



Saskatoon Nature Society Newsletter

September 2021

Vol. 43 No. 7

September Program

7:30 PM Thursday, September 16, 2021

Online presentation by Katie Garrett

A Passion for Amphibians

Katie Garrett is a filmmaker, biologist and artist from the UK. She produces short documentaries for online platforms and her work has been published by the likes of National Geographic, Science Friday, PBS, Cal Academy and the Royal Geographical Society. While she has covered diverse topics in science and conservation, her passion lies with amphibians. Working with such a specific group has its challenges, especially when your subject matter does not draw the large scale media and public following that other larger, furrer organisms do. She will be talking about how she came to work with this fascinating group of species, the challenges involved in securing funding and what it is like working with amphibians in the field. Using examples of her films she will also talk about the issues she has covered and why she believes it is important to increase public awareness and empathy with this group of highly threatened animals.



All members who have registered an email address will receive information by email on how to join the Zoom meeting. For those who do not have the technology to use Zoom, we hope that you will be able to join someone in your close social group. If you have not registered an email address but would like to do so, please do as soon as possible (contact c.bear@sasktel.net). If you do not use email or if you have any questions, please contact Blair McCann at president@saskatoonnature.org or 306-653-2958.

Field Trips

Any member is welcome to participate in any field trip. Contact the trip leader if you have any questions. Participants are free to depart early if they wish. To download checklists, visit <https://saskatoonnature.org/> Number of registrants may be limited by current Saskatchewan COVID regulations. Please wear a mask and maintain physical distancing when outside your vehicle.

Many of our trip destinations are described in the 3rd edition of "A Guide to Nature Viewing Sites in and around Saskatoon" available from <https://saskatoonnature.org/special-publications/>

Check <https://saskatoonnature.org/> website for any updated information

Wed. September 8, 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Maple Grove Birding Walk

Members Only.

Leader: Renny Grilz

Register by email to rgrilz@meewasin.com giving your full name and phone number.

Saturday, September 11

Fall Bird Count

Open to everyone.

Register by email to trips@saskatoonnature.org giving your full name and phone number.

Wed. September 15, 7:30 PM – 9:00 PM

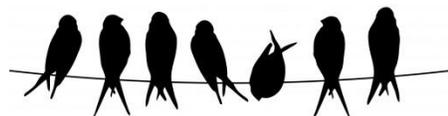
Bat Hike through Maple Grove

Members only.

We will look for any flying bats and use a special instrument to listen to their ultrasonic sounds.

Leader: Renny Grilz

Register by email to rgrilz@meewasin.com giving your full name and phone number.



President's Message

The SNS Board met on August 12 for the first time in a couple of months. My wife Lynn and I hosted the meeting in our backyard. It was the first in-person meeting since I joined the Board in March 2020. What a treat to finally see everyone and actually do some socializing after the meeting! The main item on the agenda was the appointment of Laurette Lefol as our new Treasurer. On behalf of the SNS, I welcome Laurette and thank her for taking on such an important role within the organization. Laurette is taking over from Yvonne Cuttle, who graciously stepped in as Acting Treasurer. Thank you, Yvonne. She will be staying on as a Director to help Laurette with the transition. Laurette will continue working with Bev Roth of Roth Accounting, who has been incredibly helpful in managing the SNS financial data over the last year.

On July 24, I had the opportunity to participate in the shorebird field trip organized by John Patterson. John had spent lots of time scouting for some wetlands that actually contained water. Finding water in these ponds was no small feat. The wetlands that John included in the tour were teeming with activity. I've never seen so many shore birds in such concentrated areas. It was both impressive and worrisome. Great to view the huge diversity – many were recent arrivals from their nesting in the Arctic – but troubling to see what a struggle they face in the historic drought we're experiencing. It's hard to believe that many of these wetlands were at historic high water levels as recently as 2016. What a dramatic shift! Hopefully we are at the nadir and can see things improving over the fall and winter months.

