

Lorne Heshka



*Cypripedium  
acaule* – Pink  
Lady’s-slipper, or  
Moccasin-flower,  
in Nopiming  
Provincial Park.

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## SLIPPERS OF THE SPIRIT

The Genus *Cypripedium* in Manitoba

( Part 1 of 2 )

by Lorne Heshka

The orchids of the genus *Cypripedium*, commonly known as Lady’s-slippers, are represented by some forty-five species in the north temperate regions of the world. Six of these occur in Manitoba.

The name of our province is aboriginal in origin, borrowed from the Cree words *Manitou* (Great Spirit) and *wapow* (narrows) or, in Ojibwe, *Manitou-bau* or *baw*. The narrows referred to are the narrows of Lake Manitoba where strong winds cause waves to crash onto the limestone shingles of Manitou Island. The First Nations people believed that this sound was the voice or drumbeat of the Manitou.

A look at the geological map of Manitoba reveals that the limestone bedrock exposures of Manitou Island have been laid down by ancient seas and underlies all of southwest Manitoba. As a result, the substrates throughout this region are primarily calcareous in nature. The Precambrian or Canadian Shield occupies the portion of Manitoba east of Lake Winnipeg and north of the two major lakes, to Nunavut. Granitic or gneissic in nature, these ancient rocks create acidic substrates. In the north, the Canadian Shield adjacent to Hudson Bay forms a depression that is filled with dolomite and limestone strata of ancient marine origins.

With a geological map of Manitoba in hand, along with a plant hardiness map and an understanding of the ecological preference of each of the *Cypripedium* species, one can establish a reasonable probability of the range for our six indigenous Lady’s-slippers.

### *Cypripedium acaule*, the Pink Lady’s-slipper

Demanding a low nutrient, acidic substrate, the Pink Lady’s-slipper prefers Jack Pine forests on a sandy or granite substrate. In mid-June, canoeists on rivers and lakes of the Canadian Shield east of Lake Winnipeg or

*(continued on page 10...)*



Canada Post Publications Mail Sales  
Product Agreement No. 0040069231.

Issued 6 times a year as the official  
publication of Nature Manitoba.  
Subscriptions are a benefit of membership.  
See backpage for membership details.  
Opinions are those of the writers and not  
necessarily the organization as a whole.

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Advertising Rates: Full page \$200, half a  
page \$140. Contact the office for other  
sizes & rates. Rate reduced if ad appears  
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Submission deadline is the first day of the  
month prior to the newsletter publication.  
**Deadline for the May/June 2011 issue is  
April 1st, 2010.**

This newsletter is printed on Enviro 100  
20lb paper which is 100% Post Consumer  
Recycled and FSC certified.

### 2010/2011 Executive

President ..... Roger Turenne  
Past President ..... Les McCann  
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Vice-President ..... James Whitelaw  
Treasurer ..... Sean Worden  
Secretary ..... Helen Leeds

### 2010/2011 Board Members

Christian Artuso, Lewis Cocks,  
Donna Danyluk, Marilyn Hearn,  
Carol Hitchon, Michele Kading,  
Alain Louer, Michael Sykes

## President's Corner

by Roger Turenne

### ***Loving Parks in Tough Economic Times***

In January I was invited to take part in a panel discussion on "Setting Park Management Priorities in Tough Economic Times" at the Parks and Protected Areas Forum of Manitoba. My first inclination was to turn down the invitation because it seemed like a real downer of a subject with a highly questionable premise. But then I thought it might be fun to go there and question the premise.

Even if we were in "tough economic times", does it necessarily follow that parks and protected areas must suffer? I argued that, on the contrary, in times past parks have thrived in economically difficult periods. During the Great Depression, national parks never had it so good. In the United States, new parks were created and there was major building of infrastructure in existing parks, as part of the job stimulus programs. The same thing happened in Canada where, among other things, Riding Mountain National Park came into being.

Today, Nahanni National Park saw its area increase sixfold in the middle of the recession. Closer to home, the province somehow found \$10 million for the Foundation promoting the World Heritage Site on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

I pointed to the effect that "tough economic times" had on park attendance in the two countries. National Park attendance in Canada went down. Park attendance in the United States broke all previous records on the upside. Why?

National Parks have a much higher profile in the cultural makeup of the United States than they do on this side of the border. They are, to use the subtitle of a recent PBS documentary, "America's best idea."

Americans consider the parks their birthright; visiting them is a normal part of growing up. And doing so affordably. One reason attendance rose during the recession is that a vacation in a U.S. national park is seen as the best bang for the buck. This is not the case in Canada, where the fees are higher and the services are simply not comparable. True, with a smaller population and smaller budgets, we can't do as much. But there is more to it than that.

I have been fortunate to have traveled extensively in U.S. national parks, most recently last September when a group of us visited Yellowstone, Yosemite, Kings Canyon and Sequoia. Those are among the most visited parks in the country, parks that were, and may still be, in danger of being loved to death. We experienced first hand what 40,000 visitors a day crowded into 7 square miles of Yosemite Valley looked like.

And yet it all worked out. Somehow the National Park Service managed to keep order, direct traffic, efficiently handle tens of thousands of visitors daily, run an exemplary interpretation program, all with an apparently well run staff of over 1100 personnel for that park alone. "Tough economic times" do not appear to have been used as an excuse to cut back on those necessary services.

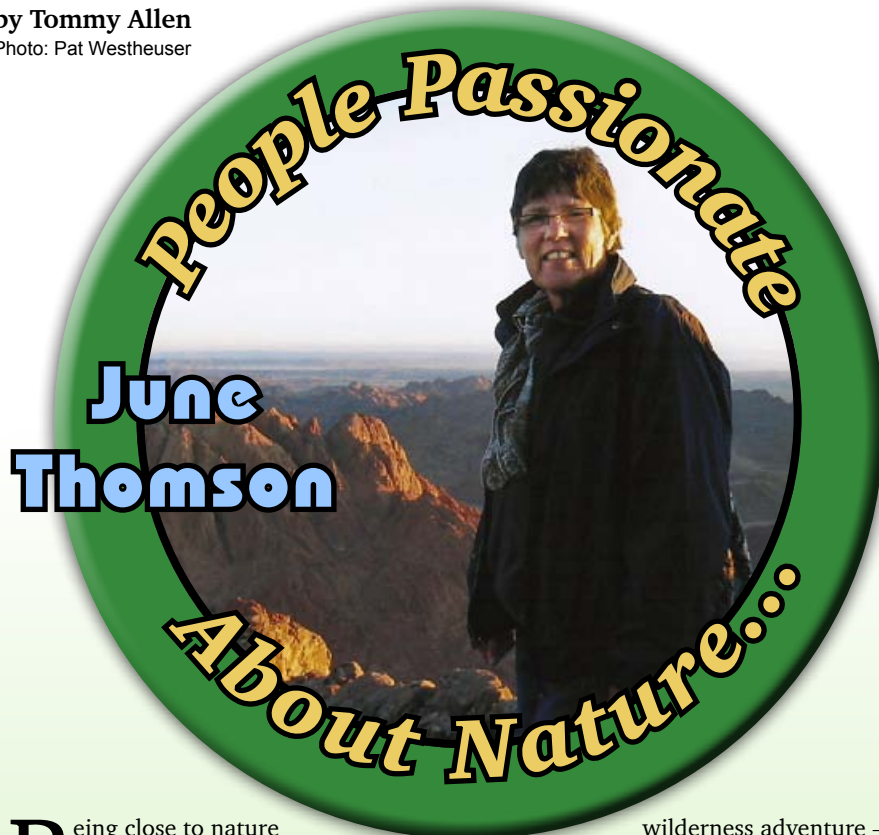
I have gathered enough anecdotal evidence over the years to convince me that a greater proportion of Americans love their parks than Canadians, and the "park culture" this engenders goes a long way towards protecting parks from being starved of funds. Nature Manitoba members do love their parks of course, but there just aren't enough of us.

What I found problematic with the theme of the workshop was the implied defeatism, with the old shibboleths of privatization and tinkering with fees being trotted out. I argued instead for more interpretation services and outreach to build up the constituency for parks, to foster a greater "park culture". Bring on the love, I said, sounding perhaps a bit too... American.



***"Bring on  
the love,  
I said, sounding  
perhaps a bit  
too... American."***





Being close to nature isn't new for June as she grew up on a farm in England, helping to raise the animals including horses and ponies for riding. She went to boarding school on the coast, and came back to the farm in the summers, sometimes hearing stories about her dad and cousins working in Canada. After her school years, she decided to train in occupational therapy, an unconventional choice for a woman in those days. She also had the desire to come to Canada, and with her training it was a simple matter of signing some papers and basically hopping on the boat.

June's first job was in Toronto, which she grew tired of after a year. A friend from England, then working in Winnipeg, came to Toronto to visit, and together they drove back to Winnipeg. After 6 weeks of working in Winnipeg she had met her husband-to-be, and so she settled in to stay. Family and work took up all of her time, so she didn't have the opportunity to explore the wilderness or do the horse-back riding that she loved.

It wasn't until 1994 that she finally had the time to start looking for some adventures of her own, and some friends mentioned the MNS. She began cycling with the MNS every week, and also undertook one of the Mantario Summer Program's canoe trips – her first Canadian

wilderness adventure – which she found rather challenging.

***"I've made many friends through the Grey Hares – you become the inspiration for each other."***

June has now taken trips to all continents of the world, some with friends she has met through the MNS, her favorite being penguin watching in Antarctica. The photo above is of June standing at the top of Mount Sinai in Egypt watching the sunrise, an event that you can only see if you start the trek at 1am. It sounds like she has had more than a few unwelcome moments too, mostly during trips to Utah. During one trip, the wind not only tore two canoes off of the van's roof, while driving, but it also threatened to sink the group's houseboat in the middle of Lake Powell, where June had to fight the wind and waves with only a single outboard motor.

Birding has also come to fascinate June, which she claims to have learned "through osmosis" from Don Wilson, and although it has been the focus of many of her trips, she maintains her view that "there is more to life than birds." She leads trips for both Nature Manitoba's Grey Hares and the Charleswood Ski Club. "I've made many friends through the Grey Hares – you become the inspiration for each other." She's an active volunteer too, helping International HOPE (Health Overseas Project Education), Cancer Care, Manitoba Theatre Centre, Fringe Festival and the MS Society.

