WINTER 2016 VOLUME 74.4

BLUE JAY

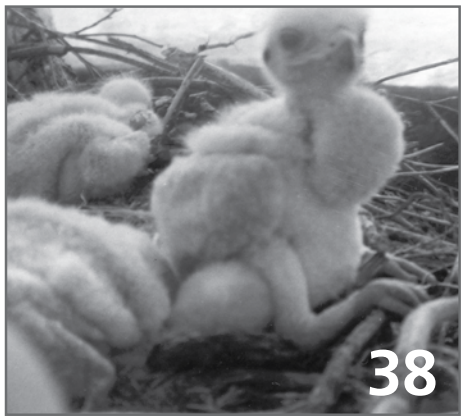
Harold Fisher shares what is believed to be the first documented occurrence of a Northern Hawk Owl using an artificial nest box erected for that purpose in North America.

On August 13, 2015, Dale and Paule Hjertaas travelled to Buena Vista on Last Mountain Lake to view the first reported Purple Martin roost in Saskatchewan.

The Saskatchewan Breeding Bird Atlas project is a multi-year effort to assess the distribution and abundance of breeding bird populations and will involve a large number of volunteers.

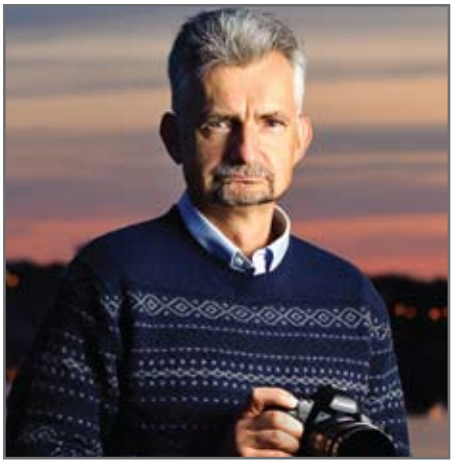
Mary Houston holds the North American record for Bohemian Waxwing bandings (5,387), including 80 in the spring 2011 and 40 in 2014 — her 63rd year of banding birds.

Rob Warnock describes an observation of three Short-eared Owls on the deck roof of his home in Regina on July 2, 2016.



Spencer Sealy remembers a majestic Ferruginous Hawk nest he discovered back in his junior high school days in Kindersley, SK in this issue's edition of Human Nature.

WHAT'S INSIDE



Dr. Branimir Gjetvaj

Photo credit: May Haga

ON THE FRONT COVER

A Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) in winter. This photo, and the photo on the back cover, were taken by May Haga, who passed away on September 15, 2016. To read May's memorial, written by J. Frank Roy, see page 9.

Photo credit: May Haga

ON THE BACK COVER

Great Gray Owl (*Strix nebulosa*).

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dr. Branimir Gjetvaj
President, Nature Saskatchewan

If we are to believe the user data analysis from all-mighty Google web searches for terms "global warming" and "climate change," there is a steady but noticeable decrease in the public interest in learning more about the phenomena (http://goo.gl/TzckjE). The interest peaked between 2006 and 2010, only to drop and stabilize to pre-2005 levels over the last few years. The public isn't extensively searching about the topic, suggesting that either they are not interested anymore or that they feel to know enough about climate change conditions. On the other hand, the media coverage certainly has not declined. This is especially true with the recent announcement by the federal government's controversial plan to put pricing on carbon emissions.

Reducing energy consumption and emissions is a common theme in North America (while South American media coverage puts emphasis on topics such as impacts of deforestation on climate, and coverage in Africa focuses on water shortages, deforestation and extreme weather events). At the 2016 Fall Meet in Saskatoon, members inquired whether Nature Saskatchewan has a position on climate change. Our society does not run programs that are directly related to issues that one would normally associate with "climate change." We do, however, work toward the protection of Saskatchewan's natural environment. Similar to climate change — itself an extremely serious and far-reaching environmental problem — the degradation of natural habitats through environmental and agricultural intensification has a huge impact on economic development, human health and well-being. In terms of solutions that address global warming, biodiversity-rich wetlands and grasslands are important in reducing the effects of our carbon footprint — areas we work hard to conserve.

Nature Saskatchewan runs several programs related to habitat protection and citizen science monitoring of the effects of climate change. The goal of our Stewards of Saskatchewan programs (Operation Burrowing Owl, Rare Plant Rescue, Shrubs for Shrikes and Plovers on Shore) is to conserve and enhance habitat for species at risk, raise public awareness and provide support to agricultural producers. The SOS programs, together with the SOS Banner Program launched in 2010, currently have 795 participants conserving 127,212 hectares (314,346 acres) of grasslands and 118 kilometres (74 miles) of shoreline habitat for wildlife and plants across southern Saskatchewan. Our PlantWatch program, part of the suite of Canada-wide NatureWatch programs, is a network of citizen science volunteers who record the blooming times for common plant species. Information collected by PlantWatch volunteers is a valuable tool to track how and at what rate climate change is taking place across the province and nation.

Given the public, media and political interest in climate change, it is important for our society to show that the effects of climate change, combined with fragmented and degraded habitats and threats to biodiversity, have a serious impact on our society. To explain the critical role that species play in providing ecosystem services, productive cropland, natural beauty and pleasure that we all benefit from, will require our constant attention and improved ways of communication. We will have to work harder to reach diverse audiences, to engage people and inspire deeper connection with nature.

BLUE JAY

Blue Jay, founded in 1942 by Isabel M. Priestly, is a journal of natural history and conservation for Saskatchewan and adjacent regions. It is published quarterly by Nature Saskatchewan.

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Editorial Information

Blue Jay welcomes all submissions, preferably by e-mail (although hand-written or typed manuscripts will be considered to accommodate those who do not have access to computer equipment), polished or in need of some editorial assistance. All items for publication should be sent to the editor electronically (in a Microsoft Word document) by e-mail or on CD. Hard copies and CDs can be mailed to the editor at the address above.

Submission deadlines

January 1 for the Spring issue,
April 1 for the Summer issue,
July 1 for the Fall issue, and
October 1 for the Winter issue.
For detailed information, please see the "Guidelines for Authors" under the Publications section of the Nature Saskatchewan website.

Nature SASKATCHEWAN

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HOW DID 'OWL' SUMMER GO?

Kaytlyn Burrows
Habitat Stewardship Coordinator
Nature Saskatchewan

Another beautiful Saskatchewan summer has come and gone and now we all prepare for certainty that is just around the corner – winter! But before we do that, I would like to celebrate this summer's achievements. With the help of our Habitat Stewardship Assistants, Kris Mutafov and Shayna Hamilton, we visited 21 current Operation Burrowing Owl (OBO) participants this summer to discuss the program, their operation, and how OBO can continue to provide support in conserving Burrowing Owl habitat. We also plan to visit a few more current participants this fall!

Stewards of Saskatchewan (SOS) staff also visited with 14 potential OBO participants and I'm thrilled to welcome six new participants to the program this year! New participants are signed up through public and landowner sightings and new landowners purchasing land previously owned by OBO participants. Even though the majority of participants no longer have nesting owls, their role in conserving habitat is essential if we are to see a population increase. Currently, OBO has 365 participants conserving almost 150,000 acres of Burrowing Owl habitat. OBO participants are also helping us monitor the owl population. The annual OBO census is in full swing and we are currently collecting the data. While the census is only 40 per cent complete, so far, participants have reported nine pairs of Burrowing Owls. Hopefully, many more pairs will be reported by the participants that have not yet been reached.

OBO is very pleased to have partnered with one of our participants in completing a 45-acre native seeding project through our Habitat Enhancement program. The project is currently in its second year and will be monitored annually for Burrowing Owl use. Nature Saskatchewan's Habitat Enhancement program works with rural landowners to increase and improve species at risk and other wildlife habitat. Nature Saskatchewan provides funding to landowners on a 50:50 cost share basis. Projects include native seeding, wildlife-friendly fencing, and alternative water development for Burrowing Owls, Sprague's Pipit, and Piping Plovers. If you are interested in participating, please contact me at (306) 780-9833, toll free on our HOOT line at 1-800-667-4668, or email me at obo@naturesask.ca. Funding is available!

Along with a busy field season of landowner visits and species at risk searches, SOS staff also delivered several presentations and participated in many events such as the Wakamow Valley Education Day, the Estevan Wildlife Camp, the Native Prairie Appreciation Week tour in Maple Creek and Cypress Hills, and the Nature Saskatchewan Spring and Fall Meets. We also hosted a Conservation Awareness Day in Willow Bunch on July 21 with more than 30 participants and members of the public in attendance. We enjoyed a delicious pizza and lasagna meal locally catered by Nick's Homestead Restaurant followed by several informative presentations. Along with SOS program updates by Kris and Shayna, Al Smith (Piping Plover Census Coordinator) discussed the preliminary results of the Saskatchewan portion of the 2016 International Piping Plover Census. Jamie Holdstock and Cierra Wallington from Old Wives Watershed Association also discussed their programs, and finally, Tera Edkins and Allie Gallon discussed their snake research with a live bull snake!

Adult Burrowing Owl. Photo credit: Kaytlyn Burrows

From all of us at Nature Saskatchewan, I would like to thank Kris and Shayna. The field season was a success because of their hard work, passion, and dedication. I would also like to send a huge thank you to Marika Cameron, former Habitat Stewardship Assistant, for volunteering many hours to complete the OBO census follow-up.

As always, if you have any questions or comments about Operation Burrowing Owl or the Habitat Enhancement program, please do not hesitate to contact me at (306) 780-9833, toll free on our HOOT line at 1-800-667-4668, or email me at obo@naturesask.ca. I would love to hear from you!

2016-17 ANNUAL WINTER BIRDING CONTEST

Boyd Metzler
Whitewood, SK

The Winter Birding Contest for all members of Nature Saskatchewan will be held again this year. The 2016-17 contest will be our 29th annual. It is very easy to take part — all you have to do is keep a Saskatchewan winter bird list from December 1, 2016 to February 28, 2017. Share your results by sending your winter bird list to:

Boyd Metzler
Box 126
Whitewood, SK
S0G 5C0

or e-mail your list to
boyd.metzler@sasktel.net

Last year, Ryan Dudragne set a new record of 100 species recorded. We appreciate all entries, big or small.

Snow Bunting. Photo credit: Randy McCulloch

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Ms. McLeod,

The new format of the Blue Jay is excellent. Mrs. Priestly would have been delighted!

She used to write each edition in longhand in the 1940s. Then I typed it and ran it off on a Gestetner. The pages were then stapled together and mailed to the subscribers. Even then, we had subscribers from many areas, including, if I remember rightly, the British Museum. Certainly no one dreamed the little paper would become such a fine magazine.

I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely,
Ruth Smith (nee Beck)

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

for the Margaret Skeel Graduate Student Scholarship

A $2,000 scholarship will be awarded in 2017 to assist a graduate student attending a post-secondary institution in Saskatchewan.

It will be awarded to a student in the fields of ecology, wildlife management, biology, environmental studies including social science applied to marketing conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

This scholarship must be applied to tuition and associated costs at the named institution.

The Nature Saskatchewan Scholarship is awarded to a student pursuing studies in a field that complements the goals of Nature Saskatchewan. Nature Saskatchewan promotes appreciation and understanding of our natural environment, and supports research to protect and conserve natural ecosystems and their biodiversity. We work for sustainable use of Saskatchewan's natural heritage, ensuring survival of all native species and representative natural areas, as well as maintenance of healthy and diverse wildlife populations throughout the province. We aim to educate and to stimulate research to increase knowledge of all aspects of the natural world. Research that will contribute to resolving current conservation problems have a special priority. Contact our office by e-mail at info@naturesask.ca or by phone at (306) 780-9273 or 1-800-667-4668 (toll-free).

Application Guidelines:

- An updated resume with a cover letter
- Letter of References are optional
- A full description of your present and/or proposed research
- A transcript of the undergraduate and graduate courses completed so far and those currently enrolled in
- An indication of what other source(s) of funding you hope to rely on to complete your studies

Application Deadline:

February 28, 2017

Please submit your completed application to the Scholarship Committee: info@naturesask.ca or
Nature Saskatchewan
206-1860 Lorne Street
Regina, SK S4P 2L7

Peregrine Falcon Tour (left to right): Rick Bryne, Gail Bryne, Lynn Oliphant, and dog Rudy. Photo credit: Rebecca Magnus

A CELEBRATION OF WHOOPING CRANES AT THE 2016 FALL MEET

Ellen Bouvier
Communications Manager
Nature Saskatchewan

Northern Saw-whet Owls, Great Blue Herons and Whooping Cranes all made an appearance at the Nature Saskatchewan Fall Meet in Saskatoon from September 30 to October 1, 2016. Members came from near and far to enjoy a weekend of friendship, learning and exploring. The Saskatoon Nature Society did an excellent job hosting and organizing this event as it seemed not a single detail was missed.

Members and friends gathered at the Nutana Legion on Friday evening to learn about the field trips for the weekend and also to enjoy the Larry Morgotch Images of Nature event. Once again the talent of our membership was evident in the slideshows they presented. Thank you to everyone who shared images with us!

Friday evening was beautiful and clear and was the perfect time for some Northern Saw-whet Owl banding. For many of the participants, this was their first encounter with these fantastic little birds. The night saw 15 owls banded and recorded and even included one recapture from Harold Fisher's banding station. I was not able to join the group but from what I hear it was a wonderful night with more than a few laughs.

Saturday morning came early for many — members had the choice to attend one of three tours being offered that day. A large group set out early in the morning in search of Whooping Cranes, and while sightings can never be guaranteed, the cranes did not disappoint. Roughly 15 Whooping Cranes were spotted and for some on the tour it was the first time they had ever seen a Whooping Crane in the wild. A true highlight for many!

A second group set out to Wanuskewin Heritage Park. Wanuskewin is a place that is rich with history and truly feels alive with the stories and mysteries it holds. The group was led by an interpreter and after a brief movie, the group set out to explore the trails that Wanuskewin offers. While walking, we spotted two groupings of mule deer and a Great Blue Heron. A bit of excitement was added when the group spotted a Cooper's Hawk chasing down some quick flying robins.

The last group joined Dr. Lynn Oliphant to watch the world's fastest animal — the Peregrine

Falcon — catch its prey. Although the weather wasn't ideal, the falcon was eventually able to fly and did not disappoint!

The business meeting followed the tours and this year one resolution was presented. The resolution was brought forward by Lorne Scott and Rob Wilson regarding the continued use of Strychnine. After a simple amendment to the wording of the resolution it was carried.