As I'm sure most of you are aware, Stuart Houston died on July 22. Reading his obituary, I couldn't help but be impressed by his achievements and the contribution he made to ornithology and the SNS in particular. He was the last of the society's founding members. We all are indebted to him for having the motivation and energy to help create this wonderful organization. I am inspired by the fact that he was, until very recently, still actively involved with the banding and wing-tagging of turkey vultures. When I observe these beautiful birds from my backyard as they assemble on University Drive for their evening roost, I can't help but think to myself: Stuart would be pleased.

Blair McCann

Field Trips continued

September 18

Nature Saskatchewan Fall Meet at Moose Jaw

See item on page 5 and check www.naturesask.ca/get-involved/fall-meet for details.

Sun. September 19, 1:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Sandhill Crane trip to Outlook area.

Members only

We will look for cranes, geese and explore the riverbank and local history where indigenous travois trails exist. Dress for the weather and bring a picnic supper. If the pastures remain dry, we will watch for cranes near Outlook.

Leader: Marten Stoffel

To register: Text or phone: 306-230-9291

Monday, September 20, 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Sandhill Crane viewing at Chief Whitecap Park

Open to everyone.

An evening outing to view the cranes as they fly to the river to roost for the night near the city. Dress for the weather.

Leader: Diane Wells

To register: Text or phone: 306-229-0328

Whooping Crane trips 2021

Members Only.

We will offer 3 trips for SNS members to view some Whooping Cranes within 150 km of the city. Trips will depart at 8 am on the following Saturdays with the leaders indicated: Sep. 25 (Marten Stoffel); Oct. 2 (Blair McCann); Oct. 9 (Robert Johanson). To reduce disturbance, each trip will be limited to a maximum of 5 vehicles plus the leader. To register, email trips@saskatoonnature.org and state the names of all SNS members travelling in your vehicle, your preference for dates (first, second, third) as well as your cellphone number. Dress for the weather. Phone Stan Shadick at 306-652-5975 with any questions.



Whooping Cranes

Bob Godwin

Young Naturalists

The Young Naturalists is all about nature activities for kids and their families. Each program offers interesting activities geared for children aged 5 to 11 years. Children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Enrolment is limited on most programs and often programs fill up in advance, so register early. To register or for more information e-mail: naturekids@saskatoonnature.org.

- Sandhill Crane Field Trip Sat., October 2 at 9:30 a.m.
- Saw-whet Owl Field Trip (date TBA) October 2021

Depending on current COVID-19 guidelines the group size on these Young Naturalists programs may be limited. Visit the Young Naturalists web page for more details.

<https://saskatoonnature.org/young-naturalists/>



Sandhill Crane May Haga

Golden Eagles Fall Program

Membership in the Golden Eagles is open to retirees and partners interested in birds and the natural world. Participants should be members of the Saskatoon Nature Society and consider membership in Nature Saskatchewan. Unless otherwise arranged, we meet on Thursdays at the Churchill Shopping Centre at Taylor St. and Clarence Ave. Please note the departure times vary with the season and the destination. **Bring lunch, drinks, chairs and sanitizer.** If plans include dining in a restaurant, please contact the leaders to confirm numbers. Carpooling is left to the discretion of the participants. Be prepared to follow the current Covid 19 guidelines. Some locations may require a mask and/or social distancing. The outings are subject to change and updates will be sent when necessary.

Sept. 02 9:00

Gabriel Dumont Park, please meet at the GDP parking lot
Leader: Valerie Girling 306 978 2505

Sept. 09 9:00

Cranberry Flats/Beaver Creek

Leader: Connie Senkiw 306 272 8000 email: senkiw@sasktel.net

Sept. 16 9:00

Katie & Aaron Suek Acreage near Asquith

Leader: Hilda Noton 306 374 0674

Sept. 23 9:00

Blackstrap area

Leaders: John Patterson & Valerie Martz 306 249 0468

Sept. 30 9:00

Ferries on the South Saskatchewan River

Leaders: Bill & Audrey MacKenzie 306 373 2872

Oct. 07 9:00

Whooping Cranes. Members only. This trip may be limited.

