

# GRASSLANDS NATIONAL PARK INSECT COLLECTION

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In Canada, there are estimated to be approximately 54,600 insect species, 1,400 spider species, 9,500 mite species and 1,000 related terrestrial arthropods. Only half of these have been named and described.<sup>1</sup> Forty percent and four percent of the total number (about 26,000 and 2,600; these are gross estimates only) may be present in Saskatchewan and in the Grasslands National Park (GNP) area, respectively. For many groups of insects, the Northern Great Plains (the Canadian Prairies and northern plains states where the park is situated) is an area of little study and there are expected to be many undescribed species found here.

Of all these species, 302 identified species are found in an insect collection made in the GNP from 1987-90 by the Entomological Society of Saskatchewan (ESS). It was made mainly through volunteer effort, with some financial assistance from the Saskatchewan Natural History Society in 1987. The collection was turned over to the park in April 1993 and is presently housed at the Park Interpretive Centre in Val Marie, Saskatchewan.

There are about another 25 species presently being identified by taxonomists in Ottawa. These will be forwarded to the park at a later date by Ron Hooper of the Royal Saskatchewan Museum (RSM) in Regina. Specimens of about 20 other species collected have been retained for the insect collection of the RSM and the private spider collection of Don J. Buckle of Saskatoon, (the best collections in Saskatchewan of insects and spiders, respectively) because they did not have these species. Additionally, there is a substantial number of un-

identified species in the collection, particularly in the Diptera (flies) and the Hymenoptera (bees, wasps, and sawflies), because there is no expertise locally in their identification.

Included is a list of the identified species found in the collection. It notes which of these (primarily mayflies and spiders) are not pinned but are found in vials of alcohol because of their delicate nature. Also attached are more extensive notes on the taxonomy, ecology and habits of some of the major groups: 1) the spiders and other arachnids by Don Buckle; 2) the aquatic insects, including the dragonflies, damselflies, caddisflies, alderflies and mayflies, by Eric Whiting; and 3) a short note on the Orthoptera (grasshoppers and crickets) by Murray Braun.

It is worth noting that 33 species of grasshoppers (family Acrididae) are in the collection, and many other grasshopper species are found in the park. Some of these are quite beautiful in colour. Only four Saskatchewan species are pests.

Also with the collection are more complete species lists of the Coleoptera (beetles) and Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) which includes all verified records of species found in the GNP area. It has been compiled by Ron Hooper of the RSM and most species are to be found in the RSM collection.

1. DANKS, H. 1979. Canada and its insect fauna. *Memoirs of the Entomological Society of Canada* No. 108. 573 pp.