A lovely banquet followed the business meeting and conversation regarding the tours earlier in the day filled the room. Joining us for the evening were some very special guests, as each fall Nature Saskatchewan presents several awards to deserving members. This year we had four award winners.

The Conservation award was awarded to Lori Wilson, whose contribution to conservation over the years is outstanding. She has spent many hours working toward shorebird education and conservation and has also spent time on the Nature Saskatchewan Board of Directors.

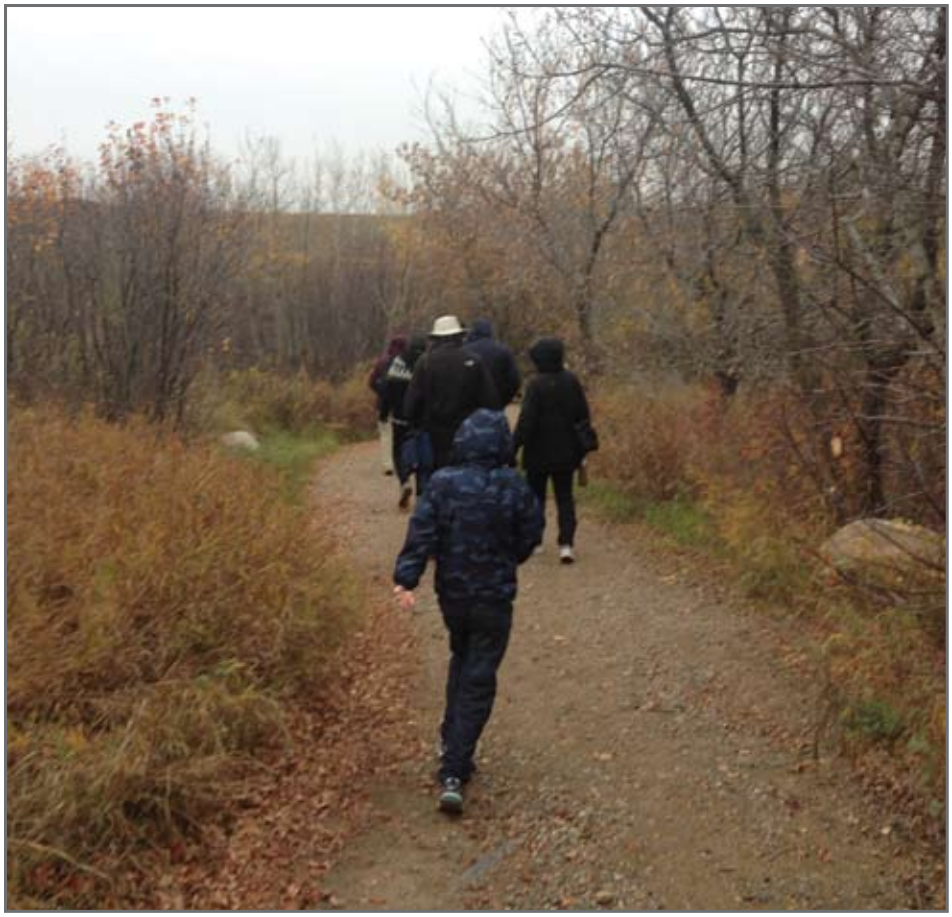
Rob Warnock was the winner of the Volunteer Recognition Award. Rob spent many years serving on the Nature Saskatchewan Board as well as serving as co-editor of Nature Views.

This year, Nature Saskatchewan awarded one Fellows Award and this was to Harold Fisher. The Fellows Award recognizes an extensive and continuing contribution of time over many years to the society. This is the highest honour that Nature Saskatchewan can bestow upon a member and we would like to congratulate Harold and thank him for his continued work.

The Cliff Shaw Award, which is chosen by the editor of *Blue Jay* for the best article/series of articles during the past year, was awarded to Chris Hay for his series on mushrooms. Congratulations to all of the 2016 award winners!

After the awards, it was time for the highlight of the evening. We were treated to a talk by Brian Johns about the "Secret Lives of Whooping Cranes." The Whooping Crane was the focus of the weekend and it was wonderful to hear about the detailed lives of some very special birds.

The Saskatoon Nature Society did a wonderful job organizing the Fall Meet and ensuring that everyone felt welcome. We hope to see everyone at the Spring Meet in Candle Lake at the Hannin Creek Educational Facility from June 9 to 11, 2017.



Tour to Waneskewin Heritage Park. Photo credit: Ellen Bouvier

POETRY

Snow

Slowly, slowly
the snow descends
singly in flakes
or swirling in clusters
out of gray skies
to whiten the earth
capping tree stumps
and filling spruce branches
of trees that were once
evergreen.

Victor C. Friesen
Box 65, Rosthern, SK S0K 3R0
victorcfriesen@yahoo.com

IN MEMORIAM

MAY HAGA
May 13, 1936 – Sept. 15, 2016

J. Frank Roy
912 - 606 Victoria Avenue
Saskatoon, SK S7N 0Z1
jfroy@sasktel.net

Photo credit: J. Frank Roy

May passed away suddenly at her home in Saskatoon on September 15, 2016. One of the most loved and most respected of our naturalists, May was a grandmother and a great grandmother, an athlete — still playing tennis every week — and one of the most accomplished bird photographers in Canada. Daughter of Otto and Marjorie Geck, the youngest of eight children, May was raised on two farms — the first at Wadena, the second near Kelvington, where she completed high school. She moved to Saskatoon in 1955.

Married in 1959, she and her husband Ken Haga raised three children: Dean (June), Todd (Dana) and Kenda (Ray). There are four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. May worked for many years at the University of Saskatchewan, first as an X-ray technologist, then as a research assistant in the rheumatology department. She obtained a B.A. with honours at the age of 53. Ken died in November 1992.

May married Bill Duffus in September 2000. It was Bill who bought May her first camera as a Christmas gift in 2001. Within a decade, she had mastered the required photographic techniques to become a bird photographer. As her son Todd said, "In everything Mother did, from gardening and sewing to cooking, from ballroom dancing to photography, she moved from hitting the ball to hitting the ball out of the park." Bill died in 2009.

Those who knew May well remember her as modest, punctual, reliable, patient, and generous. In sunshine or rain, in freezing cold or summer heat, carrying a camera with a huge telephoto lens — and often a tripod as well — May could wait for hours until a bird "co-operated" and she could make a good shot. If she happened to do better than most, she accepted that fact with pride but with humility. In her last years she was widely published and travelled extensively, photographing in Canada and USA, Bali, Ecuador, the Galapagos Islands, Argentina, Brazil, and Cuba.

She hosted many meetings in her home, including day-long stretches selecting photos for the upcoming *Birds of Saskatchewan*. To be fair, we did not know the photographer's identity for any of the more than four hundred species we were working on. If one of hers was rejected for another judged slightly more appropriate, we'd often see a shy smile as she said "that photo was mine." And no matter what she really might have thought, her remark was simply another example of her humility and her sense of humour.

JAMES RALPH JOWSEY
1925 – 2015

C. Stuart Houston
863 University Drive
Saskatoon, SK S7N 0J8
stuart.houston@usask.ca

Walter Farquharson
P.O. Box 126
Saltcoats, SK S0A 3R0

James R. Jowsey was born on October 24, 1925 on his parents' farm north of Saltcoats. Eden school was close by the farm but high school meant 13 km each way on horseback or bicycle to Saltcoats. Jim received B.A. and M.A. at the University of Saskatchewan, and his Ph.D. at McGill University. One year, he literally "lived in the chicken coop" on campus to work off some of his tuition by living adjacent to, and monitoring, the poultry department's flocks. He added a B. Ed. later. Jim's Master's thesis used the brand-new technique of radioisotopes. Radiophosphorus P32 was used to trace the fate of phosphorus in the laying hen, and three papers were co-authored with Dr. J.W.T. Spinks, the first of them in SCIENCE, one of two leading science journals in the world. Because of that publication, Jim was offered a lifetime cut-rate annual subscription to SCIENCE, which

he continued until his death. Spinks a decade later became President of the University. Jim much later became a member of the Senate of the University and of St. Andrew's College.

Jim and his wife Shirley were long-term supporters of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society, now known as Nature Saskatchewan. His first task was to advise bookshop manager Frank Brazier as to which books to carry in stock, then he replaced Brazier as treasurer. He was the first chair of the Endangered Species committee, then President of the Society in 1982-83. With George Ledingham, he was one of two Saskatchewan delegates to the founding of the Canadian Nature Federation in Winnipeg. His reputation within the society is evident from the fact that he and Shirley were two of only the second group of five named as Fellow; the others were Fred Bard, Bob Nero and Jim Slimmon.

His superbly successful book, *Wild Flowers across the Prairies*, with co-authors Fenton Vance and James MacLean, went through several printings; the three authors donated a copy of this book to every Grade 5 classroom in the province. Each revision was a best seller. Frank Switzer wrote about grasses for the final edition.

Jim was interested in nature in general, far outside his main interest of botany. He undertook 11 Breeding Bird Censuses, mainly at Churchbridge and Ceylon with one at Axford. In 1972 at Ceylon, he encountered an influx of Lark Buntings, noting 266 birds during his 50 stops. In 1985, Jim and Shirley retired to their farm and later moved into Saltcoats. The Yellowhead Flyway Birding Trail Association honoured the Jowseys with the Jim and Shirley Jowsey Wildflower Heritage and Conservation Area in Saltcoats Regional Park. After Shirley died, Jim moved into Aspen Bluffs Villa in Yorkton, where he died on November 17, 2015.

We remember a man of passion and integrity, a lifelong learner, scientist and scholar, a committed naturalist and environmentalist, a man of strong ethical principles, a friend, neighbour and good citizen.

ROBERT ROSS TAYLOR
1940 – 2013

C. Stuart Houston
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Photo credit: Jennifer LaBella

Robert Taylor arrived at the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History seven years after Robert Nero. Nero persuaded director Fred Bard that Taylor's photographic skills would be of benefit to the museum. Taylor was born in Toronto on June 16, 1940. He spent a high school summer at the Royal Ontario Museum where he was a member of the young naturalists; a teen-aged instructor named Robert Bateman coached the even-younger Taylor in photography and bird studies.

Taylor majored in science photography at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, graduating in 1963. His first job was at the relatively new Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History. For three years he became a major contributor of photographs to *Blue Jay* and undertook an unpaid assignment of chairing the Prairie Nest Records Scheme (PNRS). Taylor, as Chair, initiated publishing annual reports in *Blue Jay* for 1963 through 1965. The top sighting in 1963 was a Sage Grouse nest with six eggs near Consul by David Chandler. By 1965, Bohdan Pylypec, a high school student at Yellow Creek led all others from the three prairie provinces and the Northwest Territories with 91 cards in his second year; Bohdan's repeated visits had followed 16 Cedar Waxwing nests in 1964 and 25 nests in 1965. Taylor's final report in this capacity was to report 7,221 record cards of 236 species collected during the first eight years. As a bird bander in Regina with permit 855, he banded four species each of grebes (including 14 Red-necked), four of warblers and 13 Swainson's Thrushes.

After his next six years with the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, Taylor broke loose to become an independent photographer. One of his first successes was in the Thelon Game Sanctuary for the National Film Board in the North West Territories. As a writer and publisher, he began Windermere House Publishing, appropriately named because it was financed by the mortgage on his house on Windermere Avenue. Successful books included *The Edge of the Arctic: Churchill and the Hudson Bay Lowlands; The Great Gray Owl: On Silent Wings, The Manitoba Landscape: A Virtual Symphony, and Manitoba: Seasons of Beauty*. After Taylor visited Manitoba's second-

ever nest of the Great Gray Owl, ten miles north of The Pas, in both 1964 and 1968, Nero went along to observe the second use of this nest. Nero wrote later that Taylor "really got me started on owls." Taylor's photographs appeared in Bob Nero's book, *The Great Gray Owl: Phantom of the Northern Forest* but he kept photographing Great Grays for 30 years. His photographs appeared in *Life* and *Canadian Geographic*.

As a tour guide, he led 29 tours to Africa, and others to the Pribilof Islands off Alaska, Tobago, Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands, polar bears in Wager Bay, muskox in Cambridge Bay and walrus and bowhead whales at Igloolik. He helped start the polar bear tourism industry in Churchill. His many accolades included the Queen's Silver and Diamond Jubilee medals and a Master's of Photographic Arts from the Professional Photographers of Canada. He was one of very few photographers to be accepted into the Royal Academy of Arts. On August 6, 2013, Premier Selinger presented him with The Order of the Buffalo Hunt, Manitoba's second-highest honour since 1999. When he knew his cancer could not be cured, Robert had three goals, all of which he achieved in his final months: to go back to Africa (in January); to visit Point Pelee for his 51st time (in May); and to accompany his partner Jennifer LaBella on August 3 to the Sioux Narrows Arts Festival to promote her children's book *Good Night, Little Zebra* — the children's book which Taylor had published. He died August 15, 2013, 10 days after returning from the latter event, and was interred at Glenboro, Manitoba. The *Bird Studies of Canada News* summarized: "We will miss Bob's generous nature, his wacky sense of humour, his unending supply of stories, and his friendship. He was a true original."

POETRY

Two Winters

A few years back
For two winters
A raven befriended me.

At first he stood off
Though interested
In my strange doings.

He was the lead hand
Of a small troop
Of bullying brigands.

In time, he drew closer
Picking up spilled grain
His favoured, rich cat food.

Soon he was hopping
At my feet
Or on a post, by my head.

He'd chatter soft,
Companionably,
Sometimes, like a joke.

The others, no.
They'd caw rebukes
He'd disdain them, tilt his head.

He'd catch my eye
Wild eyes mirthful
That rolling caw, a chuckle?

The tough barn cats
Caught many crows
Raven, they never dreamed.

His lethal black beak
A battle hammer
One serpentine hiss, they'd vanish.

In spring, he'd be gone
North to the bush?
Big Muddy maybe, or Cypress.

The crows, you see
Too pesky, too many
For Raven's elegant thievery.

That next winter
He flew back again
Swooped chortling,
head bobbing with mirth.

The winter after
He didn't come.
The others, I couldn't say.

I missed him then
I still do, by God.
He was never tame, nor tamed.

That was the gift
The truth of it.
Friends, across all gaps but life.

That was truth
And it was more.
Yes truth, but beauty, too.

George Grassick
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ggrassick@sasktel.net

NATURE SASKATCHEWAN 2016 AWARDS RECIPIENTS

Each year at the Fall Meet, Nature Saskatchewan recognizes outstanding service and contributions that Society members, and/or affiliate and partner organizations, have made toward Nature Saskatchewan's objectives and goals. Below are the award recipients for 2016.

