

Saskatoon Nature Society

Newsletter

September 2022

Vol. 44 No. 7

Tracking Migratory Birds: Where Do They Really Fly?

Online presentation by Ernesto Carman, Costa Rica
7:30 PM Thursday, September 15, 2022

Ernesto Carman is a field trained naturalist who is considered one of Costa Rica's most outstanding naturalists and bird guides. Born and raised on a small organic, shade-grown coffee farm in central Costa Rica, and inspired by his parent's respect for nature, conservation has been an innate part of Ernesto's life. Apart from working on his family's farm he has been leading birding and natural history tours throughout Central and South America for part of each year since 2003. Although his focus is birds, his interest in nature as a whole enables him to impart a more complex view of environmental systems. Ernesto also dedicates part of his time to several research and conservation projects involving study species such as the Unspotted Saw-whet Owl, the endemic Cabanis's Ground-Sparrow and the Cerulean Warbler. He is co-author on several published research papers about birds.

More recently Ernesto has become the Central American coordinator for the MOTUS Wildlife Tracking System for Central America. MOTUS uses radio telemetry to track the movement and behaviour of small flying animals such as birds. Its network operates in countries throughout the world including Canada.

Ernesto will share some of his research discoveries with us in his presentation.



Ernesto with an Unspotted Saw-whet Owl

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 LeeAnn Latremouille at 306-880-9027.

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. Bus Information: 306-975-3100.

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

Saturday, September 3, 8:30 AM – 10:30 AM
Factoria Riverbank Warbler Walk

We will walk the river trail to look for migrating warblers and other songbirds.

Leader: Robert Johanson (306-653-2610)

No registration required.

Field Trips continued on page 2

President's Message

Why Do Birds of a Feather Flock Together?

Having discussed the origins of wacky words used to describe groups of specific things (i.e. collective nouns - see the two previous SNS newsletters for more information), I'd now like to turn to the question of why birds (and indeed, some other animals) gather in large groups. One particular bird, the European starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) - an invasive species first introduced in New York in 1890 and which is now widespread across North America - is especially well-known for forming huge flocks. Interestingly, the collective noun for a group of starlings (a murmuration) gets its origins from the low "murmur" that can be heard from the thousands of wingbeats and calls made by the flock as it flies. Many of us may have seen hundreds or even thousands of starlings, which, when in flight, conduct an aerial ballet that can be truly amazing to see. These large murmurations form mesmerizing, three-dimensional shapes in the sky, perhaps starting out as a massive swirling blob which may split apart and then come back together again like water droplets separating and then merging again. The flock will spontaneously change direction, moving together synchronously up or down and left or right, continuously transforming into complex shapes and patterns that can leave you awe-struck. To see what these murmurations can be like, there is a short but spectacular video filmed by Jan van Ijken in the Netherlands entitled "Flight of the Starlings" where you can also hear the "murmurs" as they fly past (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4f_1_r8ORY).

So why do murmurations of starlings form and behave the way they do? This fascinating behaviour has been the subject of study by many scientists and engineers. It seems that murmurations are not just gatherings of starlings that simply want to hang out together, but may serve some specific purposes to improve survival. Observations have shown that murmurations often form in the fall or winter seasons and generally near sunset. Thus, one hypothesis suggests that a murmuration may be a kind of visual invitation for other starlings to join the flock before they roost for the evening. Why would this be desirable? First, a group of birds huddled together may help preserve body heat during the colder months, much like penguins do in Antarctica. Second, the more eyes and ears you have, the easier (and quicker) it is to detect potential dangers such as predators, which is why many other animals have a herd instinct. Third, a large

flock of birds lowers the probability that any one bird will get eaten by a predator; of course, the risk is much higher for birds near the edges of the flock, so this could explain why murmurations appear to swirl continuously through the air as individuals constantly gravitate towards the relative safety of the centre of the flock. Finally, a huge mass of swirling birds can also make it much more confusing (and difficult) for a predator to identify and focus on a single target.

Other studies suggest that murmurations do not follow a leader and seem to change randomly, following no particular plan. Instead, the movement of the entire group may be coordinated by each starling carefully observing and responding to what the other birds around it are doing. Murmurations are not as densely packed as they appear, and it is clear that each bird is able to maintain enough space around it to manoeuvre in any direction. According to mathematical models, by keeping track of the movements of at least seven of its nearest neighbours, each individual bird can respond in a coordinated and coherent way that will keep the entire flock from disintegrating into disorder and mayhem.



Of course, this kind of synchronized behaviour is not unique to birds and has been observed in schools of fish and swarms of insects such as ants, bees, or locusts. Interestingly, this behaviour may also have practical applications for society. For example, research is now underway to see if autonomous (driverless) vehicles can be developed which can move as a coordinated group with enough space around each car to avoid a collision. So in the end, we may owe it all to a murmuration of starlings.

Jim Lee

Field Trips continued

Tuesday, September 6, 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM

Fall Picnic at Stookey acreage

They have a fish pond that often attracts migrating songbirds. Bring your own picnic food and binoculars. A barbeque will be available for you to use.

Meet at their Pura Vita acreage on Range Road 3070, 2.4 km south of Vanscoy Road 762 which is 0.8 km north of Christensen Road 350 on Range Road 3070. Here is a google map pin. <https://goo.gl/maps/qcYCEx2C7oki9Juo7>

Host: Joe Stookey (306-229-7499)

Saturday, September 10

Fall Bird Count

Open to everyone.