## Welcome New Members!

January 15<sup>th</sup> - February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011:

Valerie Adams  
Charlene & Horst Erb  
Emily Franz-Lien  
Diane, Robert & Stephanie Gagnon  
Jaime Governo  
Patrick Graham  
Joan & Lorne Heshka  
Karlyn McFadyen  
Virginie Nayet  
David Newsom  
Gerry Risser (Assiniboine Tipis)  
John Sas  
Grace Gillis & Greg Sliva  
Robert Vivian  
Elise Watchorn  
Angela Wittmann & Family

*We apologize if you are a new member and have not been listed; the process of generating this list has yet to be perfected.*

## Nature Manitoba's Email

Our new official email address is [info@naturemanitoba.ca](mailto:info@naturemanitoba.ca), although the old address will still reach the same mailbox.



## SPRING 2011 GARAGE SALE

**Saturday, April 16<sup>th</sup>**

Nature Manitoba will be holding its next GIANT garage sale on Saturday, April 16 from 9:30-noon at the Westminster United Church. Donations are accepted at the church (basement) on Friday evening, between 6-9pm, or call the office at 943-9029 to drop it off there in advance. (Note that TVs and computer monitors will not be accepted)

## Volunteers needed!

Contact the office at 943-9029.



# Encounters of the *Natural* Kind

## Life with a Northern Saw-whet Owl

by Barry Konzelman

**O**n the evening of March 11, 2010 I heard what sounded like a truck back-up alarm outside our door in the distance. I heard it again the next night, investigated and saw the silhouette of a small owl on a tree branch about 4m up. It was a male Northern Saw-whet Owl calling for a mate, and he hooted almost all night every night for several weeks from the same tree. What energy! Saw-whets are not particularly rare but nocturnal and secretive, and we were lucky to have one establish a territory in our yard. Apparently he liked our wood lot (in St. Andrew's, not far from the Red River), with its Wood Duck boxes for potential nesting cavities.

A week later, we found his daytime roost in the middle of a dense cedar tree. He was easily approached and barely stirred, looking at us with one eye. He roosted on the same branch for 7 of the next 12 days. On March 22, I found an impaled dead Meadow Vole placed on a low branch of a pine tree; it disappeared 3 days later. Saw-whets will cache extra food when available. Later I collected 6 regurgitated pellets under his roosting spot which can be analyzed to determine their diet.

After March 23 the male called much less often and he began to move around the yard when I was out. Calling essentially ceased after March 30. I learned these were signs that he may have attracted a mate. Sure enough, on April 9 a female emerged from a nesting box when I approached, as

she did for the many bird enthusiasts who came to photograph her.

By the end of May she became skittish, and one night I heard several chicks chirping quietly for food. By early June, she no longer appeared. When the chicks are nearly ready to fledge the female leaves the nest, and the male alone cares for the young. On June 3, I opened the nesting box (which smelled awful), and saw 4 live chicks inside. Two appeared at the entry hole the next day and the male was seen in a nearby oak tree. On June 8, the young were banded, and within a week they had all fledged. The box was emptied, and in the 12 cm of debris we found ants, beetles and other insects in a labyrinth of passages living off the waste from the owlets.

The male trains the young for a few months and they slowly fan out from the area. If he likes our yard enough he may overwinter here or return next year. I hope that this super-cute and tame owl returns!

Special thanks to Christian Artuso, Jim Duncan, Gary Budyk, Heather Hinam (who banded the owls) and others for their help and information about this fascinating owl. This nest site has been entered into the Manitoba Breeding Bird Atlas.



Barry Konzelman

**Four chicks in the nesting box on June 3.**



**The female owl getting nervous and ready to take flight.**

Barry Konzelman

### Have a short story?

Please send us your short stories (approximately 300-500 words) of interesting encounters with Manitoba nature, whether from your backyard or out in the field. Accompanying photos appreciated!



# NEW REPLANTERS ON THE BLOCK: The Silver Plains Project



Robert and Coleen transform this piece of land, 14 km north of Morris.

Front yard: Before (top) - July 2007,  
After (bottom) - September 2010

Robert G. Mears

by Robert G. Mears

In 2006 my spouse and I engaged an idea that we had discussed for a while. At the time it felt right; the idea evoked a sense of joy in us. But, being a pair of landscaping neophytes, we didn't know the challenge we were embracing when we chose to replant our five acres in Silver Plains with Tallgrass Prairie flora.

Coincidentally, a second idea presented itself: A website about what we are doing, about the flora and fauna, etc. Today there are two facets to the Silver Plains Project: Actual and Virtual.

## Actual

Summer of 2006 was mostly occupied with grading, having the water suction line from the dugout pond repaired, trenching a water line (that allows planting a sedge meadow in the west yard), and installing a "babbling brook".

In 2007 we fine-tuned the grading: We completed a network of ditches for the sedge meadow, installed several mini-culverts to allow for drainage, and leveled – and dug ditches across – a pending nursery. At the time, the favoured approach for replanting was to cultivate and keep areas black for a year. (Overly ambitious as we were, we cultivated 70% of the site.) We then seeded or partially planted a couple of areas – along with other species, we sowed Big Bluestem in the front yard and planted Softstem Bulrush in the sedge meadow. Remaining black areas were cultivated again.

In 2008 we seeded the front yard (again) with a mix of grasses and forbs, added seedlings – started in pots – to the west and front yards, weeded partially planted areas, kept some areas black, re-graded the back yard (for better drainage), replaced some mini-culverts with mini-bridges, graded the ditch along the eastern edge of the site, and tweaked the nursery. We sowed Blue Grama grass on the top of the ring dike that surrounds two thirds of the property and watered it diligently for a month; this yielded a dense crop of Wild Mustard. We then seeded a portion of the east yard. Did everything right. Seedlings appeared. But a week of rain

drowned the baby plants. We later cultivated the top of the dike, again. Meanwhile the

Bulrushes doubled in area and a handful of Big Bluestems appeared. Nuttall's Alkali grass, sown in the east ditch in September, all germinated before the first frost.

In 2009 we experienced our first flood. (Strange, it's so quiet.) Fortunately we had uninterrupted access to Highway 75 and the yard, inside of the dike, drained before the flood arrived; we were able to start on parts of the site fairly early. We continued keeping areas black (this time with a harrow) and began concentrating on planting smaller areas, mostly with seedlings that we germinated. And we weeded. (I developed a fixation with Quackgrass and Smooth Brome. Fortunately this did not require therapy.) The Big Bluestem increased in numbers, the Bulrushes expanded exponentially,

(continued on page 23...)

# Nature in the News...

## Trap Kills Cougar in Southwestern Manitoba

by Carol Sanders (excerpted from the Winnipeg Free Press print edition January 15, 2011 A11)

**B** iologist Bill Watkins braced himself Friday for the latest crime scene investigation – a rare cougar victims unit.

Manitoba Conservation officers were transporting the body of the big cat caught by a trapper near Boissevain to Winnipeg for examination.

“It’s so rare, it’s exciting,” he said. “We know so little about cougars in Manitoba. We’ll be able to examine it and learn from it and add to our database. What are they doing here, where are they coming from and how many there might be.”

The last time anyone got their hands on a cougar in Manitoba was nearly seven years ago.

Two cougars were found in separate incidents around Duck Mountain Provincial Park and Riding Mountain National Park. One was shot and one was caught in a trap, Watkins said. This week, trapper Grant Armstrong found the large male in a power snare set for coyotes.



“It’s a quick-kill trap,” said Watkins. The condition of the carcass can tell a lot about a cougar, he said. “Does it have a lot of body fat or was it skinny? Did it show any signs of injury? Is it an older animal or a younger animal? That’s the first tier of information. Then we do a necropsy and begin looking for things like parasite load or any disease. They’re important indicators of where an animal might be coming from.”

Whenever there’s a cougar sighting in Manitoba, people wonder if it’s wild or escaped from a zoo, he said. In the old days, this used to be their home.

“Historically, Manitoba was part of the cougar range, but it disappeared in the mid- to late 1800s when settlers settled the area and they were shot or trapped out,” Watkins said.

“Now we’re beginning to see cougars on a fairly regular basis, about one a year.” He suspects they’re following river corridors from South and North Dakota up into Manitoba.

## Nature Manitoba's

# 91<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Monday, March 21<sup>st</sup> 2011 at 7:00pm

The A.G.M will be held at Le Centre Culturel Franco-Manitobain (340 Provencher Blvd.) and begins at 7:00pm, followed by a Discovery Evening presentation (*see page 22*). Please be on time. We can't start the meeting until we have a quorum.

## Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Minutes of the preceding AGM (March 15, 2010)
3. Annual Report of the President
4. Treasurer's Report and the Report of the Auditors
5. Appointment of Auditors for 2011
6. Annual Reports of Nature Manitoba Committees
7. Election of Directors of the Board
8. Election of the Executive of Nature Manitoba
9. Presentation of Awards
10. Adjournment

## Nominees for 2011/2012

### Executive Board Members:

**President** ..... Roger Turenne  
**Executive Vice-President** ..... Don Himbeault  
**Vice-President** ..... James Whitelaw  
**Treasurer** ..... Sean Worden  
**Secretary** ..... Al Louer

### Directors:

Christian Artuso	Michele Kading
Scott Falkingham	Rose Kuzina
Carol Hitchon	Richard Staniforth

### Continuing Directors: (not up for election)

Lewis Cocks	Les McCann ( <i>Past President</i> )
Donna Danyluk	Michael Sykes

(Biographies of nominees on pages 8-9...)



*Celebrating Nature Dinner 2011*  
**A Songbird Soirée**

Thursday May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
**Victoria Inn & Conference Centre**  
1808 Wellington Ave, Winnipeg  
**6 p.m.** - Reception & Silent Auction  
**7:30 p.m.** - Dinner  
**Dress:** Business Casual

**Featuring:**  
Live Birds of Prey Exhibit  
Message from Dr. James Duncan  
(*Manager of the Conservation Data Centre*)  
Display by Christian Artuso  
(*Manitoba Breeding Bird Atlas*)

**Chances to Win!**  
Premier silent auction packages include  
vacation packages, tours,  
nature art and much more!

Raffle for 14k gold pendant "Crocus"  
by local artist Peter Sawatzky

**Ticket Price: \$100.00**  
Proceeds go to NCC Manitoba Region  
A portion of the cost available for tax receipt

**For ticket reservations please contact NCC directly at: (204) 942-7414**  
**Or by email: [carly.dow@natureconservancy.ca](mailto:carly.dow@natureconservancy.ca)**

Photo: Christian Artuso  
Golden-winged Warbler

# NATURE MANITOBA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## Nominees for 2011/2012: Biographies

### EXECUTIVE



**Roger Turenne**  
*President*

Roger joined the MNS in 1986, has been a frequent presenter at the Indoor Program and, at various times, has been active in the Outdoor Committee, the Parks Committee, and as a trip leader. He is an avid photographer and wilderness traveler.