Conservation Award: LORELEI (LORI) WILSON

Lori Wilson is the IBA caretaker for Reed Lake and Big Muddy Lake, and plays a key role as a board member of the Chaplin Tourism and Nature Centre, including active leadership in planning and presenting the annual Chaplin Shorebird Festival every year for the last 19 years. She was instrumental in the installation of a wildlife viewing tower and interpretive signage on Reed Lake, and developed a shorebird education program for schoolchildren used by the Morse Museum. In partnership with the University of Saskatchewan, Lori helped initiate the Chaplin and Reed Lake Shorebird Survey, which has just completed its third year of monitoring populations of migrating shorebirds; she is actively involved in the counting and satellite tracking, as well as recruiting count volunteers. Lori played a lead role representing the Chaplin Nature Centre in the Linking Communities Project, which brought together Nature Saskatchewan, Nature Canada and the Chaplin Centre with parallel organizations in the United States and Mexico to share expertise and knowledge around education, outreach, research, monitoring and applied conservation of shorebirds and water birds. Recently she helped to organize a workshop on shorebird ecology and management, and she has participated in shorebird banding and Piping Plover surveys. Lori is a past board member of Nature Saskatchewan and continues to work actively on our behalf on conservation issues such as the proposal to install wind turbines in the Chaplin Lake area. In 2012, Lori was awarded a Caring Canadian Award by the Governor General of Canada.

Fellow's Award: HAROLD FISHER

Harold Fisher is a long standing member of Nature Saskatchewan, with ties stemming back to his boyhood. A passionate, committed, and extraordinary conservationist, Harold has devoted a huge portion of his life in contribution to our knowledge and public awareness of raptor biology. As a regular participant at Nature Prince Albert meetings, Harold brings a wealth of biological insight to the community and provides presentations on his research at multiple venues province-wide. He is also an avid bird watcher, hunter, fisherman, and naturalist.

As a young boy, Harold's aptitude as a naturalist and his proclivity for climbing trees was quickly recognized by Dr. Spencer Sealy, who went on to become a renowned avian biologist at the University of Manitoba. Dr. Sealy recruited Harold as a partner in his raptor work near North Battleford. This partnership planted a seed that would resurface decades later, and also resulted in some of Harold's earliest contributions to avian biology; among the early *Blue Jay* articles published by Dr. Sealy was an account of a Northern Saw-whet owl nest found by Harold that contained a whopping nine young!

The passion for wildlife Harold enjoyed in his youth was never forgotten, but took a backseat to the necessities of life for a few years. He earned a BSc. in Biology, and then a teaching degree from the University of Saskatchewan. He taught math for many years in the public school system, and raised two daughters, Andrea and Shelly, with his wife Denise. Never was there a more loving and devoted father and husband, and he raised his daughters to be respectful of all of the wonders of our living world.

Years later, Shelly followed in her father's footsteps and undertook a degree in Biology at U of S. In her fourth year, she was awarded the Houston Prize in Ornithology for receiving the top grade in her class. As taught by her parents, she sent Dr. Houston a thank-you note detailing all the wonderful books she was able to purchase with the award stipend. Dr. Houston commented that Shelly was the only recipient of the award ever to respond with a thank-you note, and invited Shelly and her "significant other" for dessert one night to discuss natural history. Dr. Houston was astounded to find that Shelly had left her boyfriend at home to arrive on his doorstep with her father! Excellent conversation, good food and drink, and common interests led to the beginning of a new partnership — Dr. Houston encouraged Harold and his family to set up a Northern Saw-whet Owl banding station, which opened in 2007 at the Fisher home just north of Prince Albert. Harold's informal links to great

conservationists like Spencer Sealy and Stuart Houston came full circle that day, and serve to remind us of the importance of subtle connections in all our personal webs of life.

Since establishing his banding station, Harold and his family have banded over 5,700 owls, raptors, and passerines. He also maintains his "trap line" of over 100 Saw-whet and Boreal Owl nest boxes that he has painstakingly built and maintained. He has provided his time and expertise in numerous other volunteer banding projects, including Saskatchewan Turkey Vulture research, Purple Martin breeding biology, and migration monitoring. Over the years, he has documented new insights on owl behavior, migration, and ecology through the countless hours that he dedicates to his calling. Among his greatest contributions, however, is his incredible dedication to providing free public education, and instilling a love of nature in everyone around him. In a world almost hopelessly brimming with people, this is possibly the most lasting and priceless gift one can contribute to the conservation of our wildlife, and only an incredibly rare person can provide such a gift so selflessly. Harold routinely hosts visitors to his home year-round to experience banding activities and learn about nature. Harold's table is always set with coffee and snacks, and visitors are treated to a rare opportunity to interact with Saw-whet, Boreal, and Long-eared owls. Harold has contributed his extraordinary knowledge of raptors to 4H groups, girl guides, boy scouts, and many years of post-secondary students at Saskatchewan Polytechnic. Sticky fingers, incessant questions, cookie crumbs, and sand tracked onto the floor are all met with a measure of serenity, tolerance, and professionalism equalled by few others; many a young naturalist has established his or her early roots in Harold's kitchen.

Harold is both a gentleman and a gentle man. His respect for all living creatures inspires everyone around him with a conviction that is exemplary. Through his passion, patience, attention to detail, and commitment — and especially for his contributions to understanding raptor ecology — Harold stands out as a worthy recipient for the 2016 Nature Saskatchewan Fellow's Award.

Cliff Shaw Award: CHRIS HAY

Chris was chosen for this award based on his "Mushroom Series" articles that were published in four consecutive issues of *Blue Jay*, with the final article printed in the December 2015 issue (Volume 73.4). In his series, Chris discusses four groups of mushrooms — The Inky Caps, The Waxcaps, The Earthstars and The Russulas — and gives a general overview of each. Mushrooms are an unfamiliar topic for many, and it is not uncommon to hear someone question the type of mushroom they've found, or to wonder if it is edible.

Chris' articles are very well-written, making them accessible not only to mushroom experts and enthusiasts, but also to those whose mushroom knowledge is scarce. The series provides personal accounts, identification tips for users when examining mushrooms, and encourages readers to get out into nature and explore for mushrooms. Chris' enthusiasm for the topic is exceptionally clear throughout his articles, and the series is further made enjoyable by his splashes of subtle humour.

Chris has had a fascination with fungi from a young age when he received a small Audubon field guide to common mushrooms. He grew up in Winnipeg, Manitoba where he completed his undergraduate degree in Environmental Science, allowing him to learn more about nature through a focus on conservation and biodiversity. He spent a summer working in Grasslands National Park, Saskatchewan, and has missed the open Saskatchewan sky and landscape ever since. Chris just completed his Master of Science at Western University in London, Ontario, studying Agaricomycetes (mushrooms) of tallgrass prairies. He hopes to find work in conservation and one day return to Grasslands to take another look at its fungi.

Volunteer Recognition Award: ROBERT WARNOCK

Rob served on the board of Nature Saskatchewan from 1999 to 2012. For the majority of that time, he was the Research Director, but also served as Member Services Director and Vice-President. In 2004, Rob took on the role of co-editor of Nature Views, and continued to oversee production of this quarterly newsletter until recently. In addition to his board and editorial duties, Rob wrote book reviews for *Blue Jay*. He also served on the scholarship committee, and continued to do so after stepping down from the board. Rob was named a Fellow of Nature Saskatchewan in 2008. When the decision was made in 2015 to discontinue Nature Views and wrap it into a new format for the *Blue Jay* journal, Rob worked through the transition with full commitment and dedication. We sincerely appreciate his ongoing commitment over many years. His is a volunteer contribution very worthy of recognition!

Northern Hawk Owl chicks at time of banding (June 3, 2015). Photo credit: Harold Fisher

NORTHERN HAWK OWLS USE NEST BOX

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During the spring of 2010, Marten Stoffel and I constructed seven nest boxes for Northern Hawk Owls (*Surnia ulula*). Our hope was to erect these boxes in an area frequented by this species and to have them in place for the 2010 breeding season. The boxes were placed along the Bittern Lake Road approximately 28 km NW of the village of Candle Lake with a spacing of 1 km or more, and at a height of approximately 5 m. The area was burned over by a forest fire circa 1995 and was characterized by burned snags, deadfall and new growth less than a metre in height. Previous visits to the area had shown good numbers of Northern Hawk Owls present during the breeding season.

The boxes were constructed of rough spruce lumber. Inside dimensions of the boxes were 20 cm x 20 cm x 51 cm high. The front of the box was left open, with a 10 cm board across the opening to contain the nesting material.

We inspected the boxes for occupancy each year in the spring, but until 2015 none of them had been used. All the boxes except one were installed on dead trees in the open burn and, by 2015, more than half of the nest trees had blown down. Where Northern Hawk Owls were present in fairly good numbers during the first years after we installed the nest boxes, their numbers declined by 2014 and we were unable to locate any in that area after the spring of 2014.

On May 4, 2015, Marten, Brent Terry and I checked out the area once again and found no Northern Hawk Owls present. We checked the remaining nest boxes for occupancy

as well, but NB01 was in a wet muskeg, and with the apparent absence of hawk owls in the area, we 'checked' this one from the road with binoculars. Almost as an afterthought, Marten played the Northern Hawk Owl audio from the road and received a response almost immediately. When we walked in toward the nest box a short while later, we observed a hawk owl leave a perch some 100 m away and fly directly to the box. We used a nest inspection camera to confirm activity and found the box to contain five eggs.

On May 23, 2015, Faith Fraser and I returned to determine the progress of the nest. We used the nest inspection camera once again and determined that the nest now contained four recently hatched chicks and one unhatched egg. We captured and banded the female at this time.

On June 3, 2015, Brent Terry and I banded the four flightless young, estimated at 13 to 18 days of age and ranging in weight from 195 to 241 g. We believe this to be the first documented occurrence of a Northern Hawk Owl using an artificial nest box erected for that purpose in North America.

Northern Hawk Owl nest contents (taken with nest inspection camera on May 4, 2015). Photo credit: Harold Fisher

Northern Hawk Owl female in nest box (May 20, 2015). Photo credit: Harold Fisher

Placement of nest box on fire-killed Jack Pine (May 20, 2015). Photo credit: Harold Fisher

SASKATCHEWAN'S FIRST LARGE PURPLE MARTIN ROOST

Purple Martins settling into roost trees on Last Mountain Lake. Photo credit: Dale Hjertaas

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Pre-migratory roosting by Purple Martins (*Progne subis*) is an activity well known in eastern North America, but not previously reported in Saskatchewan. Martins of all ages assemble in roosts. They generally disperse from the roosts before dawn and forage over substantial areas before returning one to two hours before sunset. Roosts are usually situated in stands of trees or underneath concrete bridges,[1] and are often associated with water bodies and may be located in over water situations such as reed beds.[2]

On August 13, 2015, Paule Hjertaas and I travelled to Buena Vista on Last Mountain Lake to view the first reported Purple Martin roost in Saskatchewan. We were taken to the roost site by David and Karen Blais who had located and found the roost.

Just before sunset, about 20:15 h, a huge flock of Purple Martins came in over the lake. They flew around a bit then went to land in a small patch of trees just back from the shoreline. They settled in the trees, then flew out and circled around again before settling back into the trees. They repeated this action several times as though not quite ready to settle for the night. Thousands of Purple Martins flying just in front of you as you gaze into the sunset is an amazing experience.

Once they had settled, and it was quite dark, we went under the roost and could see Purple Martins perched on Caragana and Green Ash branches. The important thing for them seemed to be to find a fairly horizontal branch and there was some last minute adjusting to get better branches. I watched branches tip under the weight of too many birds until a couple closer to the end of the branch would fly up to find a new branch. That lightened the load and let the branch straighten a bit for the rest. There was lots of noise as the birds adjusted their positions and vocalized.

It is hard to count thousands of swallows as they flew by. There were too many small birds moving too quickly for me to use the 50,100, 200, 300 approach I would use to count large flocks of geese or ducks. To get a count, I took photos of the flock as it flew by. The flock was too large for one photo, so I took a quick series of four, trying to get the whole flock without overlap. I then counted the birds in my photos — or, more accurately, the spots in the photo — assuming each spot in the sky was a Purple Martin. The final count over the four photos was 5,806. There are many potential errors with this count — I took the photos as the flock made one of its take offs from the trees, so part of the flock may have remained roosting in the trees. I may have missed part of the flock in my photos and I may have some overlap

and duplicate counting. Nonetheless, it was much more accurate than a guess as they flew by and I think is a fair estimate of the number flying over at that moment. I have no way of knowing if there were further Martins that had remained in the trees, so this is probably a low estimate.

David and Karen Blais visited the site over the next several days. By August 19, David advised me that the roost seemed even larger than when I had visited and the birds seemed very restless with a lot of flying before settling. On August 22, David reported the roost was still sizeable, but for the first time they noticed it was smaller. By the evening of August 24, the roost was so much smaller that David and Karen could not hear the birds squawking in their roost.

David Blais visited the roost twice in the early morning to see the Martins' morning departure. On the morning of August 18, at 05:30 h, David found only a few stragglers left — most of the birds had already departed for the day. On August 21, David arrived at the roost at 05:10 h. The weather was overcast with a small shower. The roost lifted off in mass at 05:37 h, possibly slightly later than on the 18th because of the overcast and rain.

Why is this the first time that any roost has been reported in Saskatchewan? The Purple Martin is an eastern species with Saskatchewan and Alberta being at the northwestern end of the range, except for a separate Pacific coastal population. The Purple Martin Conservation Association keeps a registry of roosts. There is one reported from Manitoba and a few from eastern Canada, but most are spread across the eastern United States. (https://www.purplemartin.org/research/19/project-martinroost/).

The pre-migratory roosts provide safety overnight from predators in an area where the Martins can forage to put on body fat in preparation for fall migration.[2] Large pre-migratory roosts are therefore more likely to be found in areas with greater numbers of breeding Martins. Purple Martin numbers have been increasing in Saskatchewan, probably in response to availability of nest sites. The Saskatchewan Breeding Bird Survey showed an annual increase in Purple Martin numbers of 4.8 per cent per annum between 1973 and 2009.[3] So, this roost may be a reflection of a growing Martin population.

For those interested in a better visual impression of these Martins at the roost site, Paule Hjertaas has posted videos on YouTube of the Martins flying: www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_Jpd3L7Lr0 and at the roost https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFeiPfhOSfo.

