



C. Artuso



WOLVERINE!

by Christian Artuso

Many of you will know how much I have poured my heart and soul into coordinating the Manitoba Breeding Bird Atlas over the past six years. Some of you will also know how much emphasis I have placed on point counting (an extremely useful method of surveying birds where one stands still for a fixed period of time and counts all birds seen and heard), having completed approximately 2800 for this project. After five years of summer point counts, on July 18, 2014, I prepared to do what I knew would be my last point counts for the atlas. I was feeling a little nostalgic as I headed out at 2:30 am for a 16 km hike across the dimly lit tundra to get into the last reachable square from the cabin where we

were staying on Courage Lake, which is 1 km south of Manitoba's border with Nunavut. I wasn't quite expecting the grand finale that my last morning of point counting would turn out to be.

Early on, I got a brief look at a cream-coloured wolf and then near the end of one point count I noticed some odd behaviour from a female Black Scoter – calling agitatedly and flying in a circle before disappearing behind a sedge meadow. Then I noticed two little fuzz balls swimming quickly in the grassy edges towards the sound of her voice – this was the first confirmed breeding Black Scoter for the project!

As if that wasn't enough, just seconds after I finished my final point count, put my notebook in my pocket, and reached

down for my day pack, I noticed a movement ahead of me. My first view was of light-coloured fur moving through the low vegetation; it only took a second to realize I was looking at a Wolverine! Incredibly, I was looking at a mammal I have dreamt of seeing for the better part of my life! I quickly and quietly took out my camera and the wolverine continued moving in my direction, busily searching the edges of the little ponds for food and scaring the phalaropes and other birds. I got a series of photos of the wolverine running and jumping across little water channels. Eventually the animal kept on going (completely ignored me the whole time) and disappeared, leaving me shaking at the knees! I still can't quite believe it! Not a bird oddly enough but a truly magic moment.

For more photos, see page 7. Reprinted from a July 20 posting on Christian's blog: <http://artusobirds.blogspot.ca>.

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President's Corner

by Donald Himbeault



Getting away from it all, even Maid Service

This summer I have been very fortunate to enjoy an extended backcountry canoe trip in the Experimental Lakes Area/Winnange Lake Provincial Park region. At one of our campsites was a sign posted by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources with bold lettering saying "There's no maid service here." The sign further explained the camper's responsibility to keep the site clean, as there would be no one cleaning up after them. For the most part, the state of the campsites on our trip would suggest the message was understood by those who preceded us, however, there were some exceptions and there is always room for improvement.

While the sign's message is delivered in a tongue-in-cheek manner, it reveals an underlying truth about the attitude of some visitors to the wilderness. For those of us that regularly venture into the backcountry and value being in undisturbed natural surroundings, conducting oneself in a manner that is harmonious with the environment is second nature. With the growing disassociation between people and nature, many people visit the wilderness with similar expectations as if they were staying in a hotel, as the message on the sign implies. Trees are chopped down to construct a variety of makeshift furniture at the campsite. The "magic" of landfills and sewer systems (or maid service!) that make garbage and waste disappear from our immediate surroundings has desensitized some of us to the reality that cans, plastic, even paper, will remain for a long time when just tossed on the ground. Understanding how to treat nature with respect is where the true value of connecting people with nature lies.

This issue is becoming increasingly important as many wilderness areas are under pressure from more frequent visits by travelers. This is evidenced by the Manitoba Government's plans to introduce a pilot project next year of a reservation/quota system for users in order to better manage the crowding and overuse of certain wilderness areas in Nopiming Provincial Park. The visitation of wilderness areas will continue to increase; for example, the Federal Government announced in its National Conservation Plan that a portion of the budget for this program will be to create more opportunities for the public to connect with nature. While this latter initiative is still in the discussion phase, this may take the form of connecting urban Canadians with National Wildlife Areas or Migratory Bird Sanctuaries that are in or near major Canadian cities, with a view to increasing appreciation of these NWAs/MBSs and getting more urbanites out into nature.



Don Himbeault

My hope is that Nature Manitoba can play a role in helping to ensure these encounters between urbanites and wilderness are sustainable and that they provide truly valuable experiences of connecting people with nature. We already do provide occasions where members of different experience levels can learn, practice and share proper wilderness travel skills. In addition, I am hoping that we can share the knowledge and experience of our members with both provincial and federal governments by providing feedback, guidance, or even ideas for projects that would help in meeting these objectives. If you have any comments on this matter, or would like to get involved in such discussions, please contact the Nature Manitoba office.

by Tommy Allen
Photo: Guy Sain



Peggy grew up just south of Winnipeg off of St. Anne's Road. It was "out in the sticks" back then, and sandbagging territory until the floodway was constructed. Her parents were nature lovers, bird watchers as well as hunters, and the family grew most of what they ate – including some chickens and ducks that would mysteriously disappear every fall. When Peggy was 13 the family moved into St. Vital, which was still very undeveloped – the land around them had been a mink farm, now it is the St. Vital Mall.

Once she graduated from high school, she became a secretary for Hudson's Bay Northern Stores. Five years later, she went to Dallas, Texas to complete a clothing design course. She tried making a go at a fashion career in Toronto, but not only did she find it a financial challenge, she missed the more earth-connected life she had in Winnipeg. Upon her return to the Peg, she took a Human Resources job with the Dept. of Fisheries and Oceans. While working there, she became more aware of issues such as climate change, endangered species, pollution, etc.

Peggy got married in 1993 to Guy Sain, and soon after completed massage therapy training and opened her own practice. Fourteen years ago, she and Guy decided to sell their house in Winnipeg and their cottage on Bird River, and found a beautiful 40-acre property adjacent to the Mars Hill WMA (Wildlife Management Area). Peggy didn't know what a "WMA" was at the time, but immedi-

ately fell in love with the land. It was a perfect place for hiking, watching wildlife, growing gardens and creating art.

Throughout the years, Peggy noticed that the Mars Hill WMA was being abused more and more, with ATVs damaging the trails, and beer cans littered about. Peggy felt something needed to be done, but didn't know what or how to do it. Manitoba Conservation was not much help. Eventually one of her neighbours told her about Nature Manitoba. Between Nature Manitoba, the Mixed-wood Forest Society, Native Orchid Conservation Inc. (NOCI) and other environmental organizations, she formed many important connections that allowed her to take action. Peggy delved into the complexities of land use, spending the next couple of years fighting a full-time battle to protect the WMA, and she became a founding member of the Mars Hill Forest Alliance.

Although she spent much of the last 6 years lobbying for the WMA, and collecting specimens of its flora, Peggy has also explored other natural areas. Since last fall, she and Guy have travelled to the Badlands/Blackhills of South Dakota, ventured up to Churchill, and made it to Kenya for an eco-friendly camp with Gamewatchers. Peggy was impressed by the way these camps were run, ensuring that conservation was upheld, and that income for the locals was fair. "I try to be just as responsible when I travel or do research," she says, "It takes a community to conserve wildlife habitat."

"It takes a community to conserve wildlife habitat..."

Welcome New Members!

June 15th to August 14th, 2014

Jason Carriere

Geoff Fierce

Janice Hollosy
(with Greg Downey)

Yubin Huang (with Chuntai
& Chenghai Li)

Ian Hughes
(with Carol Hughes)

Blanche Kingdon

Christine Kresz

Tannis Novotny
(with Nolan Novotny)

Julie Ridgen (with Harrison,
Simon & Sydney Jones)

Rob Ring

Sharon Timson

Bobby Warren (with Susan
Ciccocioppo, Carter & Jack Warren)

New Quarterly Newsletter Schedule

(Beginning with this issue)

FALL

September/October/November

Deadline: August 1st

SPRING

March/April/May

Deadline: February 1st

WINTER

December/January/February

Deadline: November 1st

SUMMER

June/July/August

Deadline: May 1st

Watching Kites Fly

Small raptors never seen here before

by Carol Sanders (Reprinted from the July 31 edition of *The Winnipeg Free Press*)

Ed. Note: This article was written just before a nest with young was located in the vicinity, as reported in the Bird News column on page 12.

All eyes are on the skies over Wellington Crescent for a sighting of a pair of birds that don't belong here. Two Mississippi Kites – small, grey raptors – have been spotted thousands of kilometres from home, thrilling Manitoba birdwatchers who've been flocking to the posh neighbourhood along the Assiniboine River for a glimpse of them.

"It's the first time it's ever been seen in Manitoba, so it's pretty exciting from a provincial perspective," said Peter Taylor, editor in chief of *The Birds of Manitoba*. He saw the two raptors on July 28 on Wellington at Montrose Street. The rest of that week, dozens of birdwatchers, some armed with jumbo camera lenses, gathered at the corner on the lookout for the southern couple. One captured an image of a Mississippi Kite catching a dragonfly.