He was active for many years in the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, working for wilderness protection.

Prior to his retirement and active involvement in the conservation movement, Roger was a policy advisor to the Government of Manitoba, and before that, served as a Canadian diplomat in Europe and in Africa. He is the author of a book on the Franco-Manitoban community and does occasional freelance work as a political analyst for Radio-Canada.

Roger joined the Nature Manitoba board in April 2008 and became President in March 2009. He has worked hard to promote Nature Manitoba's new visual identity, revitalize and modernize the organization, and strengthen its membership.



**Don Himbeault**  
*Executive Vice-President*

Don is a new member of Nature Manitoba, and given his affinity for cross country skiing, cycling, canoeing, and the great outdoors, he misses not having joined sooner. He is a Professional Engineer (Mechanical), with a passion for the environment

and sustainable living, which is why you may see him driving around in what is perhaps Winnipeg's only battery electric vehicle. Don looks forward to sharing his prior board experience (councilor and President of the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Manitoba) with Nature Manitoba.



**James Whitelaw**  
*Vice-President*

James Whitelaw has a B.Sc. (Ecological Sciences) from the University of Edinburgh and a Ph.D. (Zoology) from the University of Liverpool. He was a staff scientist at the Royal Society Aldabra Research Station and worked

on urban nature conservation projects in London. He was a member of the management committee of the Scottish Wildlife Trust (Tayside), on the regional committee of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, and was for seven years chairman and secretary of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, Tayside Branch, before fleeing back to Canada in 2004.

James has been a Nature Manitoba member since 2004 and has greatly enjoyed the bird outings, indoor meetings and workshops. James is a keen birder and is interested in all aspects of natural history and environmental issues. He enjoys his family, his dogs, and his birding trips. He has been moved on by the military in Venezuela, detained by the army in Ecuador, and robbed at knifepoint in Gambia, and is looking forward to more birding adventures.



**Sean Worden**  
*Treasurer*

Sean Worden is a Certified Management Accountant and currently holds the title of Controller with Building Products and Concrete Supply. Sean serves on the marketing committee of the Manitoba Ready Mix Concrete Association and is working

on the rebranding and the redesign of its website. He is an active outdoor trip leader and has been on the board of Nature Manitoba as its Treasurer for the past three years. In addition, Sean also performs taxation and book-keeping services to clients in northeast Winnipeg. Sean has been married to Maureen for 19 years, they have two teenage daughters and a neurotic golden retriever.



**Al Louer**  
*Secretary*

Alain has been a member of Nature Manitoba since 1996, attracted by his great love for the outdoors. He knew joining would lead to opportunities such as hiking the Mantario trail, and now feels the accomplishment of doing so. He went to the Mantario

cabin for the first time, as a participant, during the 2001 summer program, the year the cabin rebuilding was completed. He chaired the Mantario Committee for several years, and is also active in the outdoor program with hiking, canoeing, skiing and snowshoeing. Although far from an expert, he enjoys the learning experience of our birding and botany outings, the Discovery Evenings, the Workshops and the Garden Tour. Alain is a government worker and has been a volunteer for the Union Nationale Française since 1994.



# DIRECTORS



## **Christian Artuso**

Christian Artuso recently completed his Ph.D. in Environment and Geography at the University of Manitoba. His thesis examined how Eastern Screech-Owls are affected by human population density. Christian works for Birds Studies Canada, coordinating the Manitoba Breeding Bird Atlas and

other projects such as Golden-winged Warbler research. Christian joined the Nature Manitoba board in 2008 and is involved with the Manitoba Avian Records Committee (MARC). He regularly leads bird outings and participates in numerous bird surveys such as the Manitoba Nocturnal Owl Survey (MNOS), Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and Christmas Bird Count (CBC). He has published many articles on Manitoba's avifauna and recently received the Cliff Shaw Award for outstanding contributions to *Blue Jay*. Christian is passionate about conservation and committed to public outreach, regularly giving presentations. He has photographed over 2500 species of birds, visit [www.artusophotos.com](http://www.artusophotos.com) and [artusobirds.blogspot.com](http://artusobirds.blogspot.com) to see some of his work.



## **Scott Falkingham**

Since joining Nature Manitoba just a few years ago, Scott Falkingham has had several life changing experiences, one of which occurred on one of the first trips he attended when he was introduced to caving in Manitoba. He has since become an integral part of the Speleological Society of Manitoba,

currently serving as Vice-President. Scott is also an active member of CASARA (Civil Aviation Search & Rescue Association) where he volunteers as a spotter and navigator.

Scott is a Manitoban who really loves the winter, when he gets to spend his time exploring on showshoes. When not outside Scott spends his time working as a web developer, trying to build a better internet. He recently moved near St. Genevieve in order to be closer to nature, and is very much enjoying the great views of the sky at night.

## **Carol Hitchon**

Carol Hitchon has been a member of Nature Manitoba for several years. She is interested in conservation and enjoys spending as much time as possible pursuing outdoor activities such as hiking, camping, cycling and skiing. Carol is currently Nature Manitoba's representative on the Board of the Manitoba Eco-Network.

James Whitelaw



## **Michele Kading**

Michele joined the Nature Manitoba (MNS) Board of Directors in 2000 as the Action Vice-President. With a particular interest in Winnipeg's urban environmental issues she served in this office until March 2003 when she became the Executive Vice-President (until March 2007). Michele continues to play a key role on the Policy Review Committee and Bylaws Review Committee. She is the Chair of the Human Resources Committee (since 2008). Michele has worked as a professional interpretive naturalist since 1980 in Manitoba and Ontario. In 1992, she became the Head of Interpretation at Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre. Her interests include birding, photography, gardening (prairie plants and water gardens), travel, and exploring wetlands and interpretive centres around the world. She has birded and delivered wetland education workshops to teachers in 24 Caribbean locations. Michele served on Winnipeg's first Civic Environmental Committee (December 2001 to 2005). She has an M. Sc. in Biogeography and an undergraduate degree from the University of Winnipeg (Physical Geography, Biology, and Environmental Studies).



## **Rose Kuzina**

Rose Kuzina joined Nature Manitoba two years ago in order to enjoy the outdoors with other people. A writer/editor and archaeologist by trade, Rose has worked for the national museums of Gambia and Botswana, exploring the cultural and natural history of western and south-

ern Africa. Back in Manitoba she is keen on discovering the different aspects of the province, and is dedicated to conserving and protecting the environment. Working for Parks Canada, Agriculture Canada, and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Rose was given the opportunity to visit western Canadian historic sites and northern reserves in Manitoba. She is also a member of the Native Orchid Conservation Inc. and Manitoba Editors Association.



## **Richard Staniforth**

Richard was born and grew up in the countryside of Devonshire, England. He emigrated to Canada in his early 20s, and since 1975 has taught plant and ecology courses at the University of Winnipeg, from which he retired three years ago. He and his wife, Diana, are passionately interested

in nature and spend vacations camping and hiking. Richard is the current president of the Manitoba Association of Plant Biologists and is actively involved with the Manitoba Breeding Bird Survey. He is currently involved with studies of ferns and their distributions in Manitoba.

Aldabra – designated a UNESCO world heritage site – is the topic of James Whitelaw's presentation following the A.G.M., see page 22 for details.

# SLIPPERS OF THE SPIRIT

## The Genus *Cypripedium* in Manitoba

(...continued from page 1)

along the Grassy River system north and northwest of Lake Winnipeg expect to encounter this distinctive orchid on portage trails or near their campsites. In southeast Manitoba, the sandy beach ridges that were formed along the shores of post-glacial Lake Agassiz are now dominated by Jack Pine forest, an excellent habitat for the Pink Lady's-slipper. Occasionally this orchid is encountered on sphagnum hummocks, deep in Black Spruce and Tamarack bogs.

The epithet *acaule* is from the Greek *a*, meaning "without", and *caulis* for "stem", in reference to the absence of a visible stem. This characteristic accounts for an alternate common name, Stemless Lady's-slipper. The most popular local name for this species, however, is Moccasin-flower – an apt description of the labellum or lip of this attractive species.

Unlike our other Lady's-slippers, this species has a pendulant lip with an elongated opening hidden by in-curved edges. Only large queen bumblebees are strong enough to force their way into the slipper. The bumblebees soon learn that the effort required to enter the flower is not rewarded with nectar and visits to these flowers are discontinued. As a consequence pollination rates of this orchid are often very low.

As is characteristic of most *cypripediums*, the Pink Lady's-slipper is highly variable both in plant size and in flower color. Flowers emerging from the bud are greenish-white, turning shades of pink as they mature. The hue varies from a soft blush pink to a deep rose. White-flowered forms, relatively common in eastern North America, are rare in Manitoba. Mysteriously, the flower stems of several populations in 2005 were extremely short, with blossoms barely extending above the reindeer moss surrounding them.

The Pink Lady's-slipper faces several threats to its survival. Its preferred habitats in Manitoba, especially where they border on rivers or lakes, are being selected as prime

recreational cottage development. Over the years this has led to reductions or complete losses of many populations. Even though this is a species that has proven virtually impossible to transplant, gardeners continue to dig these plants from the wild. To add insult to an already diminishing population, many of the Jack Pine forests in which it flourishes have been leased for lumbering.

### *Cypripedium arietinum*, the Ram's-head Lady's-slipper

The range of this species extends in an arching band from the southeast corner of the province through the Interlake region across to the Saskatchewan border. Throughout

much of its range in North America, the Ram's-head Lady's-slipper is rare. An exception to this is in Manitoba's northern Interlake region where several sites have an abundance of plants.

This species is of particular botanical interest in that it displays the primitive characteristic of having separate lateral sepals – not fused as in other *cypripediums*. The shape of the pouch along with the placement and appearance of the sepals and petals has led to the fanciful common name of this species. The specific name *arietinum* is from the Latin *arietinus*, meaning "of a ram".

In contrast to the showiness of other Lady's-slippers, the ram's-head is rather inconspicuous and the small dark flowers blend with the background shadows of its coniferous forest habitat. Careful searching, rather than a casual stroll, will offer the reward of finding this fascinating slipper.

Equally at home in two distinct habitats, the plants have differing growth habits in each. Single stemmed plants predominate in the moist periphery of Black Spruce and Tamarack sphagnum bogs, whereas large clumps of multiple stems are common in spruce or Jack Pine forests on sand

or limestone substrates.