Acknowledgements: David and Karen Blais located the roost, took Paule and I to see it and reported their subsequent observations. They also kindly shared their copies of Purple Martin Update to aid my research on the Martin roost.

1 Tarof, Scott and Charles R. Brown. 2013. Purple Martin (Progne subis), The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: http://bna.birds.cornell.edu.bnaproxy.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/287

2 Ray, James D 2014 Purple Dusk: Protecting Pre-Migratory Roosts Is A Key for Conservation of Purple Martins. Purple Martin Update 23(1):1517.

3. Portman, Tina. Purple Martin in Houston, C. Stuart, Alan R. Smith and J. Frank Roy (In Prep) Birds of Saskatchewan. To be published by Nature Saskatchewan.

Purple Martins flying up from roost site before returning to settle. Photo credit: Dale Hjertaas

THE 2016 INTERNATIONAL PIPING PLOVER BREEDING CENSUS – SASKATCHEWAN

Al Smith and Ross Dickson at Butterfly Lake. Photo credit: Rebecca Magnus

Alan R. Smith
International Piping Plover Breeding Census – Saskatchewan Coordinator
Nature Saskatchewan

Summary of Results

The sixth International Piping Plover Breeding Census (IPPBC) was conducted June 4 to 17, 2016. Results from Saskatchewan were 799 birds and 281 pairs; this compares to 778 birds and 195 pairs in 2011. Although the number of birds recorded was up only three per cent over 2011, the number of pairs was up 44 per cent indicating many more breeding attempts. Plovers were found on only 49 of 162 basins surveyed with 39 hosting breeding pairs. 2011 results were 35 and 29 respectively, indicating a more widespread occurrence in 2016. Much of this increase was, however, due to the discovery of six new breeding areas and the presence of birds at two historic sites not previously surveyed by the IPPBC. The new and historic sites held 15 birds and five pairs.

Much of the increase in breeding pairs can be attributed to a rebound in the use of Lake Diefenbaker. Use of the lake by 81 pairs and 209 birds has only been exceeded in 1991 (122 pairs and 276 birds) and was much higher than 2011's all-time low of seven pairs and 21 birds. The 2011 count is the anomaly as other surveys have yielded at least 28 pairs and 75 birds. Other areas showing major increases over the previous IPPBC were Last Mountain Lake and West Coteau Lake with all-time highs for pairs and birds, and Cookson Reservoir, Chaplin Lake and the South Saskatchewan River with all-time highs for pairs. On balance, Willow Bunch Lake had a record low for pairs and birds, while Frederick and Manitou lakes had record lows for birds. For the first time in survey history Redberry and Fife Lake recorded no birds, while for the second survey in a row the Quill Lakes showed no birds. High water was a common reason for the lack of birds on basins with few or no birds. With the exception of West Coteau Lake, the common theme of the basins with major increases is that their water levels are managed — more than ever the fate of the species in the province is in the hands of water management agencies.

Twenty colour-marked birds were observed during the survey. Although the origin of many of these birds has yet to be determined, we have sightings of birds colour-banded on the Gulf and Atlantic coasts, as well as birds from the Northern Great Plains.

Georeferencing of PIPL locations

Piping Plovers were found at 477 sites (often with more than one bird or pair). Of these, 456 were georeferenced with accuracy. Plovers were found at sites in 19 of 21 quarters designated as critical habitat by the Species at Risk Act (SARA). Another 29 sites were on lands offered protection by Nature Saskatchewan's the "Plovers on Shore" (POS) program. Preliminary investigations of land tenures show that many other sites are also offered protection: Nature Conservancy of Canada (at least 13 sites), Provincial Parks (eight sites), and Last Mountain Lake Migratory Bird Sanctuary (five sites). These data will help us target lands for conservation especially by POS and hopefully SARA. Previous surveys gathered or compiled little of this data, although it hoped that some of these data can be accessed.

Database of PIPL records

A search of historic records and a compilation of records in numerous

Piping Plover Surveys have led to the creation of a database of 1,800 records. This data base allowed us to target several sites not previously covered by the IPPBC, and will allow us to improve coverage in future surveys. A rollup of the total number of basins used by the species now stands at 232. Of these, breeding (nests or broods) has been proven on 101 basins. Probable breeding based on paired birds or on territorial behavior by single birds includes 56 basins, and possible breeding based on single non-territorial birds during the breeding season 49 basins, and spring and or fall migrants on 26 basins.

Big Muddy Lake facing northwest: Big Muddy Lake. Photo credit: Rebecca Magnus

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the following agencies for their financial or in-kind support: Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, Bird Studies Canada - Baillie Fund, Duck Unlimited Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada - Canadian Wildlife Service and Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk, Nature Conservancy of Canada, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, Elsa Canada Wild Animal Appeal, SaskPower, The Saskatchewan Water Security Agency, Saskatchewan Minerals, and Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment - Fish and Wildlife Development Fund and Conservation Data Centre.

We would also like to thank the following collaborators, contractors and volunteers (92 persons) who spent 1,100 person hours covering 1,106 km of potential breeding habitat: Andrea Benville, Ashley Berezowsky, Brad Bergen, Brianne Blenkin, Nathalie Brunet, Lynn Burns, Kaytlyn Burrows, Draper Chafe, John Conkin, Lea Craig-Moore, Medea Curteanu, Lauren Daly, Stephen Davis, Ross Dickson, David Donald, Kiel Drake, Ryan Dudragne, Krista Ellingson, Dennis Engele, Ryan Engele, Lance Engley, Joshua Erickson, Ryan Fisher, Shelly Fisher, Carla Florek, Ashley Fortney, Mike Francis, Brianna Gardner, Bryce Glendenning, Mike Gollop, Paul Gregoire, Dale Gross, Gary Halcro, Shayna Hamilton, Heather Peat Hamm, Chris Harris, Valeriana Harris, Ahdia Hassan, Alice Hiller, David Hornjak, Jordan Ignatiuk, Arnold Janz, Dale Jefferson, Brian Johns, David Johns, Dean Johnson, Jessus Karst, Sheila Lamont, Megan Lay, Caitlin Lee, Gabriela Logan, Sarah Ludlow, Rebecca Magnus, Chris Maier, Rita Marcinowski, Sarah Marshall, Randy McCulloch, Daniel McElligott, Dan McGill, Glenn McMaster, Kris Mutafov, Steve Nadworny, Jason Neufeld, Taylor Peck, Emily Putz, Becky Quist, Mike Ranger, Alec Reimer, Amanda Rezansoff, Hailey Rudiniski, Braden Schmidt, Cal Schommer, Lorrie Sielski, Margaret Skeel, Alan Smith, Victoria Snable, Aara Steinger, Dylan Sterzuk, Marten Stoffel, Scott Thorn, Gillian Turney, Tanys Uhmann, Andrew Urzada, Nicole Vanerleest, Robert Wapple, Sharilyn Westworth, Lori Wilson, Kerry Wrishko, Al Wynarsky, Dan Zazelenchuk, Austin Zeller, Melissa Ranalli.

BOOK REVIEW:

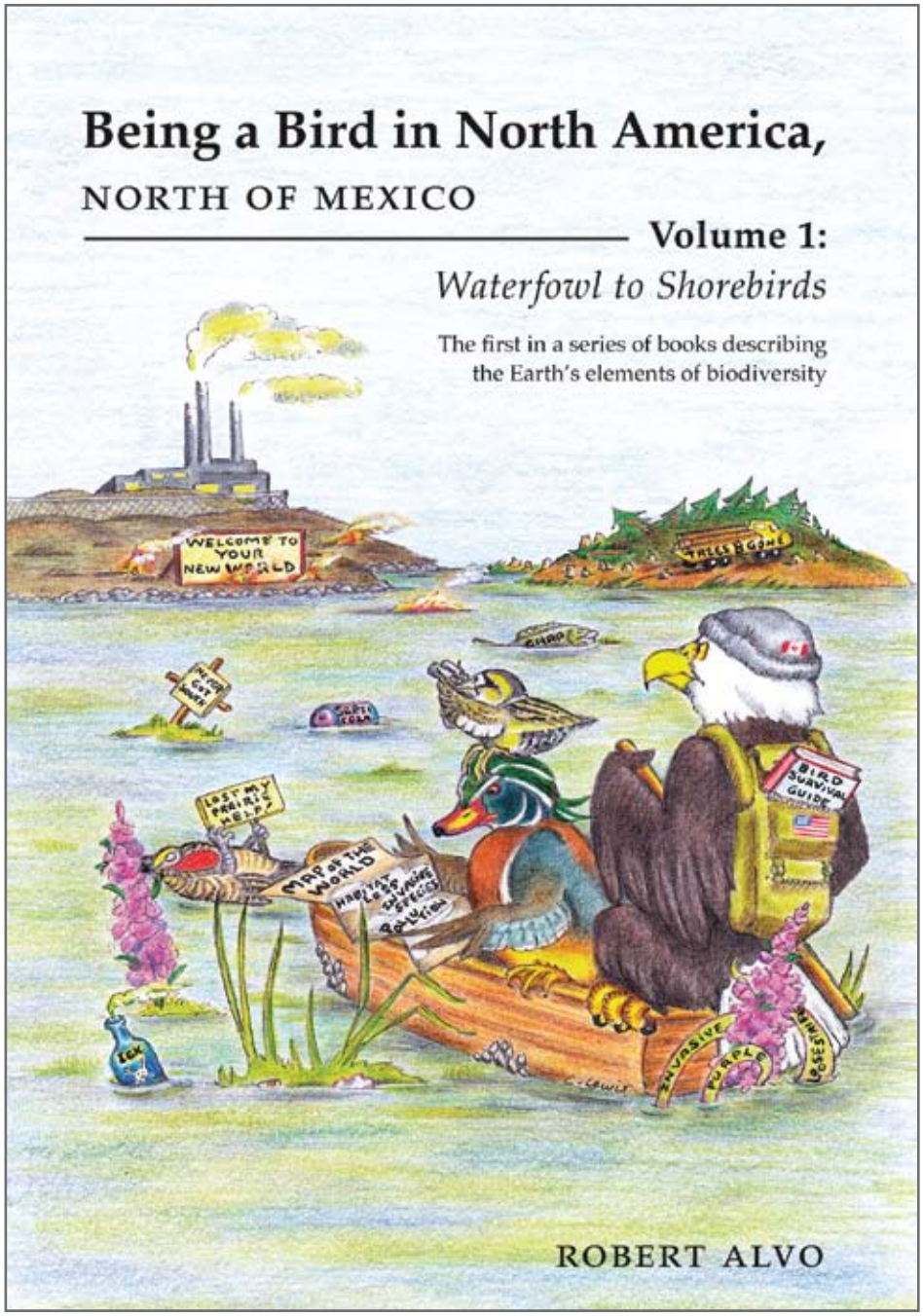
BEING A BIRD IN NORTH AMERICA, NORTH OF MEXICO VOLUME 1: WATERFOWL TO SHOREBIRDS

Written and published by Robert Alvo (www.babina.ca), 2015, 255 pp., hardcover, $44.95.

Review by Annie McLeod
Blue Jay Editor

A large section of our bookshelf is dedicated to works related to birds, and most of them fall into a number of categories. There are field guides, photo/coffee table-style books and atlases, as well as more technical books on birdwatching, bird photography and attracting birds to the yard. Robert Alvo's *Being a Bird in North America* defies such easy classification — and this is a good thing.

In the introduction, Alvo explains that the book contains aspects of other books on birds, but has an overarching theme of conservation. He also provides a host of useful information to help get the most out of the book, including the geographical scope, how to use the maps, and how the selection of species covered is based on their conservation status in North America. It is demonstrated throughout the book that conservation is clearly important to Alvo, whose many conservation accolades are included in the bio at the back.



As the first of a planned three-volume series that will cover all native bird species that breed in North America (north of Mexico), Volume 1 looks at 206 species in 13 orders of birds: waterfowl; gamebirds; loons; grebes; American Flamingo; pelagic birds; Wood Stork; suliforms; pelicans, bitterns, herons, egrets, ibises, and spoonbill; vultures and condor; diurnal raptors, marsh birds and shorebirds. Each page contains a different species account, a 'names' section that provides each species' scientific name and common names in English, French and Spanish, a cartoon related to that particular species, a global distribution map, photos, and NatureServe's conservation status.

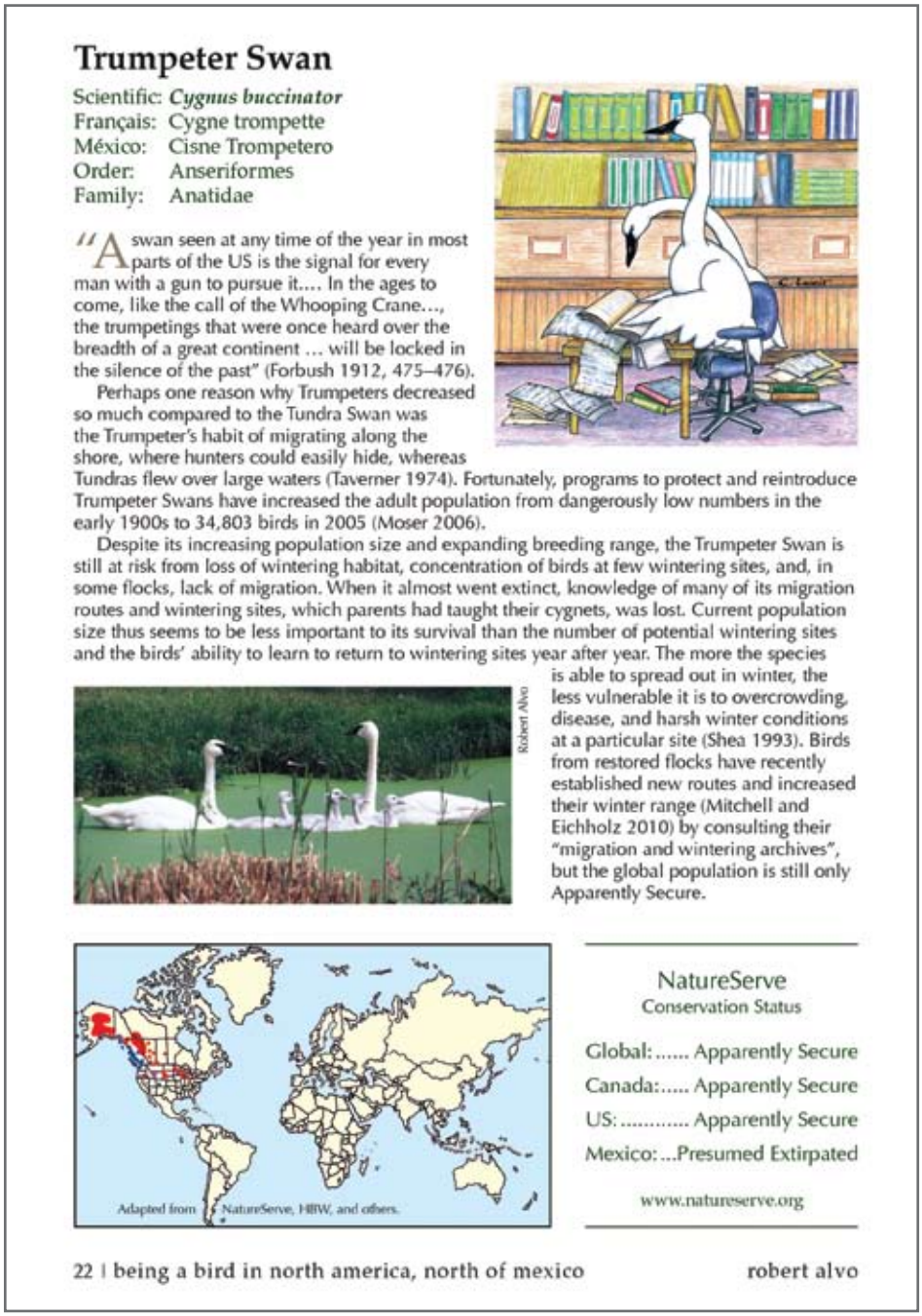
With one page dedicated to each species, and a number of illustrations provided through the maps, cartoons and photos, there is not room for comprehensive information on each species. Because it is not a field guide, readers are not going to find a bird's length, weight, height, or wingspan measurements. Nor are they going to find specific field markings or 'similar species.' However, what can be found in *Being a Bird in North America* for each and every species is an interesting account that provides at least one piece of memorable information, whether it's

a survival tactic, a challenge faced by the species, conservation or habitat issues, or a characteristic unique to the species. Personally, these accounts taught me a lot of things I did not previously know about the species covered, leading to many "ah ha" or "did you know...?" moments.