"That seems to be a specialty of theirs – catching large insects in the air," said Taylor. "It's a very graceful bird. The silhouette is a little bit like a peregrine falcon, but it doesn't have the powerful high-speed flight of a falcon. It's much more soaring and sailing and swooping after insects. It's got a slower motion of flight than a peregrine, but it's very, very graceful," said Taylor. "It's not spectacular in terms of colour – it's various shades of grey – but it's beautiful in its movements."

He couldn't say why a Mississippi Kite – whose main range is the southern half of the United States and north to around Missouri – would be so far from home. "Sometimes, rare birds show up as a result of navigation errors or are blown here by storms." The pair spotted in Winnipeg might just be explorers who went beyond the edge of their range, Taylor said.

"There are scattered records of them showing up right across the northeast and north-central states. They do seem to be gradually extending their range north," he said. In 1985 and 1992, Mississippi Kites were spotted in Regina around the legislative building, said Taylor.

"To have them appear to leapfrog as far north as Winnipeg is exceptional," he said. "It may be partly climate change, it may be

One of the kites with a dragonfly caught on the wing.



Mississippi Kite in flight over Wellington Crescent.

Photos: Michael Loyd

partly habitat change." The planting of shelterbelts in the Great Plains and southern U.S. has resulted in new habitat for the birds and (aided) their population growth, said Taylor.

In May, another kite was spotted – the Swallow-tailed Kite, whose population declined in the early 20th century. It was the first recorded sighting of one in Manitoba in more than a century, said Taylor.

The Mississippi Kites in Winnipeg are well beyond their range but have found their comfort zone and may be starting a family. "They like nesting in shelterbelts and where there is river-bottom forest," said Taylor. "It's an ideal situation, with a combination of urban forest and river-bottom forest along Wellington Crescent," he said. He couldn't confirm from the look of the two Mississippi Kites if they are mates. "The male and female are very similar," he said. Judging from their behaviour – staying around Wellington Crescent and Montrose where they've been spotted for nearly two weeks – it appears they could be nesting and setting down northern roots, he said. "We certainly hope to see them return and maybe get established, with time."

About a week after the above article was written, Michael Loyd posted the following entertaining description of the kites on ManitobaBirds on August 5:

"...the Kites seem to be reverting toward the stealth mode. I have not been seeing them over the Crescent with anything like the same frequency as during the period of virtual dragonfly ubiquity. I believe, however, that the quality of viewing has increased even though the quantity of sightings per unit of time has decreased. With fewer dragonflies in the air, the kites seem to be flying higher, their dives are far deeper and their turns are sharper. As of a few days ago, I would sometimes see 3-4 dragonflies around a flying MIKI, but now the Kites have to fly further to nab their humble prey.

The mobbing of a kite by two crows created a fantastic aerobic display of kite agility and elusiveness. The kite banked sharply, dived and climbed sharply, twisted and turned, and at one point put on the "air" brakes. Then the crows flew by it and we briefly had a Keystone Cops chase, with the role-reversing kite becoming the pursuer. It all ended when the kite landed with apparent disdain right under the circling crows which immediately flew away in dispirited defeat."

Further developments took place on Aug. 8 that determined the fate of the nest. Christian Artuso described what happened in an August 15 posting on ManitobaBirds (see next page).

Update on Mississippi Kite Nest

From an August 15 posting on ManitobaBirds by Christian Artuso

Many people have asked me for an update on Winnipeg's now famous Mississippi Kites. As I mentioned on the interview I did on Breakfast Television (www.btwinnipeg.ca/videos/3725151058001/), after checking as thoroughly as I could, this appears to be the first nest in Canada.

On August 8, I estimated the chick to be approximately 24 or 25 days old, and it was observed flapping its wings and standing on the rim of the nest. Both adults were moulting by that point. Unfortunately, shortly before 5 pm that day, both adults landed on the nest simultaneously, resulting in the chick falling from the rim all the way to the ground. Luckily, Amanda Guercio and Kayla Putty (bird banders from Delta Marsh) witnessed the chick fall and rescued it from immediate danger (chicks are extremely vulnerable on the ground) and called me.

Jake Gillis and I arrived within 10 minutes and, after a finding the chick in remarkably good shape despite the fall, we used a long stick to place it as high on the nest tree as possible. After telephone consultation between Jim Duncan, Tracy Maconachie and myself, Tracy and I went to the site in the late evening where we were joined by Amanda, Kayla, Pierre Richard, Bob Hodgson, Michael Loyd and Donna Martin. We assessed the situation and formulated a plan for the following morning. Bob would supply ladders and tools and Pierre found a contact in Dan Spiers, a Nature Manitoba member who operates a business called "Affordable Tree and Stump Removal" (www.affordabletree.ca). It was 10 pm

when I called Dan and learned that it was the eve of his son's birthday. Not only did he forgive my intrusion, he even agreed to arrive on the scene at 6 am the following morning with his bucket truck, proving once again the exceptional generosity of Nature Manitoba volunteers!

The following morning, Tracy and I checked the chick rapidly and were very happy with its condition. Pierre and Bob pre-mounted screws into a wooden crate I had found in my garage and Dan quickly mounted it below the nest in the nest tree before the chick was raised to him. Dan took a video of this which he will put on his web site in due course. The operation was complete in 45 minutes and the parents were seen and heard nearby – all indications were good! We then vacated the area because at that point the most important thing was that the parents find the young, and excess human activity around the nest could have delayed or prevented that from happening.

Over the next few days careful monitoring was done from as far away as possible, with extreme care taken to not be visible near the nest. The wonderfully generous homeowners were a huge asset in this respect, as they gave us permission to do

what we needed and they observed the kite family from their home as best they could. Fortunately pedestrian traffic in the area was minimal. Nonetheless, in the days that followed, there was no evidence that the adults were feeding the chick and their presence in the neighbourhood became increasingly sporadic. The chick was alert, active and vocal. On the evening of August 11, Michael Loyd called me to say the chick was laying down in a corner of the crate. I confirmed this from the vantage point of my car by viewing through a slit in the front panel. With no sign of the adults around, this created concerns of malnourishment. On the following day, with no sign of either adult near the nest and the chick still lying in the corner

of the crate, we enlisted the help of Dennis Swayze to bring and climb an extension ladder and lower the chick to me waiting below. Tracy and I both felt that the chick was in poor shape, and Tracy brought the chick to the head vet at the Assiniboine Park Zoo, Dr. Chris Enright, for examination.

The chick was found to be thin, but not emaciated, and with a reasonably good hydration level given the circumstances. The zoo veterinary clinic succeeded in getting the chick to feed and it continued to feed and improve on the following day. The adults do not appear to be in the area of the nest any more. Some sightings in other parts of the city seem to suggest they had begun dispersing as early as August 9.

[As of the time of writing this post] we are currently researching and reviewing options for the chick's rehabilitation and ultimate release.

Obviously this is complicated by the fact that the Mississippi Kite is a highly migratory species that winters in South America, and hawk watches taking place well south of us have already recorded good numbers on passage. However, there are some aspects of kite biology that can work in our favour. We will do everything we possibly can to give this chick a chance to return to the wild. The final strategy will be determined after more consultation and research.

This may seem a sad ending for the first Mississippi Kite nest in Canada, but at least the chick has survived and will be released into the wild with a fighting chance. It is important to remember that Mississippi Kites have very low nesting success overall (rural nests average 0.6 fledglings per nest and urban/suburban nests average 1.1 or 1.2). I suspect these birds were first-time parents. In short, this outcome is perhaps not unusual for this species under these circumstances. Despite this turn of events, it is still possible that Mississippi Kites will return to Manitoba next year as they have done elsewhere. We can only hope...!

A huge thank you to all who donated their time so generously!