This species has an interesting blooming sequence in Manitoba, with plants of northern populations blooming earlier than those in the south. At the northern extent of its range in Jack Pine forests of the limestone karsts, the Ram's-head Lady's-slipper generally begins blooming in late May. Populations in Black spruce and Tamarack bogs 450 km to the south bloom later, around the second week of

***"To add insult to an already  
diminishing population,  
many of the Jack Pine forests  
in which it flourishes have been  
leased for lumbering."***



*Cypripedium arietinum* – Ram's-head  
Lady's-slipper at the Interlake Forestry Centre.



June. A plausible explanation is that the limestone of the karst region retains heat while the wetness of sphagnum bogs maintains a cooler substrate.

Pollinated by small bees, this flower has the curious habit of dropping its dorsal sepal over the opening of the labellum once fertilization is complete. Numerous empty seed capsules from the previous year often accompany the new spring growths, suggesting that this species is readily pollinated.

Clear-cut lumbering of Jack Pine forests in the north and draining of forested wetlands in the south are major threats to the survival of the Ram's-head Lady's-slipper.

## *Cypripedium candidum*, the Small White Lady's-slipper

There is something intangible about the Small White Lady's-slipper that fascinates everyone who comes in contact with it. The shining white slippers radiate an inner glow that is swift to capture attention, but slow to relinquish it. The scientific name *candidum* is from the Latin *candidus*, meaning "shining or dazzling white".

Particular in its habitat requirements, the Small White Lady's-slipper prefers mesic to wet calcareous soils in prairies or prairie openings in the wooded grassland. The present range of the Small White Lady's-slipper is restricted to the south-central area of the province where remnant populations have been spared the plough for various reasons. The largest populations are found in the 2000 hectare Tall Grass Prairie Preserve in southeast Manitoba.

Prior to settlement, prairie fires regularly removed excessive thatch and stifled the encroachment of woody perennials, creating an ideal growing environment. Controlled grass fires are now used as the primary management tool in maintaining healthy populations.

In June 2006, at the invitation of a landowner, my wife Joan and I visited our most northerly population of the Small White Lady's-slipper. The slippers were thriving within hay meadows on a section of land that, aside from removal of a hay crop each year, has not been disturbed. Mowing of the hay in August does not affect the dormant orchids but simulates the natural burning cycle. This prevents a build-up of thatch and deters the encroachment of woody perennials that would be detrimental to the population.

In addition to the loss of habitat to agriculture, the Small White Lady's-slipper faces natural threats to its survival. An early blooming period (late May to early June) makes them vulnerable to late frosts that may damage the flowers and severely reduce the reproductive cycle. The plants themselves are not killed but their vigor may be reduced, making plants susceptible to disease and insect damage.

A more insidious threat comes from hybridization with the Yellow Lady's-slipper. Environmental changes have encouraged the proliferation of both the Large and Small Yellow Lady's-slippers in and around populations of the Small White Lady's-slipper. With shared pollinators, natural hybridization has resulted in populations with an altered genetic makeup. In 2005, the Manitoba Orchid Society sponsored a research project to study the effects of hybridization. Students from the University of Winnipeg responsible for this study found that up to 31% of the two studied populations in the south Interlake may be hybrids.

Thankfully, this species is now protected. In 1981 COSEWIC (Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in

Canada) designated it as an endangered species throughout Canada and in 1992 it received full protection under Manitoba's Endangered Species Act.

*Lorne Heshka is Past President of Native Orchid Conference, Inc., a guest lecturer at the Churchill Northern Study Centre and Past President of the Manitoba Orchid Society.*

*This is the first part of a two-part article that was first published in The Native Orchid Conference Journal, Vol. 7 No. 4 (Oct/Nov/Dec 2010). The Native Orchid Conference (not to be confused with our local group, Native Orchid Conservation Inc.) is a North American organization dedicated to the study, conservation and enjoyment of the native orchids of the United States and Canada.*

*The continuation of this article will appear in the May/June 2011 issue of Nature Manitoba News.*



*Cypripedium candidum* – Small White Lady's-slipper in the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve.

## References

- Ames, D, et al. 2005. *Orchids of Manitoba, A Field Guide*, Native Orchid Conservation, Inc.
- Corkery, M. T., et al. 1994. *Geological Highway Map of Manitoba*, Geological Survey of Canada, Manitoba Minerals Division.
- Catling P.M. and Whiting R.E. 1986. *Orchids of Ontario, An Illustrated Guide*, The CanaColl Foundation.

# OUTDOOR activities

To receive email updates for outdoor activities, please send a message to [nmtriplist@mts.net](mailto:nmtriplist@mts.net)

## Pinawa or Mystery ski

**Saturday, March 12**

Join Lorne Klassen on a ski to Pinawa.

If the conditions are not adequate the ski will be closer to Winnipeg.

To register please email Lorne at [l.klassen@mts.net](mailto:l.klassen@mts.net) or call 269-2445.

Email preferred. [Rate 2-3]

## Assiniboine Park & Forest hike

**Saturday, March 19**

Hike throughout Assiniboine Park and part of the Assiniboine Forest area.

Contact Rose Kuzina at 338-9369 or [rkuzina@mts.net](mailto:rkuzina@mts.net). [Rate 1-2]

## Pine Point Rapids & Pinawa Dam hike

**Saturday, April 2**

It may be wet, but the rapids will be magnificent in the Whiteshell area on this all-day hike.

Contact Rose Kuzina at 338-9369 or [rkuzina@mts.net](mailto:rkuzina@mts.net). [Rate 2-3]

## Kildonan - Scotia Street hike

**Sunday, April 10**

Join Al Louer for a morning hike around Kildonan Park and Scotia Street.

To register call 235-1790 or email [alainlouer@hotmail.com](mailto:alainlouer@hotmail.com). [Rate 1-2]

## Hecla Island hike

**Saturday, April 17**

Hike throughout Hecla Island and experience lakeshore geography, marshes, and Icelandic culture/heritage on this all-day excursion.

Contact Rose Kuzina at 338-9369 or [rkuzina@mts.net](mailto:rkuzina@mts.net). [Rate 2-3]

## Grand Trunk Trail hike

**Saturday, April 23, 2011**

On the day following Earth Day, join Headingley Grand Trunk Trail board member Les McCann for a ~10km, 1.5-2hr interpretive walk. Start at 1pm, meet at Wescana St. and the trail.

We will observe the various natural ecosystems, see some returned migratory birds and hopefully the resident Northern Shrike. Everyone welcome. Email [lmcann2001@yahoo.ca](mailto:lmcann2001@yahoo.ca). [Rate 1]

## Hunt Lake hike

**Saturday, April 30**

Join Les McCann on a hike of the popular Hunt Lake Trail close to West Hawk Lake in Whiteshell Provincial Park. The trail has a beautiful rocky landscape and has many beautiful sights.

To register call Les at 895-8108 or email [lmcann2001@yahoo.com](mailto:lmcann2001@yahoo.com). [Rate 3]

## Woodland Caribou canoe trip

**July 2011**

Join Jerry Ameis for another canoeing adventure into Woodland Caribou Park (WCP). Enjoy 10 days of canoeing in the wilderness (includes 1-2 non-travel days). The trip begins and ends at Wallace Lake. We will use the Wanipigow River to enter WCP. While there is a little wiggle room as to start and end dates, my preferred dates are Mon. July 11 to Wed. July 20. The trip will involve at least 35 portages (one being 1.5km). You need a minimalist approach to what you carry. Trip limited to 6 people (3 canoes) because of tent site issues.

**Book early** (last year, there were more than six people who wanted to go) Email Jerry at [raven981@mts.net](mailto:raven981@mts.net) for details.

## PAID Summer in the Whiteshell Provincial Park!

Nature Manitoba is looking for two skilled wilderness enthusiasts to lead the Mantario Summer Program.

### **Required skills:**

- above-average abilities in canoeing, hiking, and group leadership
- experience leading groups into wilderness environments
- enjoy interacting with diverse groups of potentially spirited newbies
- some cooking ability would make your life easier
- a first aid certificate (Wilderness First Aid preferred)
- a Drivers' License

### **Recommended:**

- Food Handlers Certificate (we offer an opportunity for a free course if you don't have one)
- Having access to a vehicle

### **The Position Entails:**

- Leading participants by canoe to Nature Manitoba's Wilderness Education Centre, departing from Big Whiteshell Lake each Monday and returning Fridays;
- Having the physical ability to canoe and hike 20km in one day, twice weekly for 8 weeks, with a canoe by your side (or on your head);
- Leading groups on extra excursion hikes in the vicinity of the island, approximately an extra 10 km per week;
- Cooking meals for participants;
- Half day of paid work on Saturdays to prepare for each subsequent week;
- 10 weeks of paid employment from June 20 to September 2, 2011: 6 weeks at the cabin, 2 weeks of training and maintenance, 2 week of extras (including the additional Saturday work), plus 1 week of unpaid vacation
- Rates of pay commensurate to qualifications and experience
- Training and ongoing supervision provided

**INTERESTED? Send your resume by March 25, 2011 to:**

Mantario Summer Program Committee  
C/O Nature Manitoba  
401 - 63 Albert St.  
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 1G4



**Mantario**  
The Wilderness Experience



## GREY HARES

(Wednesdays)

### March 9

Ski, location TBA.

Bruce and Wendy Ward at 667-0386.

### March 23

Ski or hike Beaudry Park trails.

Jerry Zaste at 888-2442. [Rate 2]

### March 30

Ski, hike or cycle Birds Hill, lunch at Pine Ridge Hollow restaurant.

Marilyn Hearn at 895-4659. [Rate 2]

### April 6

Cycle new trails in Winnipeg.

Ted Harvey at 889-5725. [Rate 2-3]

### April 13

Cycle River Road to Selkirk.

Denise Levesque at 889-2297. [Rate 2-3]

### April 20

Hike and migration birdwatching at Rat River Marsh.

Julia Schoen at 269-8004. [Rate 1-2]

### April 27

Tour of the mint, lunch and cycle on the Bishop Grandin paths.

Bryon Burville at 233-7904. [Rate 2]

## BIRD OUTINGS

The following walks are the beginning of a series being led by birder Brad Carey. The walks will be on Wednesdays and begin at 6:30pm. Contact Brad for details at 832-5758.

### Wednesday, April 27

Assiniboine Park

### Wednesday, May 4

St. Vital Park

The walks will continue until June 7, with the locations posted in the next issue of Nature Manitoba News.

## Trip Leader Forms

Nature Manitoba's Trip Leader forms are available on our website, on the "Outdoor Activities" page. Please fill them out for every trip, and return them to the Nature Manitoba office.

Let the office know if you'd prefer to have hard copies mailed to you.

## Classified Ads

For \$15 you get 3 lines/30 words to place a classified ad in Nature Manitoba News! E-mail the editor at [naturemanitobanews@gmail.com](mailto:naturemanitobanews@gmail.com).