Along with the species accounts, the other highlight for me is the cartoons. They provide something that isn't prevalent in many other books on birds — humour. A total of 15 artists specifically created the full-colour cartoons for this book. While some of the humour in the cartoons relates to a certain trait of a particular species — such as the Willow Ptarmigan depicted wearing snowshoes to reflect its ability to walk on snow without falling through — others depict challenges a species faces or has faced in the past. For instance, the Double-crested Cormorant is shown standing at the end of a rifle barrel, holding up a fish, illustrating how — before protection measures were in place — this bird was shot by humans because of what was thought to be competition for fish. Regardless of the theme, the cartoons are light-hearted in execution and help the reader to learn something about each species. The use of the cartoons and their ability to elicit a chuckle also makes it easier to retain and recall certain traits or facts related to each bird.

Given the use of pictures, cartoons, maps, conservation status charts and short (300 or so words) accounts of each species, *Being a Bird in North America* is a book that is accessible and useful to a wide variety of audiences. For birders such as myself, this book provides a number of useful and interesting tidbits of information that are not readily available in other books on birds. The book also holds appeal for anyone with an interest in birds and nature, for those interested in the conservation of North American birds, for young people learning about the environment, and — because of the colourful and playful cartoons — even children.

Being a Bird in North America, North of Mexico, Volume 1: Waterfowl to Shorebirds is humorous, informative and thought-provoking. It has been a welcomed addition to our collection of bird books and I eagerly look forward to Volumes 2 and 3.



Trumpeter Swan

Scientific: *Cygnus buccinator*
Français: Cygne trompette
México: Cisne Trompetero
Order: Anseriformes
Family: Anatidae

"A swan seen at any time of the year in most parts of the US is the signal for every man with a gun to pursue it.... In the ages to come, like the call of the Whooping Crane..., the trumpetings that were once heard over the breadth of a great continent ... will be locked in the silence of the past" (Forbush 1912, 475–476).

Perhaps one reason why Trumpeters decreased so much compared to the Tundra Swan was the Trumpeter's habit of migrating along the shore, where hunters could easily hide, whereas Tundras flew over large waters (Taverner 1974). Fortunately, programs to protect and reintroduce Trumpeter Swans have increased the adult population from dangerously low numbers in the early 1900s to 34,803 birds in 2005 (Moser 2006).

Despite its increasing population size and expanding breeding range, the Trumpeter Swan is still at risk from loss of wintering habitat, concentration of birds at few wintering sites, and, in some flocks, lack of migration. When it almost went extinct, knowledge of many of its migration routes and wintering sites, which parents had taught their cygnets, was lost. Current population size thus seems to be less important to its survival than the number of potential wintering sites and the birds' ability to learn to return to wintering sites year after year. The more the species is able to spread out in winter, the less vulnerable it is to overcrowding, disease, and harsh winter conditions at a particular site (Shea 1993). Birds from restored flocks have recently established new routes and increased their winter range (Mitchell and Eichholz 2010) by consulting their "migration and wintering archives", but the global population is still only Apparently Secure.

Robert Alvo

Adapted from NatureServe, HBW, and others.

NatureServe
Conservation Status

Global: ..... Apparently Secure
Canada: ..... Apparently Secure
US: ..... Apparently Secure
Mexico: ...Presumed Extirpated

www.natureserve.org

22 | being a bird in north america, north of mexico robert alvo

Are you interested in owning a copy of Robert Alvo's Being a Bird in North America, North of Mexico, Volume 1: Waterfowl to Shorebirds*?*

Blue Jay has an autographed copy of the book to give to one lucky reader!

For your chance to win this book, please visit www.babina.ca to find the answer to the question below and email the answer to the Blue Jay editor, Annie McLeod, at bluejay@naturesask.ca. A random winner will be chosen from all correct answers. Please ensure all answers are submitted before January 31, 2017.

Question: *How old is the younger brother of the "12-year-old birder"?*

Hint: Check out what others readers have written on www.babina.ca.

WORK UNDERWAY ON MONUMENTAL SASKATCHEWAN BIRD ATLAS PROJECT

Ed Rodger
Treasurer
Nature Saskatchewan Board of Directors

This year, Nature Saskatchewan has been involved in the start of an important new project in wildlife research in the province: the Saskatchewan Breeding Bird Atlas.

The Saskatchewan Breeding Bird Atlas will be a "contemporary assessment of the distribution and relative abundance of all breeding bird populations within Saskatchewan" according to Dr. Kiel Drake, the Saskatchewan Program Manager for Bird Studies Canada. The project will be managed and coordinated by Bird Studies Canada, working in partnership with the federal and provincial governments, as well as wildlife organizations including Nature Conservancy Canada, the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, and Nature Saskatchewan. While these organizations will all have guiding roles in a steering committee, the atlas project will rely on a large numbers of volunteers, and many other task-level partners, in a wide variety of roles ranging from data gathering to equipment management. The outcome of this work will be a vast new repository of information about Saskatchewan's breeding bird populations, available in both map and database form.

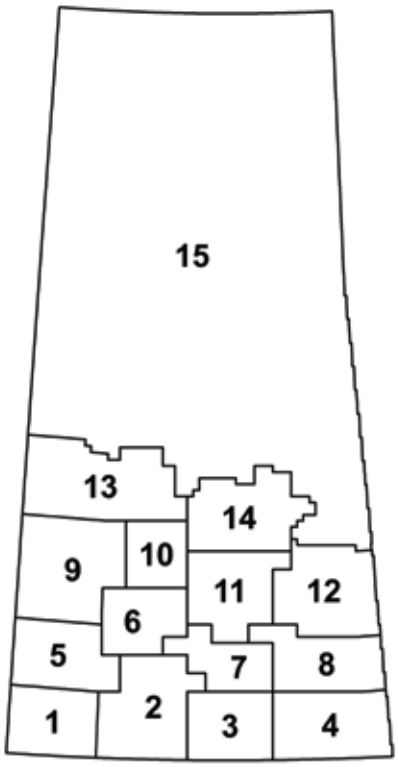
The Saskatchewan Breeding Bird Atlas is the most recent in a series of provincial or regional atlases coordinated by Bird Studies Canada, under a National Atlas Program that has seen that organization work with Environment and Climate Change Canada, provincial governments, and a variety of local natural history organizations. The program has seen previous breeding bird atlas projects completed or underway in Ontario, the Maritime provinces, British Columbia, Manitoba and Quebec over the last 18 years. The general standards for these projects are established and enhanced under an umbrella initiative called the North American Ornithological Atlas Committee (NORAC). As these are applied in the Saskatchewan project, standards are defined for the geographic framework used to build the atlas maps, for the sampling schemes, and for data collection.

Bird atlases are very important to an understanding of population and distribution changes over time, and so long-term atlas methodology calls for getting a view of distributions at 20-year intervals. In this vein, the Saskatchewan effort will be building on the foundation provided by the Atlas of Saskatchewan Birds, compiled by Alan R. Smith and published in 1996 by Nature Saskatchewan in conjunction with Environment Canada. In addition to enabling an understanding of changes over time, the atlas's updated and comprehensive profile will also be important as a single source of information on the province's birds, for applications in conservation management and environmental assessments, as an indicator of ecosystem health, and for use in education and recreation. The online structure and open access of atlases such as Saskatchewan's can also enhance public interest and knowledge of bird life.

The Saskatchewan Breeding Bird Atlas project will be a multi-year effort. Work so far in 2016 has been all about project establishment, with activity related to securing funding, setting up project governance, hiring staff, designing methodology, selecting regional coordinators and recruiting other volunteers, and developing supporting materials ranging from manuals and forms to an initial website. Data collection will occur over the years 2017 through 2021, with the online atlas becoming established as data is accumulated. Subsequent to that phase, two years of production work is anticipated, including data analysis, preparation of maps, writing and editing, and finalizing the atlas website. The outcome of this last phase will be not

only the completed map collection, but also a searchable database of field observations. The project promises to be a massive effort. The atlas project for Manitoba, working on a comparable scale, saw almost 1,200 volunteers who logged more than 42,000 atlasing hours. Data collection in Manitoba included almost 39,000 point counts and generated more than 325,000 bird data records.

As new bird atlases are developed across Canada, they continually evolve as internet resources. As such, each new project brings innovations for the finished product, and the Saskatchewan atlas is no exception. For example, the new atlas will feature enhanced map-based interactive web tools that will enable easy data entry from a variety of devices, and provide a wide variety of information related to selected locations. The atlas will also include some degree of integration with eBird. Online features will provide new capability for viewing the state of the project, such as "effort maps"



Administrative Regions of the Saskatchewan Breeding Bird Atlas.


The Sora breeds in marshes throughout North America, including Saskatchewan. Photo credit: John Conkin

that show where data capture has been done and thus indicate where work is required. And because the concept of an 'atlas' has developed so much from the traditional large book towards a multifunction website, each new project also needs to grapple with the question of what, if any, paper atlas will be made available. In the case of the Saskatchewan atlas no decision has been made as to what kind of paper version there may be. Some "middle options" are possible, such as formatting and providing a file version of the atlas that someone could arrange to print on their own.

Another area for innovation is in data collection and fieldwork. In the case of the Saskatchewan atlas, this includes the use of bioacoustic recording for data gathering. The project hopes to make some use of "acoustic recording units" to supplement traditional methods of field observation, to identify bird species and population density. Although the use of recording equipment will create special challenges for project logistics, it has the potential to help provide more complete coverage of the province where it isn't possible to have skilled field observers working.

The Saskatchewan Breeding Bird Atlas will be an important part of the life of Nature Saskatchewan over the next several years. Besides its role in the governance of the project, Nature Saskatchewan will be an important advocate for the project, and a source of needed volunteer time and support, and there should be a lot of beneficial interaction between the atlas team and Nature Saskatchewan staff and members. The atlas itself will provide an ongoing source of extremely valuable information for Nature Saskatchewan's work.

As mentioned above, the Saskatchewan Breeding Bird Atlas will involve a large number of volunteers and partners in a wide variety of roles. Anyone interested in participating can find out more by contacting the Bird Studies Canada project team, by phone at (306) 249-2894 or by email at skatlas@birdscanada.org. The initial project website has also been turned up, and can be viewed at sk.birdatlas.ca.

The Saskatchewan Breeding Bird Atlas will provide a substantial and exciting improvement to the understanding of bird life in our province, and will be fascinating to participate in and watch develop over the next several years.

SOUTHERN DOGFACE BUTTERFLY NEAR WEYBURN, SK

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Around 11:00 h on the morning of July 14, 2016, we — Martin Bailey and Carol Bjorklund — stopped on a gravel road just south of Nickle Lake Dam at S13-7-14W2 near Weyburn, SK to look at birds and butterflies.

Amongst the fluttering panorama of Wood Nymph, Skippers, Crescents, Cabbage White and Clouded Sulphur, Martin saw a sulphur butterfly that was larger, with a clear bright yellow ventral side, unlike the Clouded Sulphurs that were more of a lemon yellow. The ventral forward wing was pointed and sharp, not rounded like Clouded Sulphur.

Carol saw the dorsal side of the wings. The forewing was bright, clear yellow, with a wide, black, blocky and jagged outer rim. Inside the forewing was a black spot. The hind wing had a very narrow dark black band. The shape of the wings was pointed and sharp.

When the butterfly disappeared, Martin retrieved his Brock, J.P. and Kenn Kaufman (2003) "Butterflies of North America." It was obvious that the butterfly was a male Dogface.

We know of no records for Saskatchewan. This may be the first.

Royer, R.A., (2003) "Butterflies of North Dakota," where Dog Face *Zerene cesonia* is "an occasional stray" found in Slope and Cass Counties, ND.

P. Klassen *et.al*. (1989) "The Butterflies of Manitoba" with two records of Dogface *Colias cesonia = Zerene cesonia*.

C.D. Bird et. al. (1995) "Alberta Butterflies" with one record of Dog Face *Zerene cesonia*.

R.S. Layberry *et. al*. (1998) "The Butterflies of Canada" which lists three records for Manitoba and one for Alberta of Southern Dogface *Zerene cesonia*.

Scott, J.A. (1986) "The Butterflies of North America" where he lists Dog Face *Colias cesonia* as far north as Manitoba.

Additional Information of Interest:

The Southern Dogface is a new butterfly for Saskatchewan and represents only the fourth record for prairie Canada that I am aware of. That said, this is an irruptive species that regularly makes northward migrations, similar to the more familiar painted lady, though these flights only rarely reach Canada and then usually in southern Ontario.

