's history from a cultural, social and economic perspective. However, beginning in the early to mid 1990s, the provincial population (excluding Riding Mountain National Park) has dropped significantly to what is now the lowest overall population since the early 1980s. This decline is attributed to uncontrolled hunting, predation and disease, which has subsequently resulted in a conservation closure (no hunting) for three game hunting areas in western Manitoba and a partial closure in eastern areas. Understanding moose biology at all levels is essential if the species is to be recovered to a point where traditional anthropogenic uses can be accommodated, and where they can sustain the impacts of predation, diseases and natural mortality (old age). Over the years, Dr. Crichton has become recognized as an international authority on moose biology and management and the focus of his presentation will be on biology and management of this fascinating animal.

Monday, November 18, 2013

Ethnobotany of the Boreal Forest

Amanda Karst, *Centre for Indigenous
Environmental Resources*

Full description to follow in the Nov/Dec 2013 issue of
Nature Manitoba News, and at www.naturemanitoba.ca.

Monday, December 9, 2013

(Note location: Salle Pauline Boutal, main floor)

A Year in the Life of a Wildlife Photographer

Dennis Fast, *Past President of Nature Manitoba,
Professional Wildlife Photographer*

As the principal photographer for 10 books, Dennis's travels have taken him to many places and on countless adventures. Follow Dennis on a busy year of photographing wildlife and habitat in Manitoba and beyond. From Dickcissels to Clark's Grebes, Grasshopper Sparrows to Ruddy Ducks, gray whales and elephants to leopards and brown hyenas, Bateleur Eagles to Thick-knees (those are birds), and, yes, all of North America's bear species, Dennis will entertain you with his wildlife encounters. Expect the unexpected, which is the story of wildlife photography.

Monday, January 6, 2013

Goose Population Growth in the Arctic

Frank Baldwin, *Game Bird Manager, Manitoba Conservation*

Full description to follow in the Nov/Dec 2013 issue of
Nature Manitoba News, and at www.naturemanitoba.ca.

Monday, January 20, 2014

Probing Benefits of Play to Polar Bears and Potential Problems Posed by Tourism

Drs. Jane Waterman and Jim Roth,
Biological Sciences, University of Manitoba

Play behaviour is common in young mammals in good condition, but adult play is rarely observed, especially in mammals that are fasting. Polar bears in northern Manitoba spend several months on land fasting while Hudson Bay is free of ice, and during this time adult male polar bears frequently play. We are examining this play behaviour to determine the benefits of these energetically costly interactions, such as developing dominance hierarchies with low risk. To collect these data without impacting bear behaviour, our research program has developed several non-invasive techniques to determine body size, body condition, and the identity of free-ranging bears. We have used these new techniques to examine the influence of tourist vehicles on the behaviour of polar bears in this region. Habituation to human activities may be a larger concern for these bears than potential disturbance caused by tourism.

Monday, February 3, 2014

Unseen Fauna: The Amazing Biodiversity of Ectoparasites on Wildlife in Manitoba

Terry Galloway, *Department of Entomology,
University of Manitoba*

Terry Galloway has been studying ectoparasites in Manitoba for 35 years. In the past twenty years, he has worked closely with wildlife rehabilitation centres in Winnipeg to expand our knowledge of the startling diversity of these remarkable arthropods. Fleas, lice, flies, mites and ticks typically live on the external surfaces of their hosts, but among them are those that live in the pouches of pelicans, and inhabit the nasal cavities and feather shafts of birds. In this presentation, you will be introduced to these highly specialized organisms; you will learn a little about what they do and how they live together with their hosts. It's a guarantee you will never look at birds and mammals the same way again.

Monday, March 3, 2014

Stationarity on the Run: The New Normal for Manitoba's Climate

Dr. Danny Blair, *Associate Dean of Science,
University of Winnipeg*

The concept of 'normal' in climatology defines the range of conditions expected in the near future, based upon the recent past, with the assumption that the recent past is a reasonable approximation of the near future. Thanks to climate change, this assumption of 'stationarity' in the climate is no longer valid. One of the most important consequences of non-stationarity in the climate system is that the probability of extreme events will change. Dr. Blair will discuss the evidence for non-stationarity in Manitoba's rapidly changing climate, and will review the implications of continuing change in the coming decades on the nature and impacts of extreme weather.

Monday, March 17, 2014

(early start at 7:00 pm)

Annual General Meeting and Members' Night

Our Annual General Meeting will begin at 7:00pm, followed by two 20-minute member presentations. See the notice below.

We're looking for two 20-minute presentations on nature-related topics to accompany our Annual General Meeting on March 17th. Any travelogues should have a strong nature component. Contact Les McCann at lmccann2001@yahoo.com.

401-63 Albert Street
Winnipeg, MB R3B 1G4
Phone: 204-943-9029
info@naturemanitoba.ca

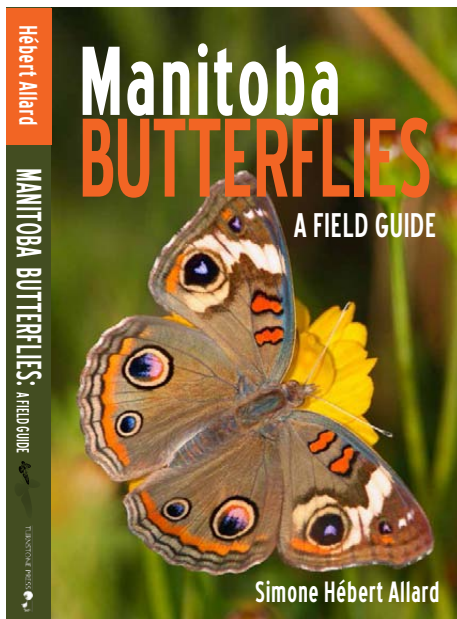


Become a Member of Nature Manitoba!

Individual \$40, Family \$55, Student \$20, Senior \$35
Join online at www.naturemanitoba.ca.

About Nature Manitoba

Nature Manitoba is people sharing a passion for nature. Since its foundation in 1920, Nature Manitoba's mission has been to promote awareness, appreciation and understanding of nature, and to preserve and enjoy it. In support of this mission, Nature Manitoba offers a wide variety of educational programs and publications, supports research into Manitoba's biological and geophysical diversity, organizes field trips and outdoor activities year-round, and advocates for the protection of our natural environment.



Manitoba Butterflies: A Field Guide

Available for \$39 (no tax) from www.naturemanitoba.ca (via PayPal), or order from our office at 204-943-9029 or info@naturemanitoba.ca. Shipping is \$10 for orders within Manitoba.

*“**M**anitoba Butterflies: A Field Guide will undoubtedly appeal to a wide range of people, from those just beginning to notice the butterfly fauna in their own backyards to those with a more serious interest in their biology, this publication has something for everyone. This well-illustrated and informative volume is a worthy addition to our natural history libraries.”*

– Deanna Dodgson

Julia Schoen



Searching for Insects at Spirit Sands

This fascinating trip, led by Bob Wrigley on June 22nd, was a follow-up to last season's workshop on insects. All participants were excited as they approached the sand hills, spreading out in every direction looking for both bugs and interesting plants (fortunately a couple of people in our group had botanical expertise to help with identification of the latter). Some of the insects found were the Big Sand Tiger Beetle (*Cicindela Formosa*), Darkling Beetle (*Eleodes tricolorata*), Sand Wasp (*Ammophila* sp.) and the Clouded Sulfur Butterfly (*Colias philodice*).