## 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.

## 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 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](http://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.



Les McCann

### Deep Winter Skiing (from Les McCann)

This photo is of the Grey Hares outing to the Turtle Mountains on January 19-20. This hardy group experiencing no difficulty skiing with a temperature of -28C. A few days later, the January 22 outing under the regular Outdoor Program proved equally adept at handling even colder temperatures; the morning temperature at Pinawa was -37C. Both groups not only handled the temperatures but truly had an enjoyable experience.

# BIRD NEWS

by Gordon Grief

**T**his month's sightings table covers the period from December 1, 2010 to the end of January 2011. I have not included birds which were seen on the various Christmas Bird Counts in the province as these are covered by Rob Parsons in a separate article on page 16.

I did not include the individual sightings of the following species as it would have taken an additional half page.

- Northern Goshawk – *Elma, Erickson, Grosse Isle, Lac du Bonnet, Winnipeg.*
- Red-bellied Woodpecker – *Giroux, Kleefeld, Lyleton, St. Francois Xavier, Winnipeg (2 locations).*

- Northern Flicker – *Dufresne, Winnipeg (2 locations).*
- American Robin – *Brandon, St. Jean Baptiste, Winnipeg (4 locations).*
- Northern Cardinal – *Brandon, Lakeshore Heights, Steinbach, Winnipeg (3 locations).*

I have noted six sightings of Red-bellied Woodpeckers. However, Sherrie Versluis of the Preferred Perch has had her customers report 13 individual birds.

There were numerous sightings of Northern Hawk Owls with as many as eight individuals being seen on a day's outing. The majority of these birds were seen along the edge of the boreal forest but there were birds seen near Morden and in St. Norbert. On the other hand, there were very few reports of Great Gray Owls.

Probably the most unusual sighting is the Sandhill Crane seen near Deloraine. It has been feeding amongst a herd of cattle and is probably obtaining both food and warmth from their presence. It will be interesting to see if this bird survives until spring.

*If you have some unusual winter bird sightings be sure to send them to me at 31 Kara Cove, Winnipeg, R2N 3C2 or to the Nature Manitoba office. If you are on the internet you can e-mail your sightings to me at ggrief@mts.net.*

## Great Bird Search 2011

The next Great Bird Search will be held on May 28, 2011. More information will be in the May/June issue of the newsletter. Apologies for stating that more info would be in *this* issue.

## Attention Parents and Keen Teen Birders!

**T**he Long Point Bird Observatory is looking for keen teen birders to apply for the **2011 Doug Tarry Natural History Fund - Young Ornithologist Workshop** to be held from Friday, July 29 to Sunday, August 7 at the Long Point Bird Observatory in Ontario.

Participants will receive hands-on training in field ornithology including bird banding, censusing, field identification, birding trips, preparing museum specimens, guest lectures, and more! Six of Canada's most promising ornithologists between the ages of 13-17 will be selected to attend, and will receive the Doug Tarry Bird Study Award to cover all on-site expenses. For those traveling long distances, special grants may also be available to help offset air travel costs. Applications are due April 15, 2011. For more information and an application form, contact us at [lpbo@birdscanada.org](mailto:lpbo@birdscanada.org), or visit [www.birdscanada.org/longpoint](http://www.birdscanada.org/longpoint) and go to the "Doug Tarry Young Ornithologist" section of the left-side column.

*"This has been an awesome week. We did a lot of banding each morning, and got to handle at least 16 species of birds including the Northern Waterthrush, Tennessee Warbler, Warbling Vireo and Cardinal. We learned about the whole process, from setting up nets to aging by skull ossification."*

– Philina English, age 14



Dennis Swayze

A Black-capped Chickadee resting between feedings – a common sight in Manitoba.



<b>Species</b>	<b>#'s</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Observers</b>
Canada Goose	6	Dec 4 10	Seven Sisters Falls	R. Koes, Nature Manitoba outing
American Wigeon	3	Dec 5 10	Winnipeg	R. Parsons
American Black Duck	1	Dec 5 10	Winnipeg	R. Parsons
Mallard	28	Dec 5 10	Winnipeg	R. Parsons
Mallard	30	Jan 16 11	Winnipeg	R. Iverson
Mallard	1	Jan 5 11	Grand Rapids	J. Kayer
Northern Shoveler	1	Dec 5 10	Winnipeg	R. Parsons
Lesser Scaup	3	Dec 5 10	Winnipeg	R. Parsons
Long-tailed Duck	1	Dec 1 10	Pine Falls	R. Porteous, A. Mickey, G. Budyk, R. Clarke
Bufflehead	1	Dec 1 10	Pine Falls	R. Porteous, A. Mickey, G. Budyk, R. Clarke
Common Goldeneye	5	Jan 5 11	Bracken Falls	R. Clarke, R. Porteous, R. Austin
Common Goldeneye	4	Jan 5 11	Grand Rapids	J. Kayer
Common Merganser	1	Dec 1 10	Elma	R. Porteous, A. Mickey, G. Budyk, R. Clarke
Common Merganser	5	Jan 5 11	Grand Rapids	J. Kayer
Common Merganser	1	Jan 15 11	St. Norbert	G. Grief
Red-breasted Merganser	1	Dec 1 10	Grand Rapids	J. Kayer
Spruce Grouse	30	Jan 5 11	Kawinaw Lake area	J. Kayer
Common Loon	1	Dec 28 10	Souris	D. French
American White Pelican	1	Dec 1 10	Grand Rapids	J. Kayer
Double-crested Cormorant	1	Jan 26 11	Seven Sisters Falls	G. Budyk, D. Dodgson
Bald Eagle	1	Jan 5 11	Grand Rapids	J. Kayer
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	Dec 1 10	Kleefeld	D. Fast
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	Dec 4 10	Seven Sisters Falls	R. Koes, Nature Manitoba outing
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	Dec 20 10	Winnipeg	G. Budyk, D. Dodgson
Golden Eagle	1	Dec 9 10	Lyleton	J. Murray
American Kestrel	1	Dec 24 10	MacGregor	L. Pearn
American Kestrel	1	Jan 11 11	Steinbach	V, J. & R. Reimer
American Kestrel	1	Jan 11 11	Ste. Anne	V, J. & R. Reimer
American Kestrel	1	Jan 9 11	Winnipeg	D. & B. Saunders
Gyr Falcon	1	Jan 23 11	Ste. Anne	L. Giesbrecht
Sandhill Crane	1	Jan 17 11	Deloraine	fide K. De Smet
Black-legged Kittiwake	1	Dec 30 10	St. Jean Baptiste	R. Mooi
Eurasian Collared-Dove	2	Jan 24 11	Brandon	D. Thompson, M. & C. Sangster
Mourning Dove	2	Dec 28 10	Selkirk	G. Cooper
Mourning Dove	1	Dec 29 10	Winnipeg	G. Walz
Mourning Dove	1	12/30/10 to 1/13/11	Dufresne	B. Krosney
Mourning Dove	2	Jan 5 11	MacGregor	D. Gamache
Northern Saw-whet Owl	1	Jan 24 11	Brandon	D. Thompson, M. & C. Sangster
Northern Flicker	1	Dec 1 10	Winnipeg	D. Goodman
Northern Flicker	1	Jan 14 11	Winnipeg	D. Boettcher
American Crow	80	Dec 30 10	Winnipeg	M. Lacroix
Horned Lark	10	Dec 24 10	Virden	C. & M. Sangster
Townsend's Solitaire	1	Jan 10 11	Brandon	C. Cuthbert
Hermit Thrush	1	Jan 17 11	Winnipeg	D. Boettcher
Varied Thrush	1	Dec 9 10	Winnipeg Beach	L. Robinson
Brown Thrasher	1	12/14/10 to 1/17/11	Altona	A. Schmitt
Cedar Waxwing	5	Jan 20 11	Winnipeg	D. Boettcher
Song Sparrow	1	Jan 1 11	Ericksdale	B. & D. Saunders
White-throated Sparrow	4	Dec 3 10	Winnipeg	G. Budyk
Harris's Sparrow	1	Dec 3 10	Winnipeg	G. Budyk
Harris's Sparrow	1	Dec. 2010	St. Jean Baptiste	J. Manikel
Red-winged Blackbird	2	Dec 19 10	Blumenort	L. Giesbrecht
Rusty Blackbird	1	Dec 1 10	Morden	P. Goossen
Rusty Blackbird	1	Jan 9 11	Whiteshell River	A. Aug, A. Smith
Common Grackle	2	Dec 4 10	Pine Falls	R. Koes, Nature Manitoba outing
Common Grackle	1	Dec 29 10	Winnipeg	P. Buchanan
Common Grackle	1	Dec 29 10	Landmark	F. Giesbrecht
Purple Finch	1	Dec 1 10	Onanole	S. Sallows
Purple Finch	1	Jan 19 11	River Hills	G. Grief, D. Fast, H. Lane
Purple Finch	1	Jan 22 11	Elma	D. Britton
Purple Finch	1	Jan 26 11	White Mud Falls	P. Douglas
American Goldfinch	20	Dec 10 10	Kleefeld	D. Fast
American Goldfinch	9	Jan 21 11	Winnipeg	R. Clarke

# Christmas Bird Count

by Robert Parsons

Weather conditions leading up to the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) period were pleasant, with below normal snow cover, and slightly above normal temperatures. For the second year in a row, the snow cover was greatest in the far western portions of the province, a reversal of the usual conditions. Although more snow did arrive toward the end of count period, it did not really impact the counts to any great extent and most who commented on the weather at all, did so favourably.

At the time of my publication deadline, 17 counts had been reported, including a new count at Cranberry Portage. Winnipeg held on to its usual place on top with 43 species, slightly lower than its average of recent years, and Cypress River rebounded to a strong second place finish with 41, while Pinawa was third with 37. At the other extreme were Cranberry Portage and Gimli, with 17 and 19 species, respectively.

The collective total was 72 species, down one from last year, with 3 additional species recorded in count week (the three days preceding or following count day, but not on count day itself) – Sharp-shinned Hawk at Winnipeg, Red-bellied Woodpeckers at both Lyleton and Cypress River, and Chipping Sparrow at Balmoral.

There were seven species seen on all counts: Downy and Hairy Woodpecker, Black-billed Magpie, Common Raven, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Common Redpoll. Honourable mention goes to Blue Jay and

Snow Bunting, missed only at Cranberry Portage. There were eleven species unique to one count. In addition to those mentioned elsewhere, they were Ring-necked Pheasant and American Kestrel at Lyleton; Eastern Screech-Owl in Winnipeg; and Northern Cardinal at Brandon.