The Manitoba Museum launches new virtual exhibit

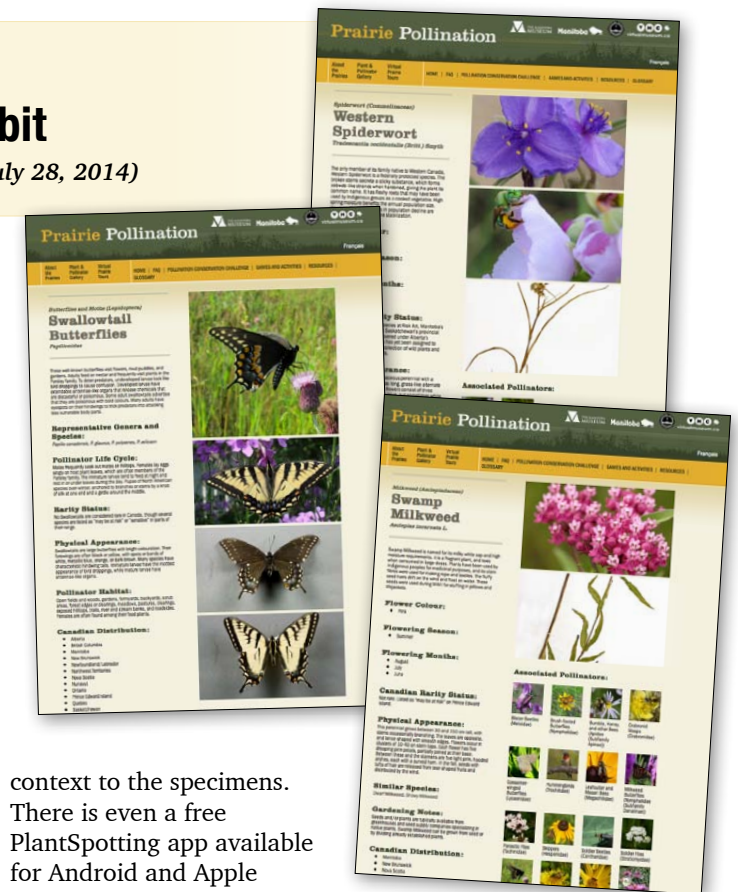
(excerpted from a Manitoba Museum press release, July 28, 2014)

On July 28, The Manitoba Museum is launching Prairie Pollination (www.prairiepollination.ca), a virtual exhibit aimed at helping the public learn more about pollinating insects and the wild plants they depend on. The endangerment of pollinators and plants is a topic of concern to many Canadians, and The Manitoba Museum has important collections that help to understand this issue. Plant and insect specimens are very difficult to display in regular gallery exhibits, so the Museum decided to create an online exhibit open to all.

The exhibit was developed in partnership with the Virtual Museum of Canada (VMC) Investment Program; the Heritage Grants Program, Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism Department, Government of Manitoba; and The Manitoba Museum Foundation Inc.

The project was led by The Manitoba Museum's Curator of Botany, Dr. Diana Bizecki Robson. She hopes that this exhibit will foster appreciation of these organisms and motivate people to make positive changes to their lives to help save them. "Pollinators need our help, but humans need their help even more," says Dr. Bizecki Robson. "Two-thirds of our crop species worldwide depend on wild pollinators to some degree! Those pollinators need more than just crop plants to survive – they need wild plants too."

Photographs of endangered and common prairie plants, and their insect and bird pollinators, are beautifully illustrated in this exhibit. Watercolour paintings of wild plants from the Museum's famous Norman Criddle collection, and virtual tours of wild prairies with pollination scientists add depth and



context to the specimens. There is even a free PlantSpotting app available for Android and Apple devices that will enable users to post their own pictures of wild plants and pollinators (ed. note: the app is "coming soon").

Teachers will also be able to help their students learn more about pollination through the lesson plans in the Virtual Museum of Canada Teachers' Centre. Using the multimedia resources provided, students will learn about the life cycles and habitats of plants and pollinators, and evaluate human impacts on prairie ecosystems and endangered species.

Jerry Weshnoweski (1947-2014)

On 13 August 2014 Nature Manitoba lost one of its long-time members, Jerry Weshnoweski, to ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease). Jerry was a frequent participant in the society's birding activities and he greatly enjoyed being out with fellow birders. For years he joined Peter Taylor, Reto Zach and myself on the annual fall hawk watch. While the other participants in the car would be talking away, his sharp eyes would catch sight of one good bird after another. He also was a regular on the Pinawa/Lac du Bonnet and Winnipeg Christmas Bird Counts, where his stamina, birding skills and positive attitude were greatly appreciated. On the Winnipeg CBC



he would arrive at my door before 8 a.m., often walking from his home in North Kildonan, and we would commence to explore, on foot, the backlanes in the neighbourhood, no matter what the weather. Another highlight in his birding career was discovering a Carolina Wren at his home in 2012, which was seen by many.

Jerry started to lose strength about a year ago, but it was not until three months before his passing that doctors diagnosed his illness. He leaves his wife Barbara, daughter Kelsey, many relatives and friends behind. We will all miss him greatly.

Rudolf Koes, Winnipeg

Encounters of the **NATURAL** Kind

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

Pygmy Grasshopper

From a June 17 posting by Deanna Dodgson on ManitobaNatureTalk

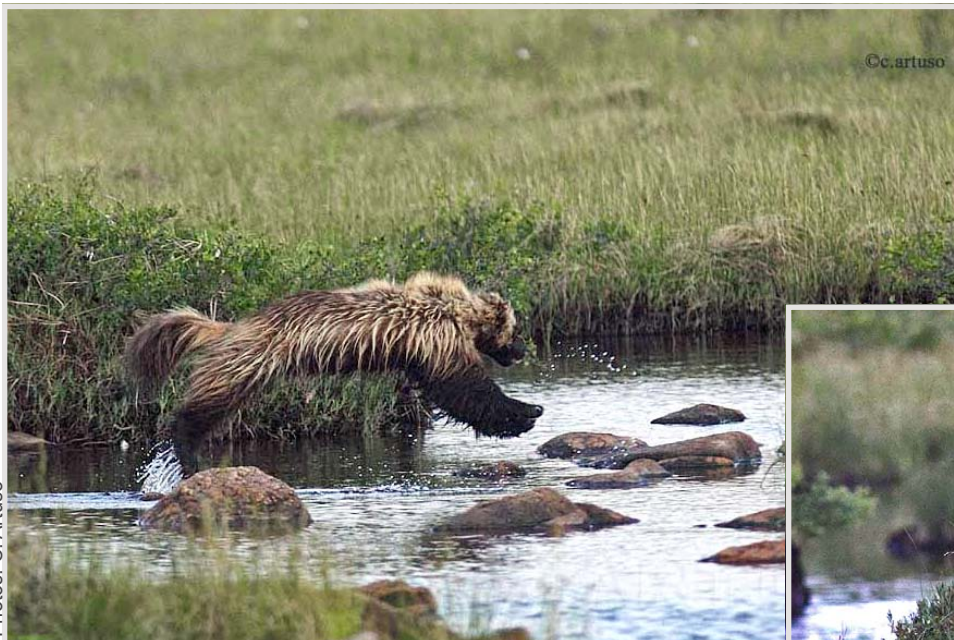
I have been generally lucky to find at least one pygmy grasshopper just about wherever I go and always keep an eye open for them. One day this past June, while at Mars Sand Hills, I came upon a nearly grown *Tetrix ornata* nymph. I have read accounts and have witnessed pygmy grasshoppers feeding on algae, while partially submerged in water. I had also heard that they will leap into water to avoid threats, such as predators. I was finally able to witness this phenomena the other day. As I walked around a large puddle in the middle of a trail, I frightened a pygmy into doing just that. The puddle he jumped into was approx. four feet wide and about 1 1/2 - 2 inches deep. For an insect about 10mm long, a feat not to be sneezed at. I wasn't able to discern how much of the pygmy's body was submerged, if any (at their petite size, I

Tetrix ornata nymph



would imagine they are fairly buoyant). The nymph swam very strongly, kicking out with his hind legs and resting very occasionally. Getting out of the water is

likely something they need to do quickly, to avoid predation from tadpoles, frogs, etc. I fished him out before he unnecessarily wasted too much energy.



©c.artuso

Two more photos from Christian's Wolverine encounter (see page 1). For more photos, visit his blog at: <http://artusobirds.blogspot.ca/2014/07/wolverine.html>.



Photos: C. Artuso

Deanna Dodgson

2014 TOUR A CHARM

by Julia Schoen

I couldn't have wished for a single thing more to end my tenure as organizer of Our Natural Garden Tour since 2000 – a job I have absolutely loved for these last fourteen years. Tour 2014 was everything I had hoped it would be.

We were blessed with a sunny day for patrons to enjoy another selection of wonderful Winnipeg gardens. As always, ONGT 2014 provided an opportunity for gardeners to show off the beauty they create in their yards.

