

## RESULTS OF THE 1992 SNHS MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS SURVEYS

PAUL C. JAMES, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, 2340 Albert Street, Regina, Saskatchewan. S4P 3V7 and CURT SCHROEDER, Saskatchewan Natural History Society, Box 4348, Regina, Saskatchewan. S4P 3W6

It was Mrs. Isabel Priestly who in 1942 as president of the Yorkton Natural History Society and editor of the mimeographed bulletin *The Blue Jay* gave this journal its first life. When the Yorkton Natural History Society could no longer support the publication of *The Blue Jay* its survival seemed more secure as part of a provincial body. So, in 1949, *The Blue Jay* publication gave a purpose to the newly incorporated Saskatchewan Natural History Society (SNHS).

Now, after 50 years of publication it seems appropriate that the SNHS re-examine its publication directives and other aspects of the SNHS itself.

Two professionally conducted surveys were commissioned to assess the Society from the perspective of the member and non-member. The main findings are reported here. Should any reader wish to consult the full survey results, they can be seen at the Executive Office of the SNHS in Regina.

**The Non-Member Survey** The SNHS participated in one of the quarterly province-wide omnibus sur-

veys conducted by Tanka Research of Regina in February 1992. Four questions dealing with awareness and interest in joining the SNHS were developed in consultation with SNHS representatives. A total of 1,000 randomly selected telephone interviews were completed. The data from the survey contained a maximum margin of sampling error of 3.2% at the 95% confidence level.

Almost half (47%) of all Saskatchewan residents surveyed had heard of the SNHS. However, only 7% of those surveyed were able to correctly identify the role of the SNHS. Most people did not know or thought that the SNHS worked with historical sites, buildings or landmarks, or the collection and dissemination of related information. All respondents were then provided with some insight into what the SNHS actually does, and asked whether they would be interested in joining such an organization. Of those asked 36% indicated that they would be either very interested (5%) or somewhat interested (31%).

**The Member Survey** Tanka Research was commissioned in March

1992 by the SNHS to undertake a survey to explore members' opinions and preferences with respect to a wide variety of topics. A total of 300 telephone interviews (or 1 in every 3 members in Saskatchewan) were conducted with randomly selected members in the province. Institutions, departments, active SNHS board members and executive were excluded from participating in the survey. The data from the survey contained a maximum margin of sampling error of 5.8% at the 95% confidence level.

The overall average age of members was calculated at 57 years. A disappointing 1% of new members (within the last five years) were under the age of 25. Retirees is the largest occupational group represented (42%), followed by professional occupations (23%) and farmers (11%). Respondents reported to have been SNHS members an average of 14 years, with 25% less than five years, 35% from five to 15 years and 41% over 15 years. Almost half (49%) of all members surveyed said that they belong to a local natural history society as well. An additional 22% would join one if it existed in their area.

The *Blue Jay* and the *Blue Jay News* were rated almost equally as the most important benefits to members. Involvement in volunteer field projects and nature tours received fairly average ratings overall.

The vast majority (85%) of members claimed to have read all of the past four issues of the *Blue Jay*. Readers showed a strong preference for non-technical (65%) writing style in the *Blue Jay*. However, 25% said that they would like to see a balance of non-technical and technical writing. Five topics were rated highly as

the most interesting to readers: birds, endangered species, natural habitat protection, flowers and plants, and mammals.

The idea of including a "letter to the editor" section of the *Blue Jay News* was supported by the majority of members (72%).

A majority of members (61%) claimed that they have made a purchase from the Blue Jay Bookshop. Good proportions of members had participated in one of the Society's tours (42%), attended an annual general meeting (40%), or attended a spring meet (33%). Relatively few members however, had ever contributed an article to the *Blue Jay* (19%) or sat on either a local society board, or the SNHS board (16%). A majority of members had good knowledge of the Society's activities including Operation Burrowing Owl (90%), Swift Fox Reintroduction Program (86%), Piping Plover Census (70%), and Ferruginous Hawk Program (55%).

Most members (90%) felt that the increased individual membership fee beginning 1992 of \$15.00 was about right. Most (87%), however, said that they would pay an extra \$5.00 provided the money went towards habitat protection. The idea of a multi-year membership fee payment option was favoured by the majority (57%).

Reaction to the idea of a possible name change for the SNHS was mixed. The majority would either approve (27%) or be indifferent (35%) to the idea. However, 38% would oppose it, especially long-time members.