Please phone Bill or Audrey MacKenzie to sign up 306 373 2872

Leader: Martin Stoffel 306 230 9291

Oct. 14 9:00

Chappell Marsh, Poplar Bluffs and Pike Lake

Leaders: Louise & Dave Cook 306 955 4764

Oct. 21 9:00

Radisson Lake area and the Sesula Mineral & Gem Museum

Leaders: TBA

This program was prepared by Dave & Louise Cook 306 955 4764 & Bill & Audrey MacKenzie 306 373 2872

A Tribute to Stuart Houston

The recent passing of well-known Saskatoon ornithologist Stuart Houston marks the end of an era for the Saskatoon Nature Society (SNS). Stuart, together with Frank Roy and Ron Bremner, instigated the formation of the SNS in 1955. He had come by his passion for birds early in life, as described in his biography for *Birds of Saskatchewan*, his last significant publication:

C. Stuart Houston was born in Williston, North Dakota in 1927; three months later his Canadian parents moved their medical practice to Yorkton. In grade 5, while at home healing his broken leg, Stuart learned touch typing. For his 13th birthday his Auntie Babs hoped to give him the *Birds of Canada* by P.A. Taverner; Auntie Dora "went halfers" to make such a high price (\$3.50) possible. The next year, 1941, Stuart and two friends joined Isabel Priestly on her weekly walks around the "muskeg." In July 1942,

Stuart, in grade 9, typed and mimeographed Mrs. Priestly's "List of Birds Identified in the Yorkton District," price ten cents. It received such enthusiastic response that the Yorkton Natural History Society was formed to publish the *Blue Jay*, with Stuart as secretary-treasurer. In 1943, Ducks Unlimited obtained for him the only official underage bird-banding permit ever knowingly issued. In 1946, Farley Mowat arrived in his open Jeep and spent July 17 to 19 banding ducks with Stuart at Rousay Lake, and collecting specimens at Leech Lake and the Rokeby Marsh for the Royal Ontario Museum. Each evening was spent making bird study skins in Stuart's mimeographing office in the Houston basement, telling stories to an excited audience of aspiring birders. Mowat's avowed aim was to write the definitive *Birds of Saskatchewan*, to publicize the nearly forgotten Saskatchewan birds collected by his hero John Richardson in the 1820s.

With his MD from the University of Manitoba in 1951, the alma mater of both parents, Stuart joined the family firm of Houston, Houston and Houston and married Yorkton high school teacher Mary Belcher. Stuart trained in radiology in Saskatoon and at the Boston Children's Hospital, and built a long and distinguished medical career at the University of Saskatchewan Hospital. He and Mary nurtured and celebrated the accomplishments of their four children, nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Stuart and Mary's hobby of ornithology centered on bird banding; Stuart specialized in raptors and colonial birds while Mary monopolized the banding and recoveries of Bohemian Waxwings. One of Stuart's great gifts was engaging others in his projects. He recruited countless adventurous volunteers to climb trees and fend off raptor parents defending their young, as well as a cadre of farmers across the province who would provide information about nest sites, and often ended up helping with the enterprise themselves. Stuart remembered everyone and everything, and always had time to talk. The dedication in Volume 3 of the *Canadian Atlas of Bird Banding* recognized him not only for the significant number of birds banded, but also for his having "served as a trainer, mentor, and inspiration to an astonishingly large proportion of Canada's bird banders."

Research and writing was another of Stuart's passions. He was quite simply driven to write, producing, often with

Mary's help, over 600 articles for publication in *Blue Jay* and other journals, as well as a number of books on topics ranging from the Franklin expedition to the history of health care to the birds of Saskatchewan.