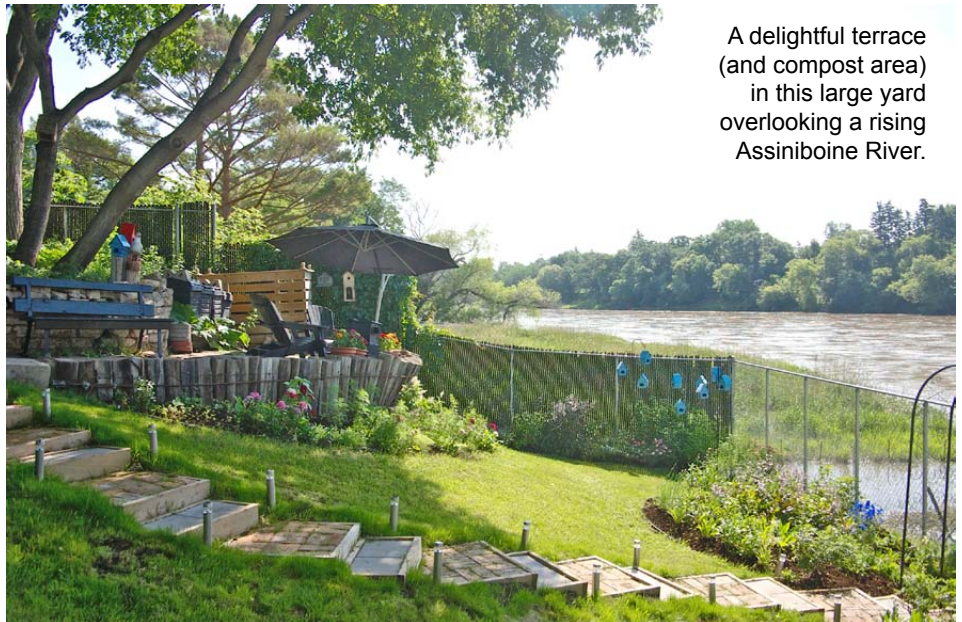
With the cool May and June temperatures and wet conditions this spring, gardeners wondered if their plants would ever burst into bloom before the July 5 tour date. But bloom they did and the yards were spectacular.

Another bonus was the resurgence in the number of tickets sold – from 320 in 2013 to 402 in 2014 – most gratifying and most welcome for Nature Manitoba's ongoing financial needs.

Also enjoyable was the gathering together of yet another group of interesting and creative people who got to know one another better as the "tour year" moved along.

As for the tour itself, there were four gardens in the west (St. James area) and five in the east (from South Broadway to River Heights). All of them garnered much praise, and many tour-goers commented on the variety of gardening styles.

The two large properties on the Assiniboine River represented two very different styles. An intriguing feature of the first yard was the fast-flowing river which provided a striking vista as seen from the huge backyard deck. The gardener here had



A delightful terrace (and compost area) in this large yard overlooking a rising Assiniboine River.

made dramatic changes which took the yard from humdrum to stunning. Many densely planted circular beds were dug into the landscape, adding to those already lining the fences. What a difference three years and fifty-seven yards of soil make!

The work put into the second yard along the river just down the street was equally impressive. It had evolved from no beds to new beds to accommodate the incoming one hundred and sixty perennials and shrubs and nineteen trees. Gardeners are hard workers!

The two small homes in St. James were again very different from each other. The first, an immaculately groomed yard, was billed as a low-maintenance garden. Its repeating patterns of pink impatiens and green hosta variations were commented on most favourably by many, as were the gardener's ceramic art pieces nestled nicely into the greenery.

The next house displayed a no-lawn property. The owner had developed an intriguing mix of styles in her garden – from a front yard full of ferns growing beneath majestic trees (spruce, weeping birch and mountain ash) to a dry stream bed at the side to a backyard showcasing a pergola and a gazebo. A nice use of space.

A quick trip east on Portage brought one to a yard on Spence Street with beautiful raised-bed vegetable gardens. Besides the vegetables, a remarkable assortment of plants was grown here – lemons, limes, figs, bay laurels, a dwarf banana and a Japanese maple.

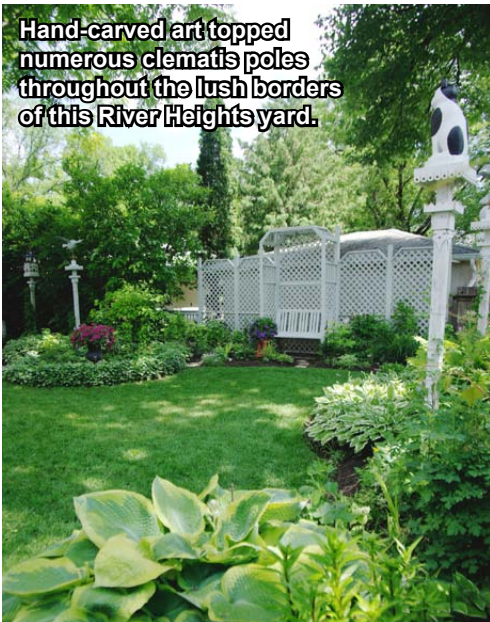
The East Gate "estate" stretched from the flower-filled front area to the densely planted beds at the back with charming stone paths leading down to the heavily treed riverbank. This yard also featured a circular maze mowed into the spacious lawn and a patio full of artistically arranged pots.

The Crescentwood yard offered elegant flowerbeds, front and back, and included

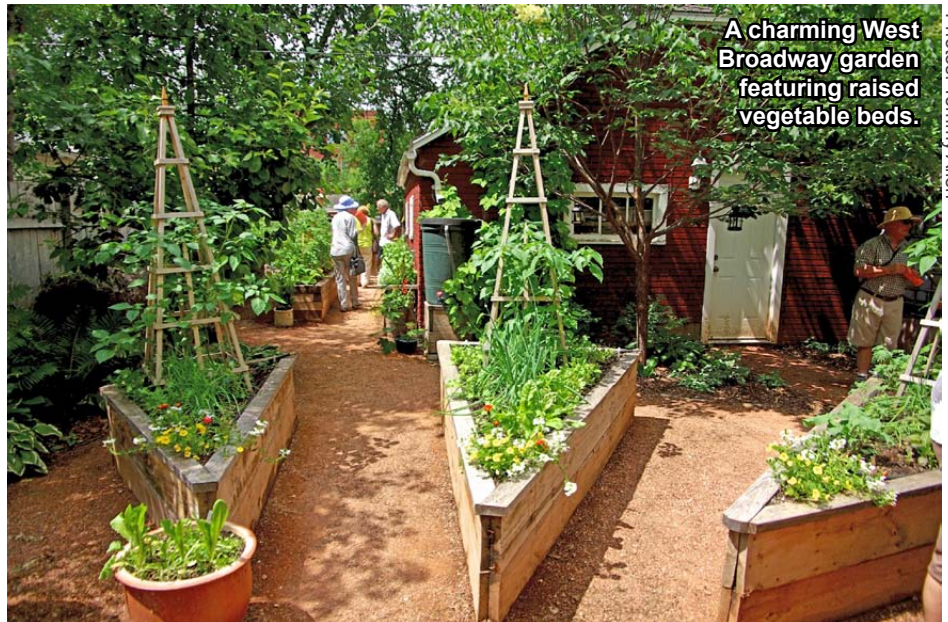


This East Gate garden included colourful plantings as well as a very creatively mown lawn.

Photos: Tommy Allen



Hand-carved art topped numerous clematis poles throughout the lush borders of this River Heights yard.



A charming West Broadway garden featuring raised vegetable beds.

Photos: Tommy Allen

a number of unusual perennials as well as over fifty clematis vines. The surprise feature here delighting visitors was the collection of “clematis poles” rising high above the garden and topped by hand-carved folk art.

The last yard was an English country cottage garden beautifully put together by a British couple. Roses, delphiniums and peonies were abundant, as one would expect in an English garden.

The community property this year was the nicely located Enderton Park (aka Peanut Park) in historic Crescentwood. The land was donated by Charles Enderton in 1902 for the neighbours’ enjoyment. But the beauty of the park diminished over time and around 2007, the neighbours “adopted” it. The gardeners have done a superb job organizing and maintaining this large elegant space.

Our fourteenth garden tour brought in just over \$6000 this year. Thank you to all those who support this summer event.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to all those whose efforts helped to make Our Natural Garden Tour 2014 such a success, including my helpers Dianne Beaven and Donna Danyluk, all those who sold tickets, and the volunteers who helped at the gardens.

Finally, of course, thank you to the gardeners for sharing their vision of beauty with the members of Nature Manitoba and the public: George & Eileen Bowden, Ron and Sandi Mielitz, Jens Wrogemann, Laura Rawluk, Linda Kaston, Val Goodridge, Jan and Kris Pedersen, Tim Evans, and Joyce Aukema and Barb Parke and their team of volunteers who work so diligently at Peanut Park.