**Discussion** While the level of awareness of the SNHS may be

favourable among the general public, there is considerable confusion as to what the organization actually does. Furthermore, the Society's name appears to do little to resolve this problem. A name change might be more descriptive and conducive to attracting new naturalists. The question of choosing a name for the Society is as old as the Society itself.<sup>1</sup> Despite this, the potential to massively increase our membership exists. Looking only at those who say that they would be very interested in joining provides the most realistic indication of membership potential. Based on Statistics Canada estimates for 1991, the actual figure of 5.3% translates into about 37,800 Saskatchewan adults who would be very interested in joining the SNHS. Using the 3% margin of sampling error, the actual number would fall between 27,800 to 47,800.

Clearly there is a latent interest in joining the SNHS, but the question

is, how do we accomplish this? Should we develop a communications or a membership strategy? Should we consider changing our name?

The results of the member survey generally show a good level of awareness, involvement and satisfaction. However, few people have served on boards which is somewhat disappointing.

The next few years will be critical to the kind of Saskatchewan that our children inherit. We urge all of you to get more involved in the Society's work. We are reminded of the saying about the three kinds of people: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who wonder what happened. Together we can make a place for wild things now and in the future.

1. BELCHER, M. 1974. Formation of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society. *Blue Jay* 32:16-22.



# SNHS 1992 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

## Cliff Shaw Award

At the Annual General Meeting of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society in Yorkton on 17 October 1992 three members were presented the Cliff Shaw Award. The award recognizes an article of distinction in the last four issues of *Blue Jay*. The winners for 1992 were Frank Roy (Saskatoon), George Tosh (Harris), and Ken Coutu (Saskatoon). They took the photographs and chose clips of text for the photo essay "The Glory of the Athabasca Sand Dunes" (*Blue Jay* 49:164-170). The dunes are a remote and beautiful part of the Saskatchewan landscape. Few of those who would like to will ever see

them except through efforts such as those of Ken, Frank and George.

## 1992 Larry Morgotch

For the second year in a row, Don Hooper of Somme received the Larry Morgotch Award. This SNHS award is given to the member whose ten slides best tell a natural history story. This year Don gave a presentation on owls.

## Conservation Award

Gordon Silversides of Saskatoon received the 1992 Conservation Award, which is presented to a volunteer who promotes conservation



*Doug Schmeiser (right) accepts the Cliff Shaw Award on behalf of Ken Coutu, Frank Roy and George Tosh. John Pollock and Ruth Shaw presented the award.*

*Margaret Skeel*



*Don Hooper of Somme receives his second consecutive Larry Morgotch Award. Presented by Frank Switzer.*

*Margaret Skeel*



*Gordon Silversides accepts the 1992 Conservation Award for his work to save Silverspring grasslands. Presented by Katherine Letkiman of Yorkton.*

*Margaret Skeel*



*New SNHS Fellows (left to right): Lorne Scott, Ron Hooper, Don Hooper, Les Baker and Christine Pike.*

*Margaret Skeel*



*John Tremblay (left) presents Stan Shadick with award for most species counted by an individual in Weyburn Birdathon.*

*Margaret Skeel*



*Michael Williams accepts the Club award for most species in Weyburn Birdathon. Presented by John Tremblay of Radville.*

*Margaret Skeel*

generally and promotes the conservation ethic of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society. It was through Gordon's untiring efforts that others became involved to raise funds and lobby the local government to conserve Silverspring grasslands, 33 acres of native fescue/mixed prairie in Saskatoon.

### **SNHS Fellows**

Fellows are a class of membership within the Natural History Society. Fellows are recognized as having made extensive and continuing contributions of time over many years to the Society and its objectives. Five

SNHS members were named Fellows at the Annual General Meeting in Yorkton: Les Baker (Somme), Don Hooper (Somme), Ron Hooper (Regina), Christine Pike (Waseca), and Lorne Scott (Indian Head).

### **1992 Weyburn Birdathon**

On behalf of the Saskatoon Natural History Society, Michael Williams accepted the award for most bird species on a list of a club or society in the Weyburn Natural History Society's Provincial Summer Count 1992. Stan Shadick of Saskatoon won the award for the most species identified by an individual.