A Fellow and past Vice-President of the American Ornithologists' Union, he edited the memorials for the journal, *The Auk*, for 21 years and received their then third highest honour, the Marion Jenkinson Award. Actively involved in both the local and provincial nature societies over many years, Stuart also served as a member of the Saskatchewan Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. He was named one of the first four Fellows of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society in 1987, and was later awarded the Saskatchewan Order of Merit and named an Officer of the Order of Canada.

In addition to leaving a rich legacy of research and publications, a remarkable network of bird enthusiasts and a whole lot of stories, in 2002 Stuart and Mary established the Stuart and Mary Houston Professorship in Ornithology at the University of Saskatchewan, supporting the work of the late Gary Bortolotti and currently, of Karen Wiebe. Stuart's contribution to our society and our province has been formidable. He will be missed!

Donna Bruce (with generous help from C. Stuart Houston in *Birds of Saskatchewan*)

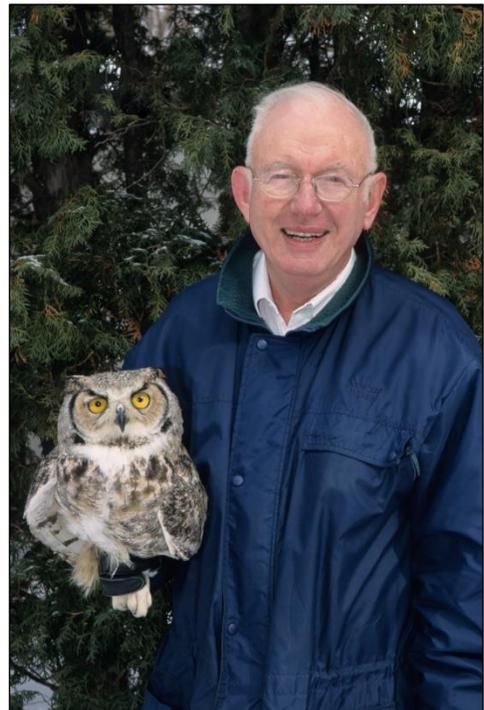


Photo: Glen Grambo



- **Request for Human Nature articles**

Nature Saskatchewan is looking for contributions to the Human Nature article feature in Blue Jay. Human Nature is a regular feature at the end of each issue that is written by members or supporters of Nature Saskatchewan about their favorite natural area in Saskatchewan and why. The direction of the article is left up to the author. Some people write from an ecological point of view while others write about their emotional and personal connection to the chosen natural space.

Articles should be around 500 words or so and can include photos. We are currently looking to fill the January 1 and April 1 deadlines. If you are interested in submitting a Human Nature article please contact Ellen at ebouvier@naresask.ca.

- **September 18 Nature Saskatchewan Fall Meet at Moose Jaw**

Morning Wakamow Valley walk
Afternoon Nicolle Flats walking tour and activities
Evening program at Kiwanis Lodge in Wakamow Valley

PLEASE NOTE: Due to the ever changing nature of covid restrictions, these schedules are subject to change and space will be limited for presentation in the evening. Please register early to ensure your spot.
www.naturesask.ca/get-involved/fall-meet for details.

Free Sustainability Speakers Series Fall 2021

The Sustainability Speakers Series is a monthly event hosted by the Saskatoon Public Library in partnership with the **Saskatchewan Environmental Society (SES)**. These environmentally themed presentations are **free** for all to attend. These events will be Zoom meetings. Talks, including the Q+A portion, start at 7:00 pm and end by 8:30 pm. Recordings of the presentations will be posted on YouTube. Zoom links to the live webinars are in the Library's Program Guide and its Program Calendar (saskatoonlibrary.ca) and the SES website (environmentalsociety.ca).