Most CBC circles did not have much open water by count period and water-related birds were scarce. Canada Geese were recorded on two counts, and Mallards on five. All but one, Minnedosa, were Red River Valley area counts. All 13 of the Common Goldeneyes were at Pinawa, where they are regular, although this is a fairly high number. Single Common Mergansers were at Minnedosa and Winnipeg.

Accipiters were scarce. This was the first time in several years where there was no count day occurrence of Sharp-

shinned Hawk. A Cooper's Hawk was rather convincingly described at Cypress River, while 3 Northern Goshawks were reported from Balmoral (one hopes there wasn't duplication, always a bit of a problem with large raptors) and a

count week bird at Portage. The low snow levels permitted Rough-legged Hawks to linger at Winnipeg and Delta Marsh. Bald Eagle was the most numerous raptor, as usual, with 17 birds reported from 10 counts, while Merlin at 14 (10 in Winnipeg) was the second most numerous.

Eurasian Collared-Doves, totalling 12, were found on four counts, with Portage (at 5) and Brandon reporting them for the first time, and Lyleton getting a first count day occurrence.

While they are certainly turning up in more places, it remains to be seen whether they will achieve the impressive numbers found elsewhere. Note Glenboro, the only count to have had them for any length of time, dropped to only two this year. Having said that, they have probably claimed the status of most expected dove (Rock Pigeon no longer qualifying as a "dove") on Manitoba CBCs. Mourning Doves, however, also put on a good show, with four count appearances of their own. Although I'm confi-

dent all were correctly identified, in light of the increasing presence of collared-doves in Manitoba, compilers should verify any reports of Mourning Doves on their counts and educate participants of the possible presence of a second dove species.

Snowy Owls were scarce this year, with singles found on 5 counts, plus two more in count week only. Although it appears to be a good winter for Northern Hawk Owls, they

***“The collective total was 72 species, down one from last year, with 3 additional species recorded in count week.”***



A Eurasian Collared-Dove photographed on December 9, 2010, Brandon's second confirmed bird.

Vern Hink



were recorded only at Pinawa and Gimli (where both were considered “expected” by compilers) and Winnipeg. Several more were certainly present in the Oak Hammock and Selkirk circles, but perhaps not until after the counts. Great Gray Owls were limited to Pinawa and Riding Mountain, but a Barred Owl at Minnedosa and a count week bird at Pinawa were nice finds.

A somewhat sparse count at Riding Mountain missed a few usual species and allowed Pinawa to claim a unique Black-backed Woodpecker. The Winnipeg count dates back to the early days of the 20th Century. In all those years, Pileated Woodpecker was reported only once (in 1947/8) prior to 1999. Since the latter year, however, it has never been missed and this year had an astounding total of 6, one of the highest in the province. Only Selkirk’s total of 8 was higher.

Rare frugivorous passerines included a Varied Thrush at Cypress River and a Brown Thrasher at Glenboro.

There were 132 Dark-eyed Juncos reported on twelve

counts. Other wintering sparrows included 8 White-throated Sparrows on five counts; American Tree Sparrows from Brandon and Cypress River; plus a Harris’s Sparrow at Selkirk and a Song Sparrow at Winnipeg. Both Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs were numerous.

Several counts reported Red-winged and Rusty Blackbirds, and Common Grackles. A convincingly described male Yellow-headed Blackbird at Cranberry Portage nicely augmented these fairly regular blackbird species.

It was not a remarkable winter finch count, but Evening Grosbeaks put on a better showing than they have in quite a few years, although still a small fraction of their numbers of 30 years ago.

The table of all counts will again be available on the Nature Manitoba website in the birding section, when all count results are in, as in previous years. All official counts will appear on the National Audubon Society website, and I can also supply a digital file to anyone who emails me at [parsons8@mts.net](mailto:parsons8@mts.net).

# Mantario

## The Wilderness Experience

Enjoy a 5 day guided canoe adventure through the designated Wilderness Zone of the Whiteshell Provincial Park. Guides, canoes, paddles, safety equipment, food and accommodations are provided. You will stay in the comfort of a fully equipped modern cabin and enjoy a lakeside sauna.

### RATES

### 5 Day Trip (includes food)

Adult (non-members) .....	\$395*
Members of Nature Manitoba (also full-time students, seniors 65+, and youth aged 14-17 with parent) .....	\$360*
Under 18 (only for Family Week) .....	\$125
(* Deduct \$35 for early-bird registrations before June 1st)	

## 2011 SUMMER PROGRAM

### July 11 - 15: Explore Mantario with Leigh Cullen and Lorne Klassen

Explore the Mantario Lake wilderness with Leigh Cullen and Lorne Klassen. Hike to Olive Lake and paddle to Ironwood Falls via Skull Lake and Morning Glory River. Swim around Eagle Nest Island or across the channel near the cabin. See bats, identify dragonflies, flowers and more.

### July 18 - 22: Mantario Living with Marc Leclair

Fishing, blueberry picking, exploring, swimming, sitting in the sauna, watching the sun set, or reading a book; you decide your week.

### July 25 - 29: Astronomy & Photography with Jennifer West & Brian Hydesmith

Take photos by day and study stars by night! Jennifer will help you identify the stars and Brian will coach you to capture better scenic, close-up and other images regardless of skill, experience or camera equipment.

### Aug. 8 - 12 Family Week with Gillian Brennan (& volunteer Charles Burchill)

What better way to introduce the kids to nature than by a full-on wilderness adventure? Gillian Brennan will keep them so busy with fun activities, they will forget Gameboy and Wii ever existed!

### Aug. 15 - 19: Pixie Cups to Jack Pines with Charles Burchill

Take a closer look at the plants growing in the Mantario Wilderness Zone with Charles Burchill, canoeist and botanist. Learn a little about the variety of plants and ecology of the boreal forest in a relaxing, stress-free environment.

### Aug. 22 - 26: Family Week & Swimming at Mantario with Lesly Andrews, Jerry Zaste, & Kim Monson

With Kim you will explore the plants, rocks and animals that live on and around the Mantario cabin. We will watch for bats, tell stories around the campfire, and go crazy with the ultimate scavenger hunt.



Western Tanager  
north of The Pas.

## Notable Records from the Manitoba Breeding Bird Atlas 2010 Season

( Part 1 of 2 )

by Christian Artuso, Peter Taylor,  
Ken De Smet, and David Raitt

*This is the first part of a condensed version of an article originally published in Blue Jay. For more details including complete references, observer names, locations, etc., please see the original article in Blue Jay Vol. 68 No. 3, pp. 114-123, published by Nature Saskatchewan.*

**A**fter many years of dreaming and more than a year of detailed preparations, 2010 saw the much-anticipated first year of data collection for the Manitoba Breeding Bird Atlas. This project will have five years of data collection (2010 to 2014) and volunteers are being sought to cover all areas of the province. The Atlas follows a similar protocol to those used for several other completed or ongoing provincial breeding bird atlases. Mapping is based on a grid of over 7000 10 km x 10 km squares and a set of criteria that define observations as “observed” only or as “possible”, “probable”, or “confirmed” breeding records. This article summarizes the most noteworthy breeding-season records gathered by Atlas volunteers and crew in 2010.

### Exceptional Breeding Season Records

At least one adult male Black-headed Grosbeak has held a singing territory annually in the same patch of riparian woodland along the Souris River south of Melita since 2006. There were some reports of a subadult male and probably

also a female present in at least one of those years. On the evening of June 15, Ken De Smet observed the male feeding nestlings in a nest 2 m above the ground in a tall shrub just inside the woodland from the roadside ditch edge. Although there are as many as 40 records (mostly migrants, and many unconfirmed) in Manitoba, this is the first confirmed breeding attempt of this species in the province. The female was not seen on the above date, nor on any occasion in 2010, so it is not known whether this is a hybrid pair, as Rose-breasted Grosbeaks occur regularly in the same area.

Western Tanager is another western species that has been suspected of breeding in Manitoba but never confirmed. On June 5, David Raitt found a pair, as well as an unpaired male, while atlassing in the Root Lake area north of The Pas. Although he did not find a nest, his subsequent observations of both adults carrying food indicated that they probably had young in the area.

A male Lazuli Bunting was observed by Wayne and Gloria Tingey visiting a seed feeder on their property along the Antler River southeast of Lyleton on May 25. Although it visited the feeder only sporadically, this bird was subsequently heard and seen by several observers from late May through July, suggesting that this bird remained on territory in an area with sparse riparian woodland and overgrown weedy fields. It used the same song perches repeatedly, in particular the uppermost dead branches that emerged above the foliage of two living Manitoba Maples, alternating between them for non-continuous song bouts lasting as long as 13 minutes. Gloria Tingey reported seeing a female *Passerina* bunting earlier in the nesting season that she believed had the markings of a female Lazuli Bunting; however, it was not seen regularly at the feeder, nor was it seen later in the season by other observers. Although this species occurs regularly in southeast Saskatchewan, there are fewer than 30 sightings in Manitoba and breeding has never been confirmed.

Equally notable was the discovery of a recently fledged family of four young Green Herons by Roxie Reimer at a Steinbach golf course on August 19-20, and confirmed by several other observers. This discovery followed sightings of two adults earlier in the month by golfing birder Harv Lane. While the species has been recorded about 100 times in Manitoba, this is just the second confirmed breeding record for the province.

### Improved Definition of Northern Range

With the notable exception of coastal regions near Churchill, there remains much to learn about bird distribution in central and northern Manitoba, especially north of a diagonal line running northwest-to-southeast from about The Pas to Bissett. One of the key aims of the Atlas is to improve the definition of these limits beyond what proved possible in *The Birds of Manitoba*. This should provide a more reliable reference to assist in the detection of any future changes, for example, from habitat alteration and climate change.

**“One of the key aims of the Atlas is to improve the definition of these limits beyond what proved possible in *The Birds of Manitoba*.”**



While some farmland species, such as Western Meadowlark, reach boundaries that are sharply defined by the extent of agricultural development, the range limits for most forest and wetland birds are diffuse and much more difficult to define than most published range maps might seem to suggest. This is equally true with the southern range limits of northern birds, the northern limits of southern birds, and all boundaries for those species restricted to the boreal forest. This problem is compounded by difficulty of access and low human population density, which result in very limited historical knowledge of boreal bird distribution, since isolated pockets of habitat are often inaccessible and rarely, if ever, visited by birders or professional ornithologists.