**SASKATCHEWAN NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL  
ACTIVITIES AND FUND BALANCE FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 AUGUST 1992 \***

|  | 1992             | 1991           |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| REVENUE  |                  |                |
| Grants - Sask. Trust for Sport, Culture<br>and Recreation: Annual Global Funding | \$ 96,000        | 100,000        |
| Grants - Specified Programs  | 119,314          | 151,440        |
| Grants - Other   | 11,591           | —              |
| Specified Programs   | 24,412           | 5,364          |
| Trusts   | 3,537            | 2,000          |
| Self Generated   |                  |                |
| AGM Revenue  | 1,659            | —              |
| Advertising  | 227              | 450            |
| Bookshop Income  | 1,739            | —              |
| Donations  | 1,152            | 3,696          |
| GST Rebate   | 3,746            | —              |
| Interest   | 8,244            | 10,765         |
| Memberships  | 21,290           | 18,197         |
| Sale of Assets   | 400              | —              |
| Special Publications   | 1,373            | 744            |
| Spring Meet  | 1,617            | 1,584          |
| Souvenir Sales   | 742              | 1,498          |
| Tour Income  | 5,391            | 5,056          |
| Recovery - Loggerhead Shrike   | <u>      </u>    | <u>1,140</u>   |
|  | <u>302,434</u>   | <u>301,964</u> |
| EXPENSES   |                  |                |
| Personnel  |                  |                |
| Administrative Salaries  | 49,615           | 45,354         |
| Office - Schedule 2  | 18,530           | 23,068         |
| Membership Communication   |                  |                |
| Blue Jay Journal   | 24,143           | 18,223         |
| Blue Jay News  | 8,826            | 5,955          |
| Travel and Meetings  |                  |                |
| Staff and Volunteer Travel   | 2,310            | 2,044          |
| Annual and Summer Meetings   | 4,567            | 1,613          |
| Board and Executive  | 1,221            | 1,595          |
| Programs - Schedule 3  | <u>195,539</u>   | <u>202,763</u> |
|  | <u>304,751</u>   | <u>300,615</u> |
| INCREASE (DECREASE) IN FUND BALANCE  | ( 2,317)         | 1,349          |
| INCREASE IN BOOKSHOP FUND BALANCE  | <u>      </u>    | <u>533</u>     |
| TOTAL INCREASE (DECREASE) IN FUND BALANCE  | ( 2,317)         | 1,882          |
| FUND BALANCE, BEGINNING OF YEAR  | <u>46,323</u>    | <u>44,441</u>  |
| FUND BALANCE, END OF YEAR  | <u>\$ 44,006</u> | <u>46,323</u>  |



**SASKATCHEWAN NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY BALANCE SHEET  
AS AT 31 AUGUST 1992**

|                                       | 1992              | 1991           |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| <b>ASSETS</b>                         |                   |                |
| <b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>                 |                   |                |
| Cash                                  | \$ 129,937        | 166,361        |
| Accounts Receivable                   | 45,565            | 29,565         |
| Inventory                             | <u>12,818</u>     | <u>11,213</u>  |
|                                       | 188,320           | 207,139        |
| <b>CAPITAL (Note 2)</b>               | 20,799            | 22,874         |
| <b>OTHER</b>                          |                   |                |
| Trust Account Investments (Note 3)    | <u>282,049</u>    | <u>253,393</u> |
|                                       | <u>\$ 491,168</u> | <u>483,406</u> |
| <b>LIABILITIES AND MEMBERS EQUITY</b> |                   |                |
| <b>CURRENT</b>                        |                   |                |
| Accounts Payable                      | \$ 17,057         | 17,004         |
| Special Projects - 3rd Party          | 7,726             | —              |
| Deferred Revenue (Note 4)             | 39,350            | 40,215         |
| <b>OTHER</b>                          |                   |                |
| Specified Programs (Schedule 1)       | 80,181            | 103,597        |
| Trust Accounts (Note 3)               | <u>282,049</u>    | <u>253,393</u> |
|                                       | <u>362,230</u>    | <u>356,990</u> |
| <b>MEMBERS EQUITY</b>                 |                   |                |
| Fund Balance                          | 44,006            | 46,323         |
| Equity in Fixed Assets                | <u>20,799</u>     | <u>22,874</u>  |
|                                       | <u>64,805</u>     | <u>69,197</u>  |
|                                       | <u>\$ 491,168</u> | <u>483,406</u> |

\* Detailed financial statements are available from the SNHS office in Regina.