The key observation noted was the very pointed forewing. This would distinguish it from the Mexican Yellow — another very rare stray that is superficially similar to the Southern Dogface, and for which there is one previous Saskatchewan record. The very common Clouded Sulphur is quite variable but generally smaller and with more rounded wings. While a variant of clouded sulphur might share many characteristics with the Dogface, the wing shape alone would certainly exclude it.

- Mike Gollop, Saskatoon, SK

INTRODUCING EMILY PUTZ

Emily was born and raised in Regina, Saskatchewan and has always had a fascination with the outside world. Her interest in nature started when she was young — growing up, most of her time was spent writing in nature journals, bird watching, gardening, and exploring different areas of Saskatchewan each summer on father-daughter trips. Emily knew that her interest was always to pursue a career in biology and she completed her degree in biology with a concentration in ecology and environmental biology from the University of Regina. She has been lucky to have had great opportunities to work with a number of different species including the SOS target species, time spent in South Africa doing species surveys, and this past summer working on the Piping Plover Project as well as doing population and habitat assessments for Chestnut Lamprey. Emily's spare time is spent hiking, reading, horseback riding, and spending time with her zoo-at-home, including a very affectionate dog, cat, rabbits and a horse. She first joined the Nature Saskatchewan team in 2014 as a habitat stewardship summer assistant and she is very excited to once again be back, this time in the position of Rare Plant Rescue (RPR) coordinator.

MARY HOUSTON: NORTH AMERICA'S PRE-EMINENT BOHEMIAN WAXWING BANDER

Mary Houston holding a Bohemian Waxwing she banded. Photo credit: Brent Terry

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My wife and banding subpermittee, Mary I. Houston, BA, BEd, SVM, holds the North American record for Bohemian Waxwing bandings (5,387, most recently including 80 in the spring of 2011 and 40 during March and April 2014 in her 63rd year of banding birds). Mary's precedence in totals of waxwings banded is eclipsed by an even more convincing leadership in numbers of their subsequent recoveries, most often when a waxwing met its death by flying into a picture window. Of the 66 recoveries from Bohemian Waxwings banded in North America between 1955 and 2003, 44 had been banded by Mary from among the 4,928 Bohemians she had banded to that time. The remaining 22 North American recoveries to that time resulted from banding by 168 different waxwing banders — among the roughly 2,000 banders in North America who had permits during that period.

Innocently, without aspiring to do so, Mary has monopolized the banding and recoveries/encounters of a single bird species to a greater degree than any other individual since North American banding began in 1921. No other bander has monopolized a common species to the extent that Mary has done with our winter waxwing. Banding history experts Chan Robbins (a bander for more than 75 years!), Professor Jerry Jackson, and Wilson Journal editor Mary Bomberger Brown, believe that this is so. What began as random banding alongside her husband with his silly slogan, "every bird needs a band," evolved into a 56-year project. Why have other banders banded so few Bohemian Waxwings? Most other banders live south of the Bohemian's usual winter range, don't have Mountain Ash trees in their yard — nor Mountain Ash berries in their freezer — and don't own either top- or side-opening traps that are best for catching waxwings.

The Bohemian lives up to its Latin name, *Bombycilla garrulus* (genus name given it by Vieillot in 1807; species garrulus, given it by Linnaeus in 1758). It is garrulous, constantly trilling and chattering; it is bohemian, moving about erratically and unpredictably all winter, brightly arrayed (Houston 1968). The waxwings arrive for a few days, strip the trees clear of fruit and deposit their fecal stains on car roofs for blocks around as their memento — but in most localities, all head back towards their forest breeding areas without a band. Such a waxwing fate is best thwarted in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. In that city, a new continent high for a Christmas Bird Count (CBC) occurred on December 26, 1975 when 12,442 Bohemians were counted within the standard 15-mile diameter circle. Most years in Saskatoon, the Bohemian is the second most numerous bird species,

Mary Houston holds the North American record for Bohemian Waxwing bandings (5,387 birds banded). Photo credit: Brent Terry

exceeded only by the House Sparrow (Wooding 2002). Of the northern Canadian cities with sufficient mountain ash trees, it now seems strange that only Saskatoon had a bander who seized upon the opportunity to band large numbers of North America's incredibly attractive winter waxwing.

Most backyard bird species are easy to capture and hence are banded by hundreds of birders every year. Why is the Bohemian Waxwing such a striking exception? First, because of its restricted and often unpredictable winter range, concentrated mainly in cities in western Canada during some winters, with extensions south into a few states including Colorado and North Dakota. Rarely a major invasion involved Idaho and Wyoming and once even New Mexico in 1962. Second, Bohemians don't come to feeders to eat standard fare such as sunflowers, peanuts, millet, and nyger. Paradoxically, the two northern fruits that attract large flocks of waxwings, mountain ash berries and crabapples, are already ubiquitous in many residential yards in most northern cities.

Only a handful of North American banders have ever possessed two or more productive mountain ash trees in their private backyards, a freezer partly full of clumps of mountain ash berries garnered when a neighbour chose to cut down a berry-laden tree — and a dozen treadle-tripping traps. Mary also had the necessary ingenuity and patience. If the temperature is below zero Fahrenheit (minus 18 Celsius), traps must not be set for waxwings; we quickly learned that, totally different from chickadees and nuthatches, a waxwing eyelid may freeze to the metal trap and swell one eye shut — cold weather banding was not attempted by us again. In the winter of 2013-14, for example, Saskatoon had 30 days below minus 30 C. Mary's response was to wait a week or two for warmer temperatures, but by then mountain ash berries had already been stripped from our own trees. The only possible stratagem remaining is to hang multiple large clumps of frozen berries on the now berry-free mountain ash trees, fill the traps with berries, and cross our fingers. Mary went through five consecutive winters, 1980-1984, without banding a single waxwing and there were four years when only one solitary waxwing received its aluminum bracelet. In 20 of 59 Saskatoon winters, berries in private yards throughout Saskatoon remained sufficient to satisfy every waxwing, which had no need to enter a trap!

Mary's only consecutive annual waxwing banding years lasted 13 years, from 1960 through 1972. Mary's best year was 1967, the heaviest–ever invasion winter, when Duncan Murray, a retired bank manager and sometime birder retired from the bank in Laird, Saskatchewan. He and his wife Marguerite bought their retirement home in Saskatoon, complete with mountain ash trees, just over a mile to the southeast of the Houston residence. Mary placed a dozen traps on tables in their backyard and banded 57 birds the first day, capturing 24 of them twice, while our four-year-old son played on the floor in Marguerite's kitchen. Mary's busiest waxwing banding day ever, March 12, 1967, was at Murray's where she banded 81 "new" Bohemians and recorded 190 "repeats" that had been banded during the previous month, thus handling 271 different waxwings in a single day, almost certainly a Bohemian Waxwing world record for one bander! Moving traps back and forth between the two sites, the top banding days at our home on University Drive were March 31, with 80 new waxwings and 51 repeats, and April 4 with the highest number of "new" birds of any day that winter — 91 new together with 84 repeats. Such days kept Mary busy banding from dawn until dark. Mary's total of 1,259 banded that one winter exceeded the lifetime totals of all three of her nearest runners-up, and still far ahead of the thousand-plus banded by biology Professor Arthur B. Mickey (exact totals unavailable) during the unique winter waxwing invasion of the mile-high University of Wyoming campus in Laramie in 1939 and 1942, before banding results became computerized. Mary's second and third best waxwing totals were

in 1978 with 704 banded and 1965, with 507.

Mary's waxwings have been caught in side- and top-opening traps, baited with Mountain Ash berries collected in the previous fall — but only in late winter after all the Mountain Ash berries on Saskatoon's residential trees have been eaten by birds, and the weather stays above minus 18 Celsius. Only in three years, between 1965 and 1972, did she have return captures of waxwings she had banded in previous winters: seven in the first winter after banding, and one each at two and three years after banding. She has had no additional recoveries or returns since.

Three other banders, Americans but now deceased, also mastered the art of catching Bohemian Waxwings, in North Dakota and Colorado. When Dr. Bob Gammel, a family practitioner in Kenmare, and his keen birder wife, Ann, visited us in Yorkton, Saskatchewan soon after our marriage, Mary was instrumental in persuading them to take up bird banding. Ann banded 991 waxwings between 1958 and 1969, with top years of 312 in 1963 and 333 in 1969. In Colorado, Eleanor Hough banded 904 waxwings at Boulder in 1962 and 1964. Allegra Collister banded 951 waxwings at Longmount between 1957 and 1977, including 226 in 1964.

Mary Houston weighing a captured Bohemian Waxwing. Photo credit: C.S.Houston

In answer to a logical question, Mary has never felt a need to use mist-nets for catching waxwings in late winter. The summer waxwing, the Cedar, gradually evolved into a very few staying over winter and joining much larger flocks of Bohemians. Only in 1987, March 20 to April 18, were 25 Cedars and in 2007, March 4 to April 7, were 22 Cedar Waxwings banded before the snow left. In the Beaver Creek valley south of Saskatoon, in fall and spring of four years when waxwings were caught in numbers, and eager helpers were available in warmer weather, she put up as many as 11 mist nets over an occasional weekend, dawn to dark, for four years. Her two best mist-net days were 101 birds of 17 species on September 19,1965 and 100 birds of 15 species September 25, 1966. For five years, 1965 through 1969, her most demanding experience involved use of two mist-nets from dawn to dusk for Operation Recovery throughout most autumn days in our small residential 50 by 80 foot city lot. Two nets were open most days in the falls of 1965 through 1969. On October 6, in that final year, she banded a record 136 individuals of 16 species, including a remarkable 50 Hermit Thrushes! Mary has also placed leg bands on more than19,000 Tree Swallows, 8,000 each of Mountain Bluebirds and Ring-billed Gulls, 4,000 California Gulls, 2,000 each of American White Pelicans and Double-crested Cormorants, and 1,000 Common Terns.

When Lieutenant-Governor Linda Haverstock presented Mary with the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal (SVM) in the Saskatchewan legislature on May 1, 2006, and read out those banding totals, Mary received more "oohs" and "ahs" than any other recipient that day, each of whom also received the Saskatchewan Centennial Medal. At the banquet after the ceremony the Lieutenant-Governor sat at the Houston family table. Mary was also placed at the head table with the Duke of Edinburgh, Royal Luncheon, Lumsden, Saskatchewan, May 18, 2005.

Mary's cv lists 105 published items: she is author or co-author of one book, 91 scientific papers, nine chapters and three miscellaneous publications. She edited Saskatchewan Christmas Bird Counts for all of Saskatchewan for 27 years. Mary was inducted into the Saskatoon Women's Hall of Fame, Saskatchewan Council of Women, 2011, and was named an Alumna of Influence, College of Arts and Science, University of Saskatchewan, 2013.

Mary and I chose Saskatoon as the ideal University city to live in, without guessing it might be the perfect place to capture waxwings. Today such a coincidence is termed synchronicity, the random occurrence of events which appear significantly related but have no discernible connection. She remains an active backyard bird bander. On August 12, 2016 we celebrated our 65th wedding anniversary, with all our children, grandchildren, spouses and fiancés present.

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Houston CS and MI Houston, 2006. Bohemian Waxwing banding results in North America, 1923-2003. North American Bird Bander 31(4):161-16.

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ANALYSIS OF OBSERVATIONS BASED ON THIRTEEN YEARS OF PARTICIPATING IN THE FEEDERWATCH PROJECT

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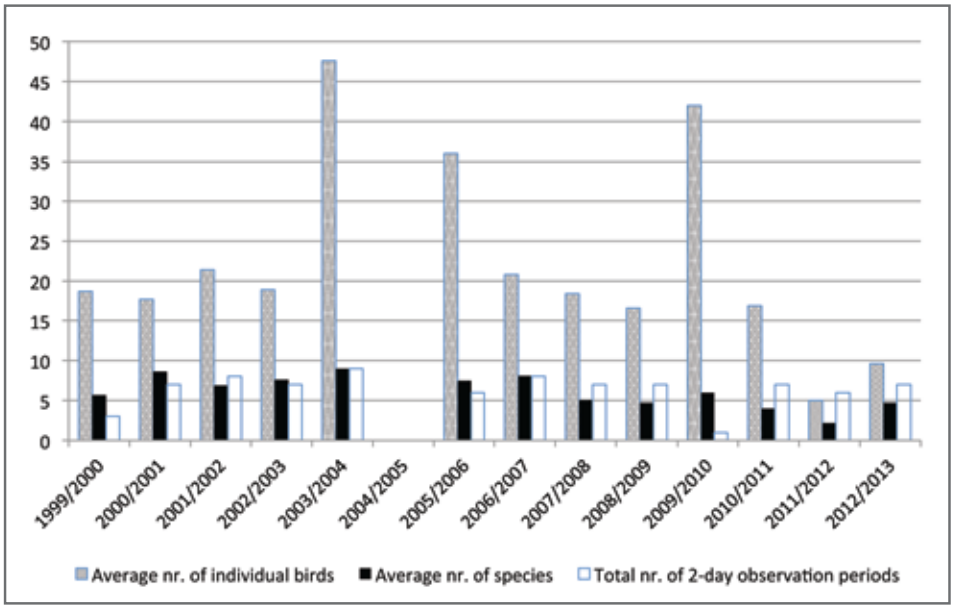
A male Common Redpoll. Photo credit: Nick Saunders

The FeederWatch project is organized by Bird Studies Canada. Participants count the maximum number of each bird species seen at one time at the feeder and the immediate surroundings such as the backyard. Only birds that are attracted to food or water provided are counted. Birds that only fly over the count site (term used by Bird Studies Canada for the observation area) are not recorded. Birds are counted on two consecutive days (called two-day observation periods) as often as every week (for online data entry) or every two weeks (for paper data entry). Given these criteria, it is up to the observer how often birds are counted. The FeederWatch observation period begins in November and ends in April.

My count site consisted of a backyard in the Lakeview neighbourhood of Regina, Saskatchewan. The yard was landscaped with perennials, various bushes and trees. I collected observations for 13 years, from 1999 to 2013, with the exception of the 2004-05 winter. I provided black sunflower and nyjer seeds and a mixture of seeds, chunks of beef fat or suet, and sometimes shelled peanuts. Until 2003-04, I used a platform feeder and tube feeder. But when a cat climbed on to the feeder, I switched to a hopper feeder, perched on top of a steel post 180 cm high with an outside diameter of 16 mm. Over the 13 years, I counted the birds on 83 two-day observation periods.