Photos: Julia Schoen

Grey Hares Tour St. Norbert Gardens

Wed. July 23 – The weather was perfect for the 16 Grey Hares who participated in this combined cycling and garden-visiting trip. We toured some lovely gardens in the St. Norbert area, and enjoyed a cycle down Red River Drive with little traffic. And we even managed to include a brief stop at the St. Norbert Farmers’ Market. LEFT: A massive dry stream bed built to address the problem of a yearly backyard spring “flood”. The stream bed immediately fixed this problem and the owner is very pleased with the results. RIGHT: A naturally wild yard with no lawn, with the Grey Hares standing on mulched ground discussing the design of the yard.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

To receive a weekly list of outdoor activities, sign-up on our website at www.naturemanitoba.ca.

Cycle Grand Opening South Shore Trail

Sun. August 31st

Join Daniela to cycle the Grand Opening of the South Shore Trail at Falcon Lake. This event will officially open the newest section of the Border to Beaches trail.

We will gather for food and music after at the Falcon Trails resort.

Please register with Daniela Rempel at 204-633-0668 or email at danielarempel@shaw.ca [Rate 3]

Hike Hunt Lake

Sun. September 14th

Join Roger for this hike and potluck BBQ – bring \$5 to contribute towards meat. Meet at 9 am in the Safeway parking lot, at Fermor and Lakewood.

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

Canoe Netley

Sat. September 20th

Join Les for a day canoe at Netley. If you don't have your own canoe, partner, or other equipment we will try to still get you in on this outing. Some canoeing experience or equivalent conditioning a necessity. It is a moderately strenuous day outing. Option of finishing off with a snack stop in Lockport.

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

Hike Mantario Trail

Sun. September 28th

Join Roger for a dayhike on the south portion of the Mantario Trail and potluck BBQ – bring \$5.00 to contribute towards the meat. Meet at 9 am in the Safeway parking lot at Fermor and Lakewood.

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

Hike & Fall Dinner at Miami

Sun. October 5th

Explore this southwestern Manitoba area and then relax at the Miami fall dinner.

Email Rose Kuzina at rkuzina@mymts.net. [Rate 2-3]

Hike & Fall Dinner at

St. Pierre-Jolys

Sun. October 26th

Hike in the St. Pierre/St. Malo area (trail to be determined) before the roast and chicken dinner in St. Pierre-Jolys. Price is \$13 per adult.

Contact Rose Kuzina at rkuzina@mymts.net. [Rate 2-3]

Hike and/or Fall Dinner in Headingley Area

Sun. November 2nd

Join Les for a hike in North Beaudry Park to be followed by the Headingley United Church Fall Dinner at 4:00 pm. Pre-purchase of tickets are a requirement.

Seats will be reserved upon receipt of your \$15 being received by Les. Contact Les McCann at 204-895-8108 or lmccann2001@yahoo.com. [Rate 1]

Hikers' Windup Potluck

Sat. November 8th

Gather at Roger's house, 782 Taché Ave., at 5 pm for a potluck and BBQ.

Call Roger Sutherland at 204-451-1219. [Rate 1]

Early Winter Camping in Riding Mountain

Sat. Nov. 22nd - Sun. Nov. 23rd

Early winter camping outing to Riding Mountain National Park. Camp at Whirlpool Lake and hike the Bald Hill trail.

Contact Les McCann at 204-895-8108 or lmccann2001@yahoo.com. [Rate 4]

Looking for More Trips?

With our quarterly newsletter schedule, trips are not always planned far enough ahead to be listed here. More trips will likely be scheduled throughout Sep/Oct/Nov. See our website's "Outdoor Activity" section for the most up-to-date listing. You can also sign-up on our website for a weekly email trip list, which will include any new and revised trips.

www.naturemanitoba.ca

Hike Whitemouth River Trail

Sun. October 12th

Join Roger for a hike of the Whitemouth River trail, on the south side of Hwy #1. Meet at 9 am in the co-op parking lot at Fermor and Lakewood. Bring \$5 towards the meat and a dish for the potluck.

Register with Roger Sutherland at 204-451-1219. [Rate 2]

Hike Spur Woods

Sat. October 18th

Join Les for this trip to explore a 9.5 km trail in this southern Manitoba wildlife management area.

Contact Les McCann at 204-895-8108 or lmccann2001@yahoo.com. [Rate 2-3]



Trip Leader Forms

Trip Leader forms are available on our website, in the "Outdoor Activities" section under "Trip Leader Forms". Please fill them out and return them to the Nature Manitoba office.

Classified Ads

For \$15 you get a box of this size to share any text that you want. Email editor@naturemanitoba.ca.

GREY HARES

Free on Wednesdays?

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

Cycle St. Boniface

Wed. August 27th

Cycle starting on Lyndale Drive.
Cheryl Chesney at 204-477-5946. [Rate 2]

Cycle Matlock to Gimli

Wed. September 3rd

Marilyn Hurrell at 204-832-8908. [Rate 2]

Hike South Mantario Trail

Wed. September 17th

Hike the south section of Mantario Trail, starting at Caddy Lake.
Charles Begley at 204-233-8395. [Rate 2]

Cycle Miami to

Altamont Railway Line

Wed. October 1st

Cycle the old Miami to Altamont railway line (west of Morden). Possible return on the Miami Thompson portion of the TransCanada Trail.
Daniela Rempel at 204-633-0668. [Rate 2-3]

Fall Photo Tour

Thu. October 2nd

Drive through the Whiteshell with Al and Thelma Ross. Enjoy the Whiteshell in the Fall, capture the vibrant colours, get tips on photography from a professional, or just enjoy the trip and company! No hiking, it is an easy trip.
Al Ross at 204-853-2047. [Rate 1]

Hike Agassiz Provincial Forest

Wed. October 8th

Hike & Snip – Hike the Ski Trails in Agassiz Provincial Forest.
Gerry Recksiedler at 204-467-8518. [Rate 2]

Hike Pumpkin Creek

Wed. October 15th

Hike & Snip – hike the Pumpkin Creek Ski Trails. Also visit Manitoba's most beautifully set junk yard of old cars from your misspent youth (cars from the 1920's to 1960's).
John Gray at 204-269-1765. [Rate 1]

Hike Grand Beach

Wed. October 22nd

Hike the Grand Beach Squirrel Trail.
Marilyn Hearn at 204-895-4659. [Rate 2]

Hike Bittersweet

Wed. October 29th

Hike & Snip – hike the Bittersweet Ski Trails.
Ted Harvey at 204-889-5725. [Rate 2]

More Grey Hares trips will be scheduled for November. With our now quarterly newsletter, trips are not always planned far enough ahead to be listed here. See our website's "Outdoor Activity" section for the most up-to-date listing, or join the Grey Hares to receive their email updates: www.naturemanitoba.ca.

BIRD OUTINGS

Annual Fall Hawk Watch

Sat. September 13th

Several groups for this outing have already been formed, but it may be possible to organize your own group.
Contact Rudolf Koes at 204-661-0763 to register your group or for more information. [Rate 1]

Shoal Lakes/St. Ambroise

Sat. September 20th

Join Garry Budyk on this day-long outing to search for waterfowl, raptors, gulls and terns, late shorebirds and warblers and more. At this time of year, anything is possible!
Call Garry Budyk at 204-667-1062 to register. [Rate 1]

Whitewater Lake

Sat. October 4th

This will be an all-day outing. En route to our destination, we should see a number of raptors and we will visit Pelican Lake. At Whitewater, we'll look for waterfowl, herons and ibises, shorebirds and more.
Contact Rudolf Koes at 204-661-0763 for details. [Rate 1]

Lake Winnipeg Beaches

Sat. November 1st

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.
Contact Rudolf Koes at 204-661-0763 for information or to register. [Rate 1]

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 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 Bird News column will not have a table of unusual sightings as it has in the past. Over the years more and more of these sightings have been taken from ManitobaBirds Yahoo Group postings and it seems redundant to repeat these sightings when the majority of people have, or could have, access to the ManitobaBirds website. (I apologize to those of you who do not have internet access.) A second reason for discontinuing the table of sightings is the space that it uses in Nature Manitoba News, particularly now with the quarterly publication schedule.