Recordings of presentations made in the series are available on the library's Youtube site at <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLRUK7BHZUVfrHCxuJyBeO0lgjjeqBwseY>

September 21 / Electricity in Saskatchewan: Current Status, Future Prospects

In recent years SaskPower has transitioned from providing electricity primarily from coal-fired power stations to gas-fired power stations. The realities of climate change, however, require that SaskPower achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions within two decades. Bob Halliday will discuss recent changes in electricity generation in Saskatchewan, SaskPower's current course on electricity generation, and will present a plan for electricity generation with net-zero emissions by 2040.

October 19 / Uranium – Premises, Promises & Predicaments

Uranium is a powerful energy source with unusual byproducts. Two dozen radioactive "progeny" are found in the ore when uranium is mined. Hundreds more radioactive offspring are created when uranium fuels a nuclear reactor. Gordon Edwards will discuss what the future holds for uranium and its legacy of radioactive wastes. He will also explain why Canada's climate change strategy should not include new nuclear reactors.

Volunteers Needed for NCC-SNS Asquith Site Fence Removal

On September 11th, NCC will be conducting a fence removal work bee at the Asquith Site. SNS has provided some financial support for the fence pull but volunteers are also needed. If you're interested in volunteering, register for the event at this link:

<https://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/where-we-work/saskatchewan/events/fence-removal-at-asquith.html>

There are several kilometers of dilapidated wire fence that is scheduled for removal. These old fences pose a significant hazard to the wildlife. Come out and help make this beautiful site the best possible habitat for the creatures that need it most.



Saskatoon Nature Society

Mailing address:

PO Box 27013 GROSVENOR PARK
SASKATOON SK S7H 5N9

Website:

<https://saskatoonnature.org>

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/SaskatoonNatureSociety



Newsletter

The deadline for the next newsletter is September 17. Please send any announcements or articles to Kathy Meeres. Please email: godmee@sasktel.net or call 306-343-8590. The editor would appreciate if articles are complete and submitted electronically.

Please consider switching from a paper to electronic copy of the SNS newsletter. You will help us save on paper, stamps, and volunteer time and you will get information more quickly and get pictures in colour.
Please contact Claire Bullaro (c.bear@sasktel.net) with your email address to switch. Thank you.

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Young Naturalists	Greg Fenty.....306-370-8839..... naturekids@saskatoonnature.org

Board of Directors

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Vice President	vacant.....
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Director	Kathy Meeres.....306-343-8590..... godmee@sasktel.net
Director	LeeAnn Latremouille
Director	Stan Shadick.....306-652-5975..... trips@saskatoonnature.org
Director	Ryan Dudragne.....
Director	Joshua Erikson.....
Director	Heather Brenneman..... habrenneman@sasktel.net
Director	Janine McManus
Director	Jan Spencer j.spencer01@sasktel.net

The board of directors meets about once a month, usually in the week before the monthly meeting. If you wish to bring an item to the attention of the board, please contact the president.

SEPTEMBER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2 GE: Gabriel Dumont Pk	3	4
5	6	7	8 Maple Grove Bird Walk	9 GE: Cranberry Flats/ Beaver Creek	10	11 Fall Bird Count
12	13	14	15 Maple Grove Bat Hike	16 Sept Zoom Meeting GE: Suek Acreage	17	18 Nature Sask Fall Meet Moose Jaw
19 Outlook Sandhill Cranes	20 Chief Whitecap Pk Sandhill Cranes	21	22	23 GE: Blackstrap area	24	25 Whooping Cranes 1
26	27	28	29	30 GE: S SK River Ferries		

OCTOBER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2 Whooping Cranes 2 YN: Sandhill Cranes
3	4	5	6	7 GE: Whooping Cranes	8	9 Whooping Cranes 3
10	11	12	13	14 GE: Chappell Marsh to Pike Lake	15	16
17	18	19	20	21 GE: Radisson Lake area	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						 muskrat

GE: Golden Eagles; YN: Young Naturalists