FIGURE 1: **The number of individual birds and the number of species, both presented as averages over the number of two-day observation periods in each of the 13 years.**



At the beginning of the project, only one or two squirrels, mostly Eastern Fox Squirrels (*Sciurus niger*) and Eastern Gray Squirrels (*Sciurus carolinensis*) were seen in a year. But by the end, up to four squirrels were observed at once. Squirrels had no trouble to climb up the thin poles. Therefore, in 2007 I installed "squirrel buffers" (Homestead Gardener Equipment Co., Juneau, WI, USA) that prevented squirrels

Table 1. The number of individuals and the number of observation periods out of a total of 83 when a species was recorded at the feeding station.

SPECIES	INDIVIDUALS	OBSERVATION PERIODS
Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*)	21	8
Downy Woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*)	81	57
Hairy Woodpecker (*Picoides villosus*)	37	33
Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*)	24	21
Black-billed Magpie (*Pica hudsonia*)	17	11
Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*)	38	28
Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta canadensis*)	142	76
White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*)	65	57
Brown Creeper (*Certhia Americana*)	16	16
American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*)	2	2
Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*)	52	30
Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*)	1	1
House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*)	216	56
Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*)	4	1
Purple Finch (*Carpodacus purpureus*)	5	1
Common Redpoll (*Acanthis flammea*)	224	19
Hoary Redpoll (*Acanthis hornemanni*)	7	5
Pine Siskin (*Spinus pinus*)	76	21
American Goldfinch (*Spinus tristis*)	1	1
House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)	772	76

from climbing up to the feeders.

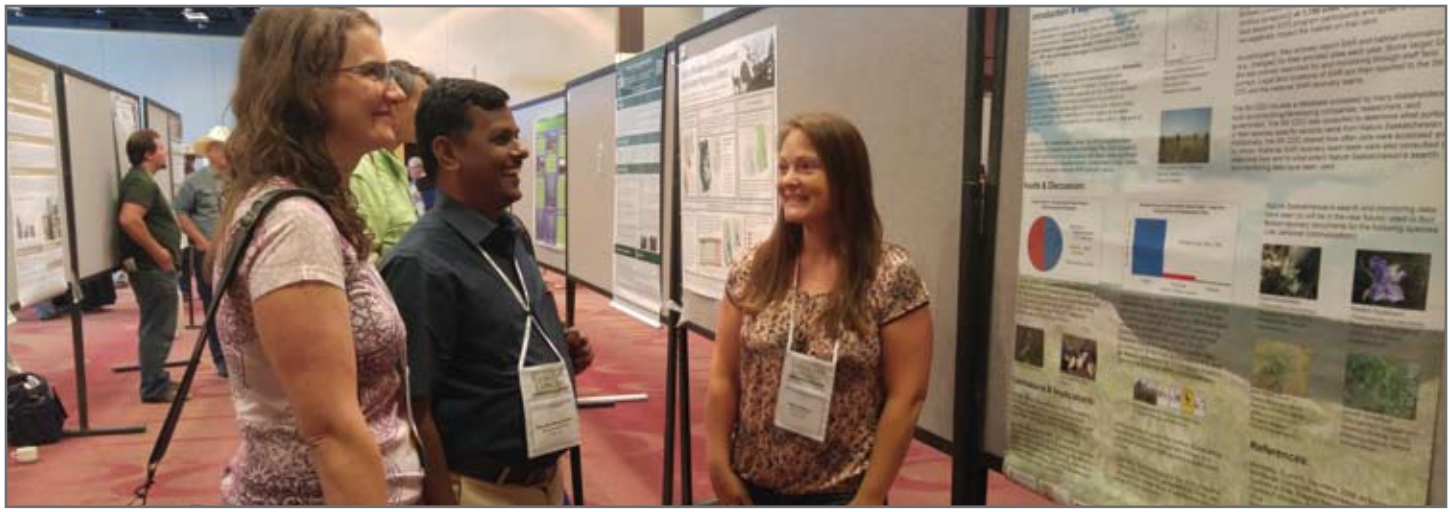
I identified 20 species of birds that visited the feeders over the 13 years (Table 1). Some visitors I discouraged. Rock Pigeons fed almost exclusively on the ground on spilled seeds. I placed chicken wire on the ground underneath the feeder preventing them from feeding. Black-billed Magpies fed exclusively on chunks of beef fat. I placed a small board over the beef fat to prevent magpies from reaching the fat.

Purple Finches were recorded only once, in a group, on March 12, 2002. A single Common Grackle appeared on November 13, 2005, probably a late migrant. Similarly, a single American Goldfinch appeared in its winter plumage on February 10, 2007, perhaps an early migrant. On March 31, 2003, and again on the same date in 2007, a single American Robin came to the feeder. A few robins are known to overwinter in Regina (personal communication and my own observations). Red Crossbills were observed only once, on April 4, 2013. The most numerous and regular visitors were House Sparrows. A total of 772 individuals were counted on 76 out of the 83 observation periods. Downy Woodpeckers, House Finches and Red- and White-breasted Nuthatches were also quite numerous and regular. The Common Redpoll was the second most numerous visitor over the years, but quite erratic. It appeared at the feeding station during only 19 of the 83 two-day feeding periods. In fact, more than half (121) appeared in only one winter, 2003-04. Hairy Woodpeckers and Northern Flickers were regular visitors from 1999-2000 to 2007-08. A total of 35 Hairy Woodpeckers and 26 Northern Flickers were counted in those eight winters with together 51 observation periods. But in the five following winters from 2008-09 until 2012-13, I counted only two Hairy Woodpeckers and one Northern Flicker in 28 observation periods.

Over the years, the number of individual birds and the number of species varied greatly. Because the number of two-day observation periods varied from month-to-month and year-to-year, I averaged the number of individuals and species over the number of two-day observation periods for each year (Fig. 1). The average number of individuals observed at the feeder varied from a low of six in the 2011-12 winter to a high of 47.6 in 2003-04. The average number of species observed at the feeders ranged from 2.2 in 2011-12 to a high of nine in 2003-04.

Aside from providing some solid numbers, which allowed the above analysis, it was a sheer pleasure to watch the variety of birds, active on even the coldest days of winter.

Acknowledgements: I thank my daughter, Wiebke Peschken, and an anonymous reviewer for many helpful editorial comments and improvements, and my son-in-law Doug Strang for producing Fig. 1.



Rebecca Magnus presenting a poster to Delegates at IRC. Photo credit: Branimir Gjetvaj

THE 10TH INTERNATIONAL RANGELAND CONGRESS: A GATHERING OF RANGE & WILD LAND LEADERS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

Rebecca Magnus
Species at Risk Manager
Nature Saskatchewan

The 10th International Rangeland Congress (IRC), held every three to five years, was held (for the first time in Canada) in Saskatoon, SK, July 16-22, 2016. This congress brought together more than 500 delegates from 58 countries! The theme was *The Future Management of Grazing and Wild Lands in a High-Tech World*. The main topics included: The State of Canadian and Global Rangeland and Pasture Resource; Ecological Good and Services of Rangeland and Pasturelands; The People of the Rangelands; Multiple Use of Rangelands; Range and Forage of High Latitudes and Altitudes; Climate Change in Rangelands; and Grazing Land Assessment and Management in a High-Tech World.

Sixteen inspiring plenary presentations brought all delegates together and kept us engaged from one topic to another. The presentations ranged from: Dr. Marc Foggin's *Sustainable Rangelands, Sustainable Pastoralism in Yak Herding Areas of the greater Tibetan Plateau*; Dr. Dave Sauchyn's *The Resilience of Western Rangeland: Exposure to 9,000 Years of Climate Variability*; to Dr. Ryan Brook's *Canadian Indigenous Peoples and Arctic/Grassland Use*. There were also a number of presentations from ranchers, giving a landowner's perspective, often sharing stories of partnerships with a number of stakeholders. It was very interesting to listen to similar, yet diverse, perspectives from around the globe.

One particular presentation that resonated with me was:*Toward a Culture of Range: The Role of Society in Protecting Rangeland Ecological Goods and Services*, by Don Gayton, an ecologist and writer from Summerland, British Columbia. Gayton has been connected to the prairies his whole life, in one capacity or another. He also spoke about society's role in ecological goods and services. Gayton touched on the fact that humans are detached from nature, that nature is a "backdrop for human drama." He made a dramatic point — that we provide "basically lip service" to nature. Gayton suggests we must "brand and package [nature] like winemakers", that we must "make it a story…nature needs context." He used three examples of context: Farley Mowatt's novel *Never Cry Wolf*, Vivaldi's classical composition *Four Seasons*, and Robert Bateman's artwork. Mr. Gayton left us with a mission: to "re-tool our values so nature has its proper place" and he believes this is possible "through spiritual connections, using the grasslands as a church." More of Don's inspiring words can be found at: http://dongayton.ca/

Throughout the week, there were also hundreds of technical presentations given. With approximately 150 oral presentations and 250 poster presentations, the wealth of knowledge was wonderfully overwhelming!

On behalf of Nature Saskatchewan and the Stewards of Saskatchewan (SOS) programs, I presented a poster titled: *Conservation of Wildlife and Natural Areas in Southern Saskatchewan, Canada, through Nature Saskatchewan's Stewardship*. It was an honour to share a unique

Tradeshow during networking break at IRC. Photo credit: Branimir Gjetvaj

perspective from the on-the-ground work SOS does. I explained that through the SOS programs, active stewardship has allowed for landowners and managers to engage in conserving habitat for Species at Risk (SAR) and wildlife that rely on these natural areas. As it has been since 1987, SAR locational information will continue to be shared as much as possible and used for project planning by industry to minimize impacts on SAR, scientific research, to assist in species rankings, and in the development of recovery planning for prairie SAR. Without these programs, the number of sites being conserved would be reduced and the use of a significant amount of SAR monitoring data would be lost. Ultimately, the contributions of the SOS programs, both in the past and for generations to come, are critical to the conservation of wildlife and natural areas in Southern Saskatchewan.

Lastly, it was great to have a mid-week tour to enjoy local history and rangeland management in action — and re-charge for the second half of the congress. There were nine tours to choose from that featured visits to historical sites, the University of Saskatchewan, the Western Beef Development Centre, the Western College of Veterinary Medicine, local industry, dairy farms, research centres, and tours of local grazing and farm lands. While the tour I went on was educational, with the highlight being the synchrotron, the best moment for me was sitting on a picnic bench talking with a diverse group of people. The group included a Mongolian, Australian, American, and three of us Canadians!

Dr. Ryan Brook presenting at one of the plenary sessions. Photo credit: Branimir Gjetvaj

Through networking and the exchange of ideas, with so many leaders in range and wild land management, the 2016 International Rangeland Congress was a great success! Even though the cultures were diverse, there was a commonality shared amongst the delegates — no matter what side of the globe you live on and no matter what the area you specialize in, the greatest success comes from working together and allowing for everyone, including nature, to have a voice.

Thank you to the hundreds of volunteers that made this congress possible. Thank you to all the delegates for the expert knowledge brought to the table. And, a special thank you to my Aunt Patti and Uncle Ben Nussbaum, for housing, feeding, and spoiling me the whole week while I was at the congress. Because of their peaceful ambiance, luxurious linens, and delicious food, I was well rested and energized for each day.

The 10th International Rangeland Congress proceedings can be found at: www.irc2016canada.ca/pdf/papers/X_IRC_Proceedings_Aug2016.pdf

MONARCHS IN THE LIMELIGHT THIS SUMMER WITH THE STEWARDS OF SASKATCHEWAN BANNER PROGRAM

Ashley Vass
Habitat Stewardship Coordinator
Nature Saskatchewan

The Monarch is an amazing butterfly, completing the longest and largest insect migration in North America that takes three to four generations to finish. Millions of butterflies make their way north over the summer, as far as southern Saskatchewan, and then fly up to 5,000 km south to overwinter in Mexico. Although Monarch populations vary greatly from year to year, over the past 20 years Monarch numbers have dropped by as much as 90 per cent across North America, and the three lowest overwintering populations in Mexico on record occurred in the last 10 years.

The Stewards of Saskatchewan banner program highlighted this amazing butterfly in a news release this summer, and we were very glad for the response we received. The story was picked up by several online and print papers, including *The Leader-Post*, and also resulted in several interviews including CBC Radio, and a segment on CTV News. We received dozens of calls in August from people reporting Monarch sightings or looking for more information on Monarchs and how they can help. Some people were able to get pictures of Viceroys and generously shared the images with us so that we can help others differentiate between the magnificent Monarch and these sneaky, but beautiful, mimics.

Although Monarchs dominated the news, Barn Swallows continue to dominate the sightings for potential stewards in the program. It's great that so many people are willing to allow the swallows to nest on their buildings, even though they may not always choose the most inconspicuous locations. Being such an inclusive program, participants are conserving habitat for a wide range of species. This year some of the species we've encountered during our visits with landowners include: Short-eared Owls, Ferruginous Hawks, Common Nighthawks, Sprague's Pipits, Bobolinks, Chestnut-collared Longspurs, Northern Leopard Frogs, Tiger Salamanders, and Long-billed Curlews.

Ferruginous Hawk. Photo credit: Kris Mutafov

In 2016, Stewards of Saskatchewan staff visited with seven current participants and 37 potential stewards, which resulted in 24 new participants! We are very grateful that the people of Saskatchewan are happy to conserve habitat for species at risk and we now have a total of 93 participants conserving more than 33,000 acres in this program. We currently do not have an annual census for those species that fit under the banner program, but we are working on it. In the coming months, we will be communicating with researchers and other professionals that study or manage many of the species at risk we encounter in order to come up with a systematic way of creating a census that allows us to gather general population data on multiple species at risk.

Long-billed Curlew. Photo credit: Ashley Vass

If you would like more information about the Stewards of Saskatchewan banner program, or would like to report a species at risk sighting, please call 306-780-9832 or 1-800-667-HOOT (4668) toll-free, or send an email to outreach@naturesask.ca.

SHORT-EARED OWLS VISIT SUBURBIA IN REGINA

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My mom was startled by the significant noise in our backyard around 01:30 h on July 2, 2016. She was up reading in our family room as she usually does most nights. She was concerned that kids were on the deck, as our roofed deck is just off the kitchen and family room. She turned the backyard lights on and the noise stopped — she looked and to her relief there was no one there on the deck floor or in the backyard. However, the noise began again when the backyard lights were turned off. This went on for a few minutes.

Then, my mom thought that squirrels on the metal deck roof might be causing the racket. She went upstairs to her bedroom window that overlooks the deck roof and the backyard and she saw three birds on the deck roof. She wasn't sure what kind of birds they were until one of them showed its face. To her amazement, these birds were owls —they were causing the noisy disturbance by running back and forth on the metal roof.