Some of the rarer sightings during June and July were:

Trumpeter Swan

- 2 birds seen by Peter Taylor on June 4 in the Powerview area
- 2 birds seen by Garry Budyk and Deanna Dodgson on June 4 at Beausejour
- 1 bird seen by Ray Methot on June 15 near Whytewold
- 7 birds (2 adults and 5 cygnets) seen by Rob Parsons on June 18 in the Northwest Angle Provincial Forest

Cinnamon Teal

- 1 bird seen by Luc Blanchette on June 22 at Oak Hammock Marsh
- 1 bird seen by Gordon and Jaye Grief on July 4 in the Warren area

Yellow-billed Loon

- 1 bird seen by Christian Artuso and Ken Kingdon on June 21 in the Seal River area

Great Egret

- a number of sightings in various areas

Snowy Egret

- 1 bird seen by Dominique Halverson and Horst Hack on June 10 at Whitewater Lake

Cattle Egret

- a number of sightings in the Whitewater Lake and Oak Lake areas

Mississippi Kite

- Michael Loyd saw what he thought was a Mississippi Kite on July 18 but wasn't able to get confirming photos until July 27. Once he posted the news on ManitobaBirds Yahoo! group many people managed to see this first record for Manitoba; in fact these birds made the

Winnipeg Free Press shortly before a nest was found on July 31 (see articles on pages 4-5). The normal breeding range of this species is Colorado, New Mexico, Texas and Kansas and east to the Atlantic coast.

Glaucous Gull

- 1 bird seen by Mark Dorriesfield and Jake Gillis on June 13 in Cranberry Portage

Black Guillemot

- 1 bird seen by Christian Artuso and Ken Kingdon on June 24 at Hubbard Point

Northern Mockingbird

- 1 bird seen by Rudolf Koes on June 17 near St. Laurent
- 1 bird seen by Heather Hinam on July 16 near Blacks Point

Wood Thrush

- 1 bird heard by Rudolf Koes on June 22 near Garson
- 1 bird heard by Garry Budyk and Deanna Dodgson on July 23 near Whitemouth Lake

Spotted Towhee

- 1 bird seen by Richard and Diana Staniforth on June 19 near Lenswood

Field Sparrow

- 1 bird seen by Wally Jansen and Robb Nickel on June 25 in the Steinbach area
- 1 bird seen by Ken De Smet on July 9 in the Souris area

Black-throated Sparrow

- 1 bird seen and photographed by Joy and Barry Manikel on the evening of Friday, June 6 near St. Jean Baptiste. The bird remained at the Manikel's only through Saturday so many people were unable to see it as they were busy with field work for the Manitoba Breeding Bird Atlas. This was a first record for Manitoba; the normal breeding range of this species is the southwestern United States.

Eastern Meadowlark

- 1 bird seen by Peter Taylor on July 3 in the Brightstone area

I want to say that it has been my pleasure to compile the bird sightings for the past 26 years. However, I think it is now time to move on to some other projects that I have been neglecting for far too long, so this will be my last Bird News column. I want to wish everyone the best of health and happiness and good birding.

Ed. Note: On behalf of all Nature Manitoba members, the Editorial Committee extends its heartfelt thanks to Gordon Grief for keeping us up-to-date with the "Bird News" for all these years. Gordon received a Nature Manitoba Service Award in March 2012 in recognition of his long-standing contributions to our newsletter and to other birding projects.

Atlassing in the Flood: The Final Season

Adapted from the July 25 edition
of the Bird Studies Canada email
newsletter

In 2013, the Manitoba Breeding Bird Atlas had to contend with numerous forest fires. This year, devastating floods wreaked havoc in the south-western part of the province and disrupted many carefully laid atlassing plans. (A derailment that closed the train line to Churchill caused further complications.) Our valiant volunteers and crew demonstrated extraordinary dedication in braving the conditions to fill in gaps on our survey effort maps.

As of the end of July, nearly 4000 hours of atlassing had already been logged for the 2014 season, with many more still to be entered. Highlights have included: the first confirmed breeding of Black Scoter; the atlas's first Yellow-billed Loon, Greater White-fronted Goose, and Black-throated Blue Warbler; and the project's second Snowy Owl nest.

Point counting wrapped up in early to mid-July, and a final big push was made to squeeze as much general atlassing as possible into areas that needed it during the rest of the breeding season.

We'll have more articles in future issues of Nature Manitoba News on the outcomes from this massive 5-year project.



Two Greater White-fronted Geese

C. Artuso



Reserve the Date!

On Friday, November 7th join us to celebrate the completion of Phase 1 of the Atlas. We will be celebrating five years of amazing volunteers at the Caboto Centre. www.birdatlas.mb.ca

Bilingual Manitoba Important Bird Areas (IBA) information brochure and map now available!

Distribution of this brand new publication is now underway! Learn more about IBAs in Manitoba, the IBA program and how you can get involved as a volunteer at an IBA near you.

Feel free to drop by Nature Manitoba during office hours to pick up your free copy or request one to be mailed to you by contacting the IBA Coordinator, Diana Teal, at 204-943-9029 or iba@naturemanitoba.ca. Please provide your full mailing address.

Thank you to our amazing donors who made this publication possible - EcoAction, the Shell Fuelling Change Fund and TD Friends of the Environment Fund. Thank you as well to the photographers who donated their wonderful work - IBA Steering Committee Chair Christian Artuso and IBA Caretakers Donna Martin, Charlie McPherson and Joanne Smith. One last thank you goes to Oscar MacDonald,



Diana Teal

who provided his graphic design services on a volunteer basis for this project.

New IBA Program Website

The IBA program recently launched a new website. Check it out at www.importantbirdareasmb.ca!

Report from the Field: Southwest Manitoba Flooding Impacts Nesting Birds

by David Hatch

The following report from David Hatch on the immediate impacts on local nesting birds of the massive flooding in the Oak Lake area of southwestern Manitoba was posted in early July on ManitobaBirds Yahoo! group.

Over a four-day period between Thursday, June 26 and Sunday, June 29, the Oak Lake area received 200-215 mm of rain, coupled with winds around 70 km/hr on the final day. Prior to this deluge the area was already saturated with far too much rain.

Oak Lake [the actual lake] and its massive network of wetlands, meadows, pastures, croplands and aspen woods, plus the Oak Lake recreational area, are located between Hwys. # 1 and 2, southwest of the town of the same name.

The impact of this latest flooding is devastating to local farmers and extremely disheartening, so it is almost sacrilege for me, raised in the local area and still where my heart resides, to talk about the impacts on birds. The colonies of Franklin's Gulls, Black-crowned Night Herons and Eared Grebes have been drowned out, becoming parts of broad expanses of open water. So also are two of the three Cattle Egret colonies. One small colony of 200-300 birds still remains and here is some good news. It is a site of frantic activity with many birds carrying stalks and leaves of aquatic vegetation to rebuild or raise their nests as the water continues to rise. In mid-June this particular colony also had six or more Great Egrets and at least one Snowy Egret hanging around it and possibly nesting. Both species are still present and they are also carrying nesting material.

“Nesting habitat is at a premium as many meadows and pasture fields have stretches of flood waters that extend for 2000-3000 acres. The marshes have become open water devoid of the emergent vegetation essential to anchor and protect floating nests.”

The biggest surprise was that now Black-crowned Night Herons and as many as 17 White-faced Ibis have arrived in this maize of cattail beds and are carrying nesting material. Possibly they are birds flooded out from other wetlands and, finding this colony still intact, have decided to try a new area. To reach this colony one has to know the terrain very well and trudge and wade for nearly two hours to get close enough to see with a scope what is occurring. I remained a long distance from these colonial nesters so as not to disturb them.

Although White-faced Ibis have been in the Oak Lake marshes in the nesting season during 2012 and 2013, I have not had any evidence that they were nesting, but from a distance it sure appeared they were this week. This year was the first

year that I have had any evidence that Cattle Egrets or any other egrets were nesting in the Oak Lake area, even though they arrive in the area in late August annually now and remain well into October. In the falls of 2012 and 2013 some of the roosts

were attracting hundreds of birds, and it was possible to see a dozen flocks of 10-25 birds arrive before dusk to spend the night in the cattails.

I only spent July 2 and 3 in the Oak Lake area, but there was not a Franklin's Gull around. Where could thousands of pairs go so quickly? Are they searching for a new possible colony site far from here or has their nesting season ended for 2014?

Many local residents enjoy birds and have oriole feeders, which every summer are used daily by both Orchard Orioles and Baltimore Orioles. Every person with an oriole feeder told me they had not seen an oriole since the heavy rains and furious winds of June 29. One couple had been enjoying watching a Baltimore Oriole on its nest on a low branch of an American Elm only three metres from their feeder, but the bird disappeared in the winds. Last year it had nested within a metre or two of the same location and given the family great pleasure. Where would all the orioles go so suddenly after the rainstorm? I did not see one of either species during this visit.

The number of pairs of Gadwall, Blue-winged Teal, Lesser Scaup and Redheads observed was astonishing. Will these four species of late nesters still attempt to raise a brood? Nesting habitat is at a premium as many meadows and pasture fields have stretches of flood waters that extend

White-faced Ibis



C. Artuso

for 2000-3000 acres. The marshes have become open water devoid of the emergent vegetation essential to anchor and protect floating nests.