Volunteers and field crew in western Manitoba recorded several species that are associated primarily with the Aspen Parkland in areas north of their expected ranges, such as American Woodcock, recorded in the Porcupine Hills and just south of Grand Rapids. A single record of Warbling Vireo 25 km southwest of The Pas was heard only. Veery was recorded in three squares of The Pas / Flin Flon area, the northernmost being near Goose Lake, approximately 15 km south of Cranberry Portage, and in eight squares in the Porcupine Hills. A Gray Catbird found approximately 20 km north of The Pas was at a similar latitude to a recent Breeding Bird Survey record at Minago River. Additional species recorded near The Pas, towards the northern periphery of their ranges, include Wood Duck, Marbled Godwit, and Sedge Wren. Some of these species have been found in recent years in areas modified for agriculture in the Carrot Valley and around Ralls Island. Recent surveys by Bird Studies Canada have found other unexpected species in the Porcupine Hills area, including Chimney Swift near Barrows, Yellow-throated Vireo near Whitefish Lake, and Indigo Bunting near Birch River.

The most notable record from Manitoba's Interlake region was a singing male Pine Warbler found by Peter Taylor on June 19 at 52°N in suitable breeding habitat – an extensive, mature Jack Pine stand near Highway 6 south of Tan Creek. Further exploration for the species in this area is planned. Although there are a few previous records of migrant Pine Warblers away from their known breeding range in south-east Manitoba, including two fall records on Hecla Island, this is apparently the first territorial bird recorded in the Interlake during the breeding season.

Northern Parula was found in at least five locations in the Interlake in 2010, including three singing males close to 53°N (Katimik Lake, Long Point, and near Grand Rapids), providing further evidence of a breeding population in central western Manitoba. Eastern Bluebirds were found in at least four locations north of their principal range including the central/northern Interlake and also near The Pas. The north-south highway and transmission-line corridors and associated structures in the Interlake region seem to have provided an opening for this species.

Turkey Vulture was recorded near Thompson, well north of



**Male Black-headed Grosbeak south of Melita.**

C. Artuso

the known breeding range, but in keeping with scattered reports north of 53°N in recent years, possibly involving wandering subadults. A singing Winter Wren was exceptionally far north near Twin Lakes, southeast of Churchill. In a visit to Dunlop's Fly-In Fishing Lodge at Waskaiowaka Lake, north of Split Lake, from July 10 to 17, Rudolf Koes and Richard Staniforth found several species north of their expected ranges. American White Pelicans were recorded in various sections of Waskaiowaka Lake; admittedly, these may have been wandering non-breeders or long-range commuters from distant colonies. Common Grackles were recorded much farther north than expected, including four confirmed breeding records. Red-winged Blackbirds were recorded in five squares, including three instances of fledged young. Other unexpected finds by Rudolf and Richard around Waskaiowaka Lake were Black-capped Chickadees, Hairy Woodpecker, Least Flycatcher, and Red-eyed Vireo. Black-billed Magpies are known to irrupt northward into the boreal forest from time to time, but a family group with five young, photographed by Brian Taylor at Paint Lake on August 2, was still a surprise.

## ***Southern Range Extensions***

Much fewer southward than northward apparent range extensions were detected, which is not surprising given the much better knowledge of bird distribution in the more populous south, and perhaps also a greater potential for range contraction near the southern fringes of the boreal forest. Nevertheless, the comments about limited coverage of the boreal forest also apply to extreme southeast Manitoba, and there is potential for surprises just an hour's drive east of Winnipeg.

One of the most notable southern range extensions recorded in 2010 occurred when Vic Reimer found a Bonaparte's Gull nest, approximately 7.5 m high in a Black Spruce, on June 16 at Windy Lake, northeast of Richer. This is easily 200 km south of the species' expected breeding range. Rudolf Koes and Richard Staniforth found a pair of Tundra Swans with two cygnets at

***“ . . . there is potential for surprises just an hour's drive east of Winnipeg.”***

*(continued on page 23...)*

# NATURE MANITOBA'S WORKSHOP SERIES 2011

from February 1<sup>st</sup> until May 3<sup>rd</sup>

## **PRE-REGISTRATION required!**

Contact the Nature Manitoba office at 943-9029 or [info@naturemanitoba.ca](mailto:info@naturemanitoba.ca).

**REGISTER EARLY TO AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT.** Class sizes are limited to 28 (we no longer have access to a larger room at Kelvin to accommodate workshops with enrolments larger than 28).

If you are unable to attend, **please CANCEL** by calling the office so others may benefit from the vacancy.

We ask for your understanding and suggest that you sign up for **ONLY THREE WORKSHOPS**. If you are interested in more than three workshops, you are welcome to call the office one week prior to any additional workshops. If there are any vacancies, you will be able to register.

**FEE:** \$5 for Nature Manitoba members, \$10 for non-members (students: \$3 for members, \$5 for non-members). Workshops are open to children over 10, accompanied by a parent.

**TIME:** 7:30pm

**LOCATION:** KELVIN HIGH SCHOOL (Room 31), Stafford Street at Academy Road, **with the exception of "Identifying Minerals and Rocks on your Walks"** which will be held at the University of Winnipeg. Parking at Kelvin is available in the lot behind the school, by the west entrance.

**Workshop Co-ordinator:**  
*Julia Schoen*

Want to dig deep into the wonders of nature under the guidance of an expert? Then Nature Manitoba workshops are for you!

## **Manitoba Trees in Winter**

**Instructor:** Richard Staniforth,  
*Retired Professor of Botany at University of Winnipeg*

**Date:** Tuesday, March 1, 2011

A workshop to sort out the differences between Manitoba tree species in the winter. Specimens are provided, but you are welcome to bring your own twigs, too. We will include all of the native species of conifer and hardwood trees, and also some of the more common planted exotics, as time permits. Regrettably, Manitoba shrubs are too numerous to include in this workshop.

## **Migrating Hawks**

**Instructor:** Ward Christianson,  
*Nature Manitoba Birder*

**Date:** Tuesday, March 15, 2011

Join Ward in this multi-media workshop on the basics of raptor identification. Learn about where and when to look for hawks in migration and what to look for when you attempt to identify them. Your enjoyment of these majestic birds can begin here. In the field, participants will practise identifying hawks from some of the best viewing sites in Manitoba.

## **Reptiles of Manitoba**

**Instructor:** Dr. Bill Preston,  
*Retired Curator of Reptiles, Amphibians and Fishes at the Manitoba Museum*

**Date:** Tuesday, March 22, 2011

This workshop will be a powerpoint presentation on the reptiles of Manitoba, with emphasis on snakes. Some of the snake families and their adaptations will be covered. Many of the snake photos were taken in zoos and other live collections, as well as in nature.

## **Identifying Minerals & Rocks on your Walks**

**Instructor:** Kim Monson,  
*Geography Department at University of Winnipeg*

**Date:** Tuesday, April 5, 2011

### **NOTE CHANGE OF VENUE:**

Room 5L22, 5th floor of Lockhart Hall, University of Winnipeg, 480 Ellice Ave.

Ever look down when you're out walking and wonder, "What is that rock, where did it come from, how did it get there???" If you have, this workshop is for you. With the aid of rock and mineral specimens, maps and test kits, you will learn how to identify many of Manitoba's common rocks and minerals. Bring your favourite rock or mineral along and figure out what it is... or what it isn't!



## Organic Lawn Care

**Instructor:** Anne Lindsey, *Executive Director at Manitoba Eco-Network*

**Date:** Tuesday, April 12, 2011

How can you maintain a beautiful green space around your home without resorting to chemical pesticides for weed control? This workshop is an overview of the principles and practice of organic lawn and garden care, with tips and resources for a healthy lawn, as well as ideas for alternatives to lawns. We will also discuss why more and more communities are moving to phase out cosmetic pesticides.

## Universe on a Grand Scale

**Instructor:** Jennifer West, *Astronomy Instructor at University of Manitoba*

**Date:** Tuesday, April 19, 2011

In this workshop, I will present an overview of the kinds of objects that make up our universe: asteroids, planets, stars, galaxies and beyond. I will also try to give participants a sense of the enormous distances involved. The scale of our universe is truly mind-boggling!

## Morels and Other Fungi

**Instructor:** Dr. David Punter, *Retired Professor of Botany at University of Manitoba*

**Date:** Tuesday, April 26, 2011

Morels are the mushrooms that appear in the spring while most other fungi can be found in late August and September. Participants in this workshop will begin learning to identify mushrooms in time for the morel season. A field trip will be offered in the late summer.

## Birding by Ear

**Instructor:** Brad Carey, *Nature Manitoba Birder*

**Date:** Tuesday, May 3, 2011

Come and experience some of the more common sights and sounds of our returning "feathered friends". We will view pictures taken from birding software programs, listen to tapes and discuss ways to identify birds in the field.

Julia Schoen



This is just the front doorstep of a garden that will be on the tour this year. There is so much more to see in the large pie-shaped yard.

## OUR NATURAL GARDEN TOUR

### Nature Manitoba Fundraiser 2011

Nine beautiful St. Vital gardens did "Our Natural Garden Tour" proud this past summer. Now everyone can look forward to a new group of gardens, equally beautiful, on our next tour on **July 23, 2011**.

Our new tour will take place in Fort Richmond and Fort Garry, with a swing a bit further west to McCreary Road.

A number of smaller yards will be featured, all very different from each other, all very creatively put together. The largest property is huge, comprising three acres on McCreary, and quite spectacular. Ponds and water features are effectively utilized and container plantings add decorative touches.

Our community property for 2011 is the Carol Shields Memorial Labyrinth in King's Park, Fort Richmond – a project that began with community involvement in 2003. It is a unique and inviting garden.

Tickets are \$15. Last year, this \$5 price increase helped to bring in the largest amount of money to date for our organization. Nature Manitoba appreciates this great support.

Tickets will be available at Discovery Evenings (see page 22), at the 2011 Workshops, and from the Nature Manitoba office.

**The 2011 Garden Tour is on Saturday, July 23. Come out to support Nature Manitoba and have a great time doing it!**

Julia Schoen

## Endangered?

(from Julia Schoen, Workshop Co-ordinator)

Our first workshop of the season on February 1 was a great success with every seat in the room filled. Bill Watkins with his assistants, Doug Collicutt and Christa Rigney, shared information on lesser-known rare and endangered species of Manitoba. A blue-nosed Salamander, an American Toad and a Skink were some of the live critters present. Here, an interested group studies butterfly specimens after learning about the threatened Poweshiek and Dakota Skippers.

Julia Schoen



# DISCOVERY EVENINGS 2010-2011

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** (on the second floor)

**March 2<sup>nd</sup> begins at 7:30 pm, and  
March 21<sup>st</sup> (A.G.M.) starts at 7:00 pm.**

**Admission is \$2.00 for members and \$3.00 for  
non-members.** Members must show a valid Nature  
Manitoba membership card to get the reduced rate.