Thankfully, my mom got me out of bed (thanks mom!) and showed me the birds on the deck roof. When I saw them, I realized that they were Short-eared Owls (*Asio flammeus*). They exactly matched the Short-eared Owl description and photo in the 'Owls of the Prairies' article in the Spring 2016 issue of Blue Jay.[1] Unfortunately the camera was downstairs and the owls would have likely gone away by the time I retrieved the camera. In a few minutes, two of the owls moved to trees in the neighbouring yards but the third one continued to look and bark/squawk at us for more than 10 minutes from the northwest corner of the deck roof. Both the male bark/squawk calls and female 'keeeyup' calls are also diagnostic for Short-eared Owls.[2, 5] We heard both types of calls. They were in and around our yard for about 45 minutes. I have never birded in my PJs or had such a good look at Short-eared Owls before. I have rarely heard Great Horned Owls hooting near our place at night. The unexpected visit of the Short-eared Owls led me to ask two questions.

Where did the owls come from? Short-eared Owls are summer residents of grasslands and haylands in Saskatchewan including outside Regina.[3] Most likely they came from the open fields across the TransCanada Highway in south Regina — our house is only a few blocks from the highway. Other likely possibilities are west of Harbour Landing, the Regina Airport or Wascana Marsh. Unfortunately, the Short-eared Owl populations have declined and have been species of special concern in Canada for a number of years.[4]

Why did they come? They were likely foraging for food, specifically, mice and voles. However, they rested and played during their visit. The Short-eared Owl makes use of a wide variety of open habitats, including arctic tundra, grasslands, marshes and old pastures and specifically forages in areas with sufficient concentrations of small mammals.[5] Low concentrations of small mammal prey near their nest may have led them into the city looking for food.

Short-eared Owl. Photo Credit: Randy McCulloch

Well-treed suburbia is not typical foraging habitat for Short-eared Owls and this type of habitat did not seem to meet their foraging needs.

1 Burrows, Kaytlyn. 2016. Owls of the Prairies. *Blue Jay* 74(1): 24

2 Duncan, James R. 2013. The Complete Book of North American Owls. Thunder Bay Press, San Diego, CA.

3 Smith, Alan R. 1996. Atlas of Saskatchewan Birds. Nature Saskatchewan, Regina SK.

4 Dickson, Ross. 2012. Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*). Photo note. *Blue Jay* 70(1): 58-61

5 Wiggins, D.A., D.W. Holt and S.M. Leasure. 2006. Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*), The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, Ed.). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY. Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/062

PLOVERS ON SHORE IN SEARCH OF PIPING PLOVERS!

Ashley Vass
Habitat Stewardship Coordinator,
Nature Saskatchewan

Nature Saskatchewan coordinates the Saskatchewan portion of the International Piping Plover Census, conducted every five years since 1991. This is a survey to count all adult Piping Plovers across the province, and often involves more than 100 volunteers surveying hundreds of basins. These small shorebirds put us through our paces this year.

Stewards of Saskatchewan staff were busy helping out with the census at several small basins within the Missouri Coteau, as well as helping Corie White, from the Water Security Agency, survey Lake Diefenbaker. The information from this census is valuable in giving a glimpse into how the Piping Plover population is doing at a large scale, as well as over smaller regions. A lot of basins in Saskatchewan are hard to get to and this comprehensive census greatly helps the Plovers on Shore program prioritize geographic areas to conserve habitat for Piping Plovers; it allows us to discuss the program with individual landowners that could make the biggest difference for plover conservation.

The current census of Plovers on Shore participants is 40 per cent complete and, so far, there are only three landowners reporting a total of four pairs and one single Piping Plover. In addition, the International Piping Plover Census found Piping Plovers on the land of seven other Plovers on Shore participants with a total count of 28 pairs and 25 singles. Although the purpose of the International Piping Plover Census is to count adults, there were incidental sightings of four young and 17 nests on participants' land as well.

The shorelines of many Saskatchewan basins are difficult to access and agricultural producers are very busy through the spring and summer months. Because of this, many landowners often can't look thoroughly enough to determine with certainty whether or not plovers are present on their shoreline each year. This has caused us to start thinking about whether a new survey method is needed to enhance the data that we are currently receiving from participants regarding their conserved sites. This winter, we will be working on creating a questionnaire to deliver to landowner participants, which will allow us to determine if there is a better way to conduct an annual census for the Piping Plover at participating sites.

International Piping Plover Census at Lake Diefenbaker. Photo credit: Ashley Vass

Stewards of Saskatchewan staff visited with nine current participants as well as 10 potential participants. We are happy to welcome six new participants to the Plovers on Shore program, which means that Saskatchewan landowners are now conserving nearly 85 miles of shoreline for Piping Plovers. With the results of the International Piping Plover Census organized, we now have a lot more landowners that deserve praise for maintaining a shoreline habitat suitable for this endangered bird, and we will be sure to do that.

If you would like more information about Plovers on Shore, or would like to report a species at risk sighting, please call 306-780-9832 or 1-800-667-HOOT (4668) toll-free, or email outreach@naturesask.ca.

Piping Plover. Photo credit: Emily Putz

SHRUBS FOR SHRIKES IN THE QUEEN CITY

Ashley Vass
Habitat Stewardship Coordinator,
Nature Saskatchewan

This summer we were very grateful to have received so many reports of Loggerhead Shrikes from the Saskatchewan public. More than 50 people reported sightings of 31 Loggerhead Shrike pairs, 21 singles, and 48 young! There were even a number of sightings of shrikes within Regina city limits, all on the west side of town, with a number of other sightings reported in the Pilot Butte/ White City area. One pair of shrikes even fledged six young in A. E. Wilson Park! The City of Regina was very pleased to hear that their park was being used by this threatened species and posted a very positive message on their Facebook page supporting Nature Saskatchewan in its conservation goals, and pledging to leave the shrike nesting habitat undisturbed.

In addition to public sightings, staff completed grid road searches in the Missouri Coteau/Wood River Plain area this year and, between those searches and other incidentals, saw 47 adult Loggerhead Shrikes, mostly reported as single bird sightings. The participant census is 40 per cent complete with 68 participants responding and, so far, 44 pairs, 21 singles, and 16 young have been reported as well.

This summer, Shrubs for Shrikes staff visited with 18 existing participants and 30 potential stewards. We have gratefully welcomed 13 new participants into the program and expect this number to rise as we are still in conversation with more individuals who have

Loggerhead Shrike. Photo credit: Emily Putz

shown interest in the program. As of now, Shrubs for Shrikes has 187 participants conserving nearly 36,000 acres of Loggerhead Shrike habitat across more than 300 sites!

Thank you so much to everyone reporting species at risk. Without you we would be missing valuable information about the numbers and locations of these species that aid conservation efforts.

If you would like more information about Shrubs for Shrikes, or would like to report a species at risk sighting, please call 306-780-9832 or 1-800-667-HOOT (4668) toll-free, or email outreach@naturesask.ca.

Loggerhead Shrike adult with young. Photo credit: Boyd Coburn

FALL REPORT FROM THE TURTLE

Darlene Roth
Turtle Lake Nature Sanctuary Steward
rothdato@sasktel.net

Summer brought forth a great event as I got to enjoy the awesome company of three gentlemen from the Maurice Street Nature Sanctuary in the Nipawin area. Doug Pegg, Doug Phillips and Richard Douslin were so happy to have this opportunity to come so we could share ideas of each other's sanctuaries. Touring them through our sanctuary was so exciting. Showing all the new signage, diverse trails and highlight spots in our sanctuary was enjoyed by all. Thanks for the huge bag of bird seed! I have put it out in five locations on the sanctuary, and it didn't take long before numerous birds found this wonderful treat. Serving the seed on an open flatbed feeder made it easy for a good variety of birds to dine as they wished. Thanks guys for the package of milk weed seed to plant and attract the Monarch butterfly in our strawberry meadow. They have been planted and spring will tell if they liked their new location. Thanks, Muriel Carlson, for your addition of seeds of the same. I have held off planting these ones in case the location wasn't the greatest. I will plant in the spring of 2017.

I am drafting eight more signs of interest to help out our beginner visitors. Some of our bird signs that school children have done need to be replaced. I will be contacting a few schools to see if they would like this project for one lucky classroom. I like the idea of signs, but want to keep a natural balance for the viewing eye to keep man made attractions as a side line so they don't become an unnatural look on our trails.

The wild berries provided great treats to our walkers this year — wild Saskatoons were amazing. Mushrooms were found in lots of areas because of all the rain.

I have started an account on Instagram. If you have taken a cool picture on the sanctuary and want it posted, please send it to me: rothdato@sasktel.net. My Instagram handle is "turtlelakenaturesanctuary" — remember only photos taken on the sanctuary will be posted.

Updating the websites for our sanctuary will be done this winter. I hope to use my personal drone to get a great aerial tour of the sanctuary to post on the web.





Photo credits: Darlene Roth

LAKE NATURE SANCTUARY

Hopefully this winter, or by spring for sure. This will give those who can not get out on the trails a chance to see the splendor it holds.

A new attraction besides plant/bird identification cards I will have at the main gate will be a leaf identification card. This will provide another challenge for our foot travellers to try out.

Our sanctuary will be sporting a new look by the end of October. Thanks to a great donation by Cliff Wieger and family, our main gate entrance will have a new sign. The sign is done — it just needs to be put up. The old sign will be fixed up and relocated at our second entrance. Thank you so much — that means that people have a vested interest in this prime piece of land and want to see its success as remaining one of Nature Saskatchewan's collection of sanctuaries. Our second entrance has been obstructed by future development at the present time but hopefully next year it will have access for the Hamlet of Indian Point Golden Sands walkers.

The lawn mowers got a good workout once again this year. Two new volunteers helped and will continue to help next year. I tip my hat to Michelle Broadfoot and Doug Cushway for their big helping hand. Doug will help keep some cross country ski trails open this winter that is so exciting. Merv Brose is still my main fence line man — keeping fallen trees off the perimeter fence is no easy job. Over the years my crew of volunteers make working on the sanctuary lots of fun — thanks past and new volunteers.

A thank you to mention is to a gentleman from Nanaimo, BC. Thanks, Ron Kozlow for your heartfelt generosity by giving me a battery operated chainsaw. Can't wait to try it out on the north lake shore trail. The need to back off the young vegetation is a must.

Along with new birds of interest signs, I will be approaching a school to have some students build bird houses — sounds like a good Practical Arts project to me. The need to get the youth involved is so important.

Well, I have stopped many times to smell the flowers in our sanctuary, and my plan is to get that eye in the sky and enjoy the visits by our numerous song birds this coming spring.

See you on the trails!

From a distance, a Ferruginous Hawk leaving the nest.

The Ferruginous Hawk nest observed by Spencer Sealy.

The eggs in the nest.

Three Ferruginous Hawk nestlings.

The site of the old nest in 2013.

HUMAN NATURE

Spencer G. Sealy
Professor Emeritus, University of Manitoba

Every naturalist discovers a place or observes an object of nature that becomes forever etched in his or her memory. One such instance takes me back to my junior high school days in Kindersley, Saskatchewan. I refer simply to the nest of a pair of Ferruginous Hawks. This may seem ordinary to some observers, but to me its majestic size, increased through re-use over the years, made it special (it was so big that standing on the top of a ladder, photographs of the contents of the nest could only be taken by holding the camera high above my head and hoping for the best).

My companion, Glen Fox, and I spotted the nest from afar in the fall of 1956 while accompanying my father, the Rev. Laurie B. Sealy, on a goose-hunting trip west of Teo Lake. The nest tree stood high and dry at the edge of a slough whose water level had once been high enough to kill the supporting tree. Its years now seemed numbered.

As I approached the nest the following spring, a Ferruginous Hawk flushed from a clutch of four eggs; by early summer, three young had fledged. Over the winter of 1957–58, the nest tree toppled over, probably succumbing to winter winds. Branches and other materials that once composed the nest were strewn on the ground below where the nest and tree once stood. The hawks, and House Sparrows that nested on the side of the big nest, were forced to nest elsewhere.

I moved away from Kindersley and as I pursued my career as an ornithologist over the ensuing decades I never forgot my experiences with

this nest. In the years that followed, I discovered other Ferruginous Hawks' nests — some in trees, others on cliffs — but it was that first nest that I always remembered, and I hoped someday to revisit the site.

Something was happening, though — recognition was setting in that the numbers of Ferruginous Hawks were declining, and the northern portion of the species' range was contracting. It was not long before "my nest" fell into the category of a "pre-1960" Ferruginous Hawk nest in Saskatchewan.

I visited the site of the old nest again in the summer of 2013, more than 50 years later. The water level was higher and the slough was a patch-work of bulrush that teemed with shorebirds, mostly Marbled Godwits. A young Swainson's Hawk peered over the edge of a nest defended by one of its parents in the grove of maples that backdropped the big nest so long ago, but the Ferruginous Hawks were just a memory. It was reassuring, however, that the slough was still there after all these decades. Despite the ups and downs of the water level — alternating between wet and dry spells over the years — it still attracted migrating shorebirds and geese in the fall. Perhaps like rising water levels, hope will rise, too — that one day Ferruginous Hawk numbers will increase once again and this site will become home to another pair of these magnificent birds. Perhaps, then, another young naturalist will discover this nest, and it could be etched forever in his or her memory as it was mine.

Human Nature is an ongoing series for Blue Jay. In each issue, we will feature someone's favourite/ memorable nature spot in Saskatchewan. Please contact editor Annie McLeod if you are interested in this opportunity.

Photo credit: Nick Saunders

Mystery Photo

Fall 2016 (below)

ANSWER:

The creature pictured here is a Smooth Green Snake. These snakes can be found in southeastern Saskatchewan and southwestern Manitoba, are bright green in colour and have a creamy white or yellowish belly. Hatchlings are blue-grey to dark green at birth. Smooth Green Snakes can grow up to 79 cm in length, but usually adults are less than 50 cm.

Photo credit: Kim Mann

Mystery Photo

Winter 2016 (above)

THE QUESTION IS: What creature, that spends its summers in much of Saskatchewan, has captured this rodent?

Please send your answers to Blue Jay editor Annie McLeod at bluejay@naturesask.ca or by letter mail: 3017 Hill Ave. Regina, SK S4S 0W2.

Those with correct answers will be entered into a draw for a prize from Nature Saskatchewan.

Have you taken a picture that may make for a good mystery photo? Send it to Annie using the contact information above.

Nature SASKATCHEWAN

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