I spent much time along the west side of the lake, utilizing Road 150W where it was passable and a few connecting roads. Despite the challenge, I recorded four singing Chestnut-collared Longspurs and 13 Sprague's Pipits. Both species were doing a great deal of singing. With little patches of dry ground and the cool temperatures hopefully there will be much re-nesting for these now-scarce prairie residents.

Large numbers of three other grassland-nesting species were also highly vocal and may also make another nesting attempt. They were Willet [heard in eight sites] and the much more locally common Upland Sandpiper and Marbled Godwit. Even if these species had young before the major four-day storm, it would have been difficult for their offspring to survive the overland flooding. All three species were making so much

noise that it sounded like they had just returned from the south in spring and were staking out territories. Upland Sandpiper, which can have a prolonged nesting season, are often seen in the Oak Lake area with young as late as the first week of August, but normally the Willets and Marbled Godwits are drifting south of the Oak Lake area by then.

Finally one last piece of really good news. Both pairs of Trumpeter Swans, which had broods on my mid-June visit, were located and still have their broods. They nested in quiet, isolated marshes, but now that everything is so flooded, they are so conspicuous from the air that they look like white sailing ships on a lake.

Please respect private land and indeed all land and give these species a chance to salvage their nesting season. The less disturbance nesting birds have from human activity, the better it is for the birds.

MB Chimney Swift Initiative: 2014 Update

by Barb Stewart, *MCSI Steering Committee Member & St. Adolphe nest site monitor*

As this update was being penned at the end of July, Chimney Swifts in Manitoba were heading into the home stretch of the nesting season. Breeding adults at St. Adolphe nest sites were feeding non-brooded juveniles, and "fledging day" in early August was a much anticipated event. In Winnipeg, a large roost of 70-110 Chimney Swifts continued to provide an evening spectacle at Assiniboine School in St. James. Roosting dynamics throughout Manitoba were set to shift by early to mid-August. As migration ensues, Chimney Swifts head south, ultimately reaching South America for the winter.

The Manitoba Chimney Swift Initiative (MCSI) was active in 2014 with a focus on two activities. First, we supported the National Roost Monitoring Program coordinated by Bird Studies Canada (Ontario Region) which will evaluate the distribution and abundance of Chimney Swifts returning to their summer range. For this second year of the program, Canadian monitors were chimney-side on May 21, 25, 29 and June 2 to count roosting birds. In Manitoba, volunteers in Brandon, Carman, Clearwater, Dauphin, La Broquerie, Portage La Prairie, Selkirk, St Adolphe, Steinbach, and Winnipeg collected valuable data. Moreover, many dedicated volunteers in these various communities continued to document the activities of their Chimney Swifts during the summer. Monitoring reports kept winging in to the MCSI; the submitted information contributed to our ongoing efforts to better understand this threatened species. Thanks to all of our monitors for making these efforts such a success!

The second activity that MCSI focussed on was identifying candidate chimneys that could be reopened, refurbished, or



Nick Stefano

otherwise repaired for ongoing use by Chimney Swifts. The considerable decline in Chimney Swift populations (the Canadian population has been declining by 7.8% per year since 1968, which represents a total decline of 95%) is thought to be linked partially to loss of habitat. Old brick chimneys from the pre-1960 era are being converted to lined and capped structures with the conversion to modern high-efficiency heating systems. In the process, Chimney Swifts are losing access to roosting and nesting sites. MCSI gratefully acknowledges the Environmental Damages Funds which were awarded in the spring of 2014 to continue habitat stewardship activities.

Our much appreciated webmaster, Frank Machovec, posts news bulletins, photo challenges, etc. at <http://swift-notes.blogspot.ca>, plus manages the databases and resource listings at the main website www.mbchimneyswift.ca. If you would like to participate in Chimney Swift monitoring in 2015 or have information about historically used chimneys that could be rehabilitated for roost or nest sites, please contact us at mbchimneyswift@gmail.com. Thank you to Nature Manitoba for the ongoing support of MCSI.

Brokenhead Wetland Interpretive Trail Near Completion

by Peggy Bainard Acheson,
with files from Ryan Wakshinski
(Reprinted from the Manitoba Eco-
network's Eco-Journal, Summer 2014)

If you are an avid hiker, naturalist, or just enjoy discovering new places to visit in Manitoba, you may be interested to know that the Brokenhead Wetland Interpretive Trail is close to completion. The story of the planning, design and construction of this exceptional trail is a saga in and of itself. Suffice it to say that, at long last, the dreams of Carl Smith and his father, elder Lawrence Smith of the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation (BON), are coming to fruition. The trail, located just north of the BON along Highway 59 near Scanterbury, will be officially opened at the end of June 2015.*

This wheelchair-accessible trail features over one kilometre of cedar boardwalk, using floating dock billets to suspend the walkway over the existing ground, allowing water to pass underneath and minimizing the impact on the sensitive ecosystems below. Numerous rest points with benches are featured along the route, allowing opportunities for interpretation through both signage and personal reflection on the surrounding environment. An octagonal forest plaza awaits at the southern conclusion of the route, providing an opportunity for a picnic lunch or outdoor classroom learning before making your way back to the trailhead. The development also includes a parking lot for up to 24 cars, bus turnaround and parking, and an accessible, non-modern washroom.

In 2007, a group of dedicated volunteers made up representatives from two non-profit organizations, the Manitoba Model Forest and Native Orchid Conservation Inc, along with the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation, formed a new organization, Debwendon Inc. (meaning "trust" in Ojibway). The partnership now also includes the Eastside Aboriginal Sustainable Tourism Inc. The purpose of Debwendon is "to promote and preserve the Brokenhead Wetland Ecological Reserve, raise public awareness of the historic cultural connection between the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation and the Brokenhead Wetland, construct and maintain over the long term a boardwalk and interpretive trail adjacent to the Brokenhead Wetland Ecological Reserve, and raise funds toward those ends."



Peggy Bainard Acheson

Brian Kolak

Richard Reeves, long-time NOCI volunteer, showing something to visitors on the new boardwalk.

After a few years of false starts, the project was finally able to go forward due to the exceptional generosity of the late Eugene Reimer, a long-time naturalist and board member of Native Orchid Conservation. A donation of \$600,000, known as the Eugene Reimer Environment Fund, was invested through the Winnipeg Foundation, and will provide funding in perpetuity for the repair and maintenance of the trail. With this stable support, the Province of Manitoba committed \$1 million in funding for the capital cost of the construction of the trail, which was announced in October 2011.

The Brokenhead Ecological Reserve was designated in 2005 under the Province of Manitoba's Protected Areas Initiative, "a government program dedicated to working together with others to build a network of protected land, freshwater, and marine areas that contains the tremendous biological diversity and unique features found in Manitoba's varied landscapes."

The Brokenhead Wetland Interpretive Trail is located adjacent to the ecological reserve within a 100 meter-wide buffer that follows the eastern edge of the ecological reserve for about 1.2 km. Riverside Gravel supported the trail development by relinquishing a portion of their quarry lease to accommodate the trail. The trail route winds through various habitat types found in the area including a gravel moraine, jackpine forest, cedar wetland, and fen. The trail will highlight specific plants such as orchids, pitcher plants and other features such as glacial erratics. A key objective is to maximize the experience for users so they grasp the

importance of the ecological balance that needs to be maintained in the wetland.

The special relationship that the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation has with the wetland will also be a focus of the interpretation. Debwendon intends to offer live interpretive programming to be provided by BON members during the summer months to share information about the many features along the Trail. The Brokenhead Ojibway Nation has been using the wetland for approximately 300 years and it continues to be considered by the band as a place of great cultural importance and a place for collecting medicinal plants, tea, berries and cedar.

The Brokenhead Wetland Interpretive Trail and Brokenhead Wetland Ecological Reserve will also be a very valuable tool for educating the general public about wetlands. Southern Manitoba has lost approximately 70 per cent of its wetlands since 1900 and public education is critical in order to save the little that remains for future generations.

** An update from Peggy Bainard-Acheson on the trail opening: "Trail infrastructure such as signage and washrooms are not yet complete, so the official opening has been delayed until June 2015. However, we have seen a lot of people already using the trail and we have received some great feedback from those to whom we have spoken. There is now a temporary sign at the trailhead indicating that the area is still a construction site and that anyone using the trail does so at their own risk. Visit our website at www.debwendon.org for more information on the trail and official opening."*

Centre Teaches Wonders of Tall Grass Prairie

by Martin Zeilig

(Excerpts from an article that appeared in the July 19 edition of the Winnipeg Free Press)

At one point during her outdoor presentation on plants and soils of the tall grass prairie, Cathy Shaluk has a student stand up on the seat of the sheltered picnic bench at which the talk is being held. Shaluk, a naturalist and regional outreach and communications co-ordinator with the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), hands him a thin blade of a tall grass known as big bluestem, complete with an extensive root system that extends several metres.