For more information, call the Nature Manitoba office  
at 943-9029 or email [info@naturemanitoba.ca](mailto:info@naturemanitoba.ca).

**Wednesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011**  
(NOTE: Wednesday, not Monday!)

## **Grassland Conservation Plan for Prairie Grouse in North America**

**Dr. Richard Baydack**  
(Professor, Dept. of Environment and  
Geography, University of Manitoba)

**A** Grassland Conservation Plan for Prairie Grouse in North America, coordinated by the North American Grouse Partnership (NAGP), was recently developed. The goals of the plan are to enhance, conserve, and restore grassland ecosystems to benefit prairie grouse and other grassland species. The plan uses an ecosystem diversity approach to compare historical grassland conditions to the current situation. Priority areas for grassland conservation are then selected to benefit each prairie grouse species. The Plan identifies a goal of conserving or restoring 65 million acres of grasslands for prairie grouse, along with strategies for implementation.

**Monday, March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011**

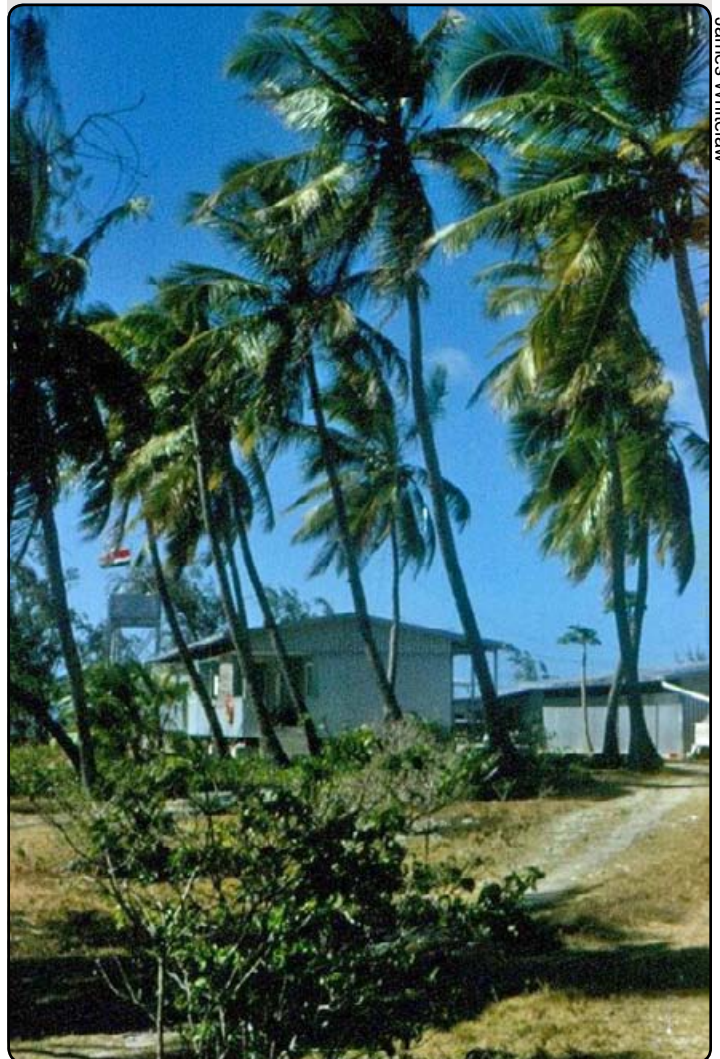
## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** (early start at 7:00 pm, see page 6 for details)

### **ALDABRA, North of Madagascar**

**James Whitelaw**  
(Vice-President, Nature Manitoba)

**T**he Seychelles consist of 115 islands with a land area of 455 sq.km. scattered over 1.4 million sq.km. of the western Indian Ocean. The central Seychelles are granitic, ancient continental fragments with their own distinctive flora and fauna. The outlying islands are coral atolls. The most interesting of these is Aldabra Atoll which, since its last re-emergence above the waves 80,000 years ago, has been colonized by a variety of plants and animals and has developed a unique ecosystem. After Nature Manitoba's Annual General Meeting, we will explore the natural history of Aldabra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

**ALDABRA**, in the western Indian Ocean, has been spared most of the human disturbance suffered by all the other islands in the region due to its rugged terrain and harsh climate. It has therefore managed to retain a truly unique terrestrial ecosystem. Aldabra is also surrounded by an almost pristine coral reef and is an important site for seabirds, with at least ten breeding species. For these reasons Aldabra has been designated a UNESCO world heritage site – a fascinating and little known part of the world.



James Whitelaw



## Notable Records from the Manitoba Breeding Bird Atlas 2010 Season

(...continued from page 19)

Waskaiowaka Lake, over 200 km southwest of the nearest known breeding locations near the Hudson Bay coast. Interestingly, both Bonaparte's Gull and Tundra Swan have recently been recorded breeding far south of their expected ranges in Saskatchewan.

A Fox Sparrow was recorded by David Raitt as probably breeding about 20 km north of The Pas, based on repeated observations of a singing

individual in suitable habitat. This is the third year in a row that David has encountered singing Fox Sparrows in this area. White-crowned Sparrows were recorded in eight locations around Waskaiowaka Lake, including recently fledged young, and both Common Redpoll and Bohemian Waxwing were also found there. This is along the very southern periphery of these species' known ranges.

*The second part of this article will appear in the May/June 2011 issue of Nature Manitoba News. Visit the Manitoba Breeding Bird Atlas' website at [www.birdatlas.mb.ca](http://www.birdatlas.mb.ca) for more information and distribution maps.*



Male Lazuli Bunting southeast of Lyleton.

C. Arturo

### Front Yard; September 2010

Robert G. Mears



## NEW REPLANTERS ON THE BLOCK: The Silver Plains Project

(...continued from page 5)

and a few areas started filling in with other species. Around winter solstice we frost seeded four areas.

2010 looked like it was going to be a good year. April was dry and warm. The last frost was a week early. Seedlings were germinating in little pots. Then it started to rain. During infrequent dry spells we harrowed black areas, planted some seedlings, and weeded. But the weeds had the advantage. We couldn't impede their progress much because the yard was usually wet. Nothing desirable came up where we had frost seeded. One stretch, alongside the pond, which stayed too wet to harrow, filled in with weeds.

We also started getting to know others who have been or are replanting their properties to native. When we began this project, the ditches, fields, and properties around us were/are all covered with alien plants. We were unaware of most people in the province with a passion for tallgrass prairie. It's good to have company, to learn from those already "going native".

And a couple of experiments indicated that covering areas with flax straw is the way to go on this site. So, we started covering parts of the yard with a thick layer of that mulch, including the, as yet, unplanted nursery that was overgrown with weeds. Using mulch, which we can plant into, instead of seeding large black areas that invariably fill in with undesirables, also solves the problem of soil erosion from winter winds and summer rains.

While we've had reason to give up, we now want to see the yard replanted more than when we started. Native flora is amazing, so is the fauna it attracts. In spite of setbacks and persistent competition from alien plants, about one quarter of the site is planted and 120 indigenous species are now growing here; some spontaneously. The front yard has more than 50 bunches of Big Bluestem and we had to curtail the Bulrushes in the sedge meadow.

### Virtual

Coincident with yard work we regularly visited tallgrass prairie remnants, over by Gardenton, and scouted ditches in much of the region between there and where we are (just off PTH 75, 14 km north of Morris). We have found spots where tallgrass flora is hanging on; some near our site. We were surprised, in 2010, to see Hoary Puccoon growing in the ditch beside PR 330 to the west of us. We had not seen the plant there before (in six years of visits); disappearing then reappearing is an idiosyncrasy of native flora. Similarly we saw Culver's Root for the first time growing in a ditch east of Stuartburn.

During our travels we've been collecting seed and taking photographs of flora, fauna, and the place. We also started researching (mostly flora) back in 2004 and now have image and information pages on more than 150 plant species. As well, our website outlines the scope of and motivation for the project and documents our annual progress. To learn more, and to see more photos, you can visit our website at [www.silverplains.ca](http://www.silverplains.ca).

*Robert G. Mears is joined in the endeavours of "The Silver Plains Project" by Coleen Zebeluk.*

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

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### About Nature Manitoba

The Objectives of Nature Manitoba are to:

- Foster an awareness and appreciation of the natural environment and an understanding of humanity's place therein;
- Provide an association and voice for those interested in natural history and the outdoors, and cooperate with individuals and organizations with similar goals;
- Arrange educational and recreational programs and field trips to promote an understanding of the natural environment;
- Stimulate research and record and preserve data and material in natural history and allied subjects;
- Work for the preservation of our natural environment.

## TOURS FOR NATURALISTS

### \*\*\* YUKON & DEMPSTER HIGHWAY \*\*\*

Land of the Midnight Sun

Tour I, 18-29 June 2011 (12 days), Tour II, 1-12 July 2011

Cost \$3500 (dbl occup) +GST from Whitehorse

The Yukon is a fabled land whose very name evokes archetypal images of wilderness and a frontier populated by colourful characters. On this tour we will experience both the natural and human landscapes of this fascinating and beautiful land, visiting **the Klondike, the Dempster Highway, and the Mackenzie Delta**. The Dempster is renowned as a naturalist's paradise with its varied and beautiful landscapes, sought-after bird species, large mammals, and we visit at the peak of the wildflower display. **At latitude 66N we cross the Arctic Circle and enter the Land of the Midnight Sun. We also fly across the Mackenzie Delta to Tuktoyaktuk on the Arctic Ocean.**

### \*\*\* SUNSHINE COAST FOR NATURALISTS \*\*\*

18-22 July 2011 (5 days)

\$1350 + HST (dbl occup) from Vancouver

The Sunshine Coast exemplifies the best of coastal British Columbia as the temperate rainforest meets the blue of the Salish Sea in a confusion of magnificent fjords and green islands. We visit the Sunshine Coast's scenic highlights, including a full day cruise to world famous Princess Louisa Inlet. We also visit Jedediah Island and take a sunset cruise. The Sunshine Coast's culinary offerings are central to this tour and we will sample the best. Meals are included in the tour price except for four dinners.

Leader: Tony Greenfield

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Tel: 604-885-5539, Email: [tony@whiskeyjacknaturetours.com](mailto:tony@whiskeyjacknaturetours.com)

Full details & itineraries at website: [www.whiskeyjacknaturetours.com](http://www.whiskeyjacknaturetours.com)  
BC reg #34425

### NATURE MANITOBA STORE



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