The astonished boy is one of a group of about 25 Grade 4 and 5 students from Ross L. Gray Elementary School in Sprague in southeastern Manitoba. They are spending a day at the NCC's Weston Family Tall Grass Interpretive Centre – a redesigned 3,000-square-foot home near Stuartburn, some 80 kilometres southeast of Winnipeg off Highway 59, on a 65-hectare site representing the splendour and biodiversity of the rare ecosystem around it.

The centre, which opened to the public just over a year ago, includes interactive displays and exhibits, a 400-sq.-ft. prairie mural, a meeting space and an observation deck on the second floor. The surrounding grounds feature a prairie garden, picnic shelter and the Prairie Orchid Hiking Trail.

“The centre allows guests to experience one of the most endangered ecosystems in North America, the tall grass prairie,” says education outreach interpreter Vicki Pruden, who’s demonstrating how to make mud balls to a second group of students at another picnic table. The students embed seeds of native plant species in the mud balls for planting later on. “All the seeds we used today are from plants found in the tall grass prairie,” Pruden tells the attentive students. She adds they can put the seeded mud balls into their freezers at home for 48 hours – “a mini-winter” – before planting them.

The centre was developed with support from the W. Garfield Weston Foundation, the C.P. Loewen Family Foundation and



The Weston Family Tall Grass Interpretive Centre

NCC Staff

private supporters C. Jean Britton, Ransom Slack and the Conserve Native Plants Society. Less than half of one per cent of this original ecosystem – which at one time stretched from the southern Interlake region north of Winnipeg down to the Gulf of Mexico – remains, an illustrated information panel inside the centre’s main-floor activity room states.

Like many remnant grasslands, the lands within Manitoba’s Tall Grass Prairie Preserve escaped destruction because the land was too difficult to plough, Shaluk tells the students. She says large boulders, aspen groves and swamps discouraged the early settlers from turning the precious sod, allowing this unique plant and animal system to endure.

Later, the students file into the interpretive centre to read the colourful display panels and see the beaver, muskrat skulls and giant wasp nest, and run their hands over a beaver pelt and coyote tail, among other items on display in a smaller exhibit room. After lunch, the group travels by bus to the Agassiz Interpretive Trail, some three kilometres east of the centre on Provincial Road 201. Once there, Shaluk and Pruden produce a number of dip nets and plastic pails. They demonstrate to the throng how to use them to search for interesting life forms in the water-filled ditches just off the trail. It doesn’t take long for the eager students and their guardians to become absorbed in the task. “Wetlands, wet meadows and forests are part of the tall grass prairie,” Shaluk says during a spare moment. “This area is the only place in Manitoba containing all of these components.”

The interpretive centre is open Thursday through Sunday, 9 am to 4:30 pm, through the September long weekend.



A monarch butterfly at the interpretive centre site

NCC Staff

DISCOVERY EVENINGS

2014 - 2015

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).

Programs start at **7:30 pm** *except* for the March 16th, 2015 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 6, 2014

Communing with Invertebrates: What I've Learned About Prairie Pollination

Dr. Diana Bizecki Robson,
Curator of Botany, Manitoba Museum

News that the world's pollinators are in danger has received much attention in the media lately. But what is pollination and why is it so important? In this reflective lecture, Dr. Diana Bizecki Robson will talk about her ten years of research on pollination in Manitoba's endangered prairies, and what she has learned from her patient observation of life. You'll hear stories about the amazing and morbid life cycles of some of the most important pollinators of Canada's rarest plants. Did you know that the pollinator of the rare Western Silvery Aster is a bee fly that parasitizes grasshoppers? Or that some insects hide on goldenrod flowers so they can paralyse and consume the pollinating insects that come to it for nectar? Photographs of Manitoba's prairie ecosystems, wildflowers and insect pollinators will illustrate and enhance this lecture. You will come away with a new appreciation of an intricate world that most people simply pass by!

Monday, October 20, 2014

Decoding the Chatter: How Richardson's Ground Squirrels Sound the Alarm

Dr. James Hare,
Dept. of Biological Sciences, University of Manitoba

Jim Hare has specialized in the study of animal behaviour for over 30 years, focusing on ants, moths, fireflies, squirrels, bats, birds, fish, snakes and humans. With his students, Jim has made intriguing discoveries regarding

how Richardson's ground squirrels – a species that humans often take for granted and target for extermination – communicate within their colonies to cope with their many predators. He will show us evidence of the exacting abilities of these squirrels to broadcast and decode information regarding predators, as well as cognitive skills we normally deny non-human animals. Squirrels recognize alarm callers as individuals, allowing them to count the number of individuals calling, and to track the movement of predators within their colony by integrating information from multiple signalers. They also base their response to individual callers on how reliable those individuals have been in the past! Upon hearing what these common prairie animals can do, you'll undoubtedly have newfound respect for these and the other animals we share the world with!

Monday, November 3, 2014

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

Dr. Terry Galloway,
Dept. 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, November 17, 2014

The Benefits and Challenges of Using Native Trees in the Urban Environment

Martha Barwinski,
Urban Forestry Branch, City of Winnipeg

More details on this presentation will appear on our website and will be sent with our regular email notices closer to the program date.

Monday, December 1, 2014

Brazil Beyond the World Cup: Birds and other Wildlife in the Pantanal and the Atlantic Rain Forest

In September 2013, four Nature Manitoba members (Brad Carey, Rudolf Koes, Peter Taylor, and Gene Walz) spent three weeks exploring some of the wild places of southern Brazil. The emphasis was on birding, with over 400 species identified, but we also came back with memories of friendly people, great food, some challenging hikes in spectacular scenery, crazy drivers, and fabulous wildlife sightings beyond the birds. We even got to see a soccer match in the jungle! Peter, Rudolf and Gene will share images and anecdotes from their adventure.

More Discovery Evenings Scheduled for January to March

The second half of our 2014-15 Discovery Evening program will be published in our Winter (Dec/Jan/Feb) issue, and even sooner on our website:

www.naturemanitoba.ca/?q=discovery-evenings

In the meantime MARK YOUR CALENDARS with the following dates (all Mondays):

January 5 and 19; February 2,
March 2; plus our AGM on March 16.

Charleswood Ski Club Recreational Skiing

(you don't have to live in Charleswood to join)



Do you enjoy recreational cross country skiing?

Would you like to ski with sociable people at places such as Sandilands, Grand Beach, Bittersweet, Shannondale, Pumpkin Creek, Birch, Pinawa, Spruce Woods, Kenora, Turtle Mountain, Birds Hill Park, Beaudry Park, Windsor Park, Duck Mountain SK, and Canmore AB (all of which are on 2014-2015 trip schedule)?

If so, you should join the Charleswood Ski Club.

Our 200+ members are skiers of all skill levels and ages. In addition to 25+ day-trips and weekend trips, we offer non-skiing social opportunities, an early season lesson session led by CANSI-certified ski instructors, and a schedule of summer activities such as hiking.

Annual membership (begins Oct. 1st) is only \$25, day-trips (carpooling) are free, and bus day trips and weekend trips are very reasonably priced.

To learn more, go to charleswoodskiclub.ca.



Les McCann



Les McCann

Snapping Turtle near Pinawa

Thankfully, there still remains a lot of wildlife in Manitoba. Most of it makes its living by staying out of view but it is always a thrill when you are privileged to meet some, face to face. Here, the whole group was treated to a very good viewing of a very old snapping turtle.

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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.

Nature Manitoba News is now a quarterly newsletter

The newsletter you are reading is the first quarterly issue of *Nature Manitoba News* (see page 3 for the new schedule). Our Winter issue will reach you by December 1st.

Discovery Evenings 2014-2015

The first half of our 2014-2015 Discovery Evenings program is listed on pages 18-19. The second half is scheduled for January to March, and will be included in the Winter issue of Nature Manitoba News (available even sooner on our website!).

@BorealMB /BorealManitoba @borealmanitoba

SHOW US WHY YOU #LOVETHEBOREAL PHOTO CONTEST



Enter your photos from the Boreal Forest in Manitoba for a chance to win prizes from Photo Central and MEC! Enter by following us on Twitter, Instagram or Facebook and sharing your photos and their location, with the hashtag **#LOVETHEBOREAL**. Or, visit www.lovetheboreal.ca to enter, and for a full list of contest rules. Contest runs until September 15, 2014.