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

Tuesday, 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

Wed, September 21, 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

Forest Nature Walk to Heritage Park in Saskatoon

Meet at the location of the Red Star on the Heritage Park map shown on page 73 of our “Guide to Nature Viewing Sites In and Around Saskatoon”. The google pin reference for this location is

<https://goo.gl/maps/qxeRcnmKTEQtNJ1Q8>

Leader: Sara Bryson 306-261-6156

Whooping Crane trips 2022

Members Only.

We will offer 3 trips for current SNS members only 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: Oct. 1 (Marten Stoffel); Oct. 8 (Robert Johanson), Oct. 15 (Bob Godwin). To reduce disturbance, each trip will be limited to a maximum of 5 vehicles plus the leader. Trip normally lasts about 5 hours. To register, email trips@saskatoonnature.org and state the names of all current 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.

Monday October 10, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Woodlawn Cemetery Bird Walk

Work up an appetite for Thanksgiving dinner by strolling through Woodlawn Cemetery. We'll look for

late fall migrants and early-returning winter residents. Later we may move to the riverbank.

Meet at the Cemetery’s gate, just off 33rd St, on Memorial Ave, west of Warman Road. See red star on map in our guide. Google pin is

<https://goo.gl/maps/NShg8PbGvdy>

Bus: Route 14 North Industrial departs downtown terminal at 9:01 AM and arrives at 33rd St and 1st Ave about 9:10 AM. Walk east 2 short blocks to Memorial Avenue.

Leader: Robert Johanson (306-653-2610)

Guide to Nature Viewing Sites: Page 154.

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. Advanced registration is required. To register or for more information e-mail: naturekids@saskatoonnature.org.

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

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

Sandhill Crane Field Trips:

Wednesday, September 21 at 7:00 p.m.

Thursday, September 22 at 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, September 28 at 9:30 a.m.

Thursday, September 29 at 9:30 a.m.

Northern Saw-whet Owl Field Trip: October TBA



Saw-whet Owl

May Haga

Golden Eagles

Membership in the Golden Eagles is open to retirees and partners interested in the natural world – birds, plants and more – and in its multicultural and historical context. Participants should be members of the Saskatoon Nature Society and consider membership in Nature Saskatchewan. Note the departure times vary with the season and the destination. Typically, participants are asked to bring lunch, drinks and chairs unless otherwise noted or specified by the trip leader. For out-of-town trips, carpooling is encouraged and may be arranged at the discretion of the participants. Members with CB (tuned to channel 28) or FRS radios (tuned to channel 7) should bring them on out-of-town trips. Be prepared to follow any current Covid-19 regulations or requests of the site being visited or the trip leader. Please contact the trip leader if you have any questions. Leaders may request pre-registration.

Unless otherwise arranged, we meet at the Churchill Shopping Centre at Taylor St. and Clarence Ave.

Thursday, September 1, 9:00 am

Honey Farm, Clavet
Leader: Joan Feather, 306-653-3169,
jfeather@sasktel.net

Thursday, September 8, 9:00 am

Cranberry Flats, Beaver Creek
Leader: Sylvia Raginski, 306 260-9356, ragso@sasktel.net

Thursday, September 15, 9:00 am

Shore birds and Waterfowl
Leader: John Patterson 306-371-9354,
jrpatterson@shaw.ca



Greater White-fronted Geese

May Haga

Friday, September 23, 9:00 am

(Note: Friday instead of Thursday)
Nature Sask Meet, Duck Mountain
Humboldt Telegraph
Leader: Joan Feather, 306 653-3169, jfeather@sasktel.net
Those not attending the Nature Sask Meet may choose to just attend the Humboldt Telegraph tour.

Thursday, September 29, 9:00 am

Shekinah Retreat Centre
Leader: Joan Feather, 306 653-3169, jfeather@sasktel.net

Thursday, October 6, 9:00 am

Whooping Cranes
Call or text Marten to register for trip.
Leader: Marten Stoffel, 306-230-9291

Thursday, October 13, 9:00 am

Redberry Lake
Leader: Lorne Sperling, 306 978-4316

Thursday, October 20, 9:00 am

Fall Migration
Leader: Bill MacKenzie, 306-373-2872,
wmack@sasktel.net

November 2 (Wednesday) 5:00 pm

Fall Turkey Supper at Queen's House of Retreat
Register with Audrey MacKenzie 306-373-2872
wmack@sasktel.net

NOTES

If only you would ...

Join us at the **Reflections of Nature Wildlife Art Show** on October 22 or 23 as a volunteer representative for the Saskatoon Nature Society booth. <http://reflections-art.blogspot.com/>

There will be more than **500 works of art on display from over 200 artists** including carvings, paintings, sculpture and photography.

Just **3 hours** of your time is needed to meet and share with others the appreciation of nature and value of the natural world.

And best of all, you'll receive a **free admission pass**.
<http://reflections-art.blogspot.com/>
Interested? Contact Jan Spencer at
j.spencer01@sasktel.net or 306.715.5948.

Nature Conservancy Dundurn property tour

Nature Conservancy of Canada invites SNS members to join their tour to the Dundurn NCC property at 1 pm on September 17. For details, email:

Bohdana.Kornelyuk@natureconservancy.ca

Nature Saskatchewan Fall Meet

Join us in Duck Mountain Provincial Park for the 2022 Fall Meet on September 23-24. Field trips, presentations, banquet and more! For details, see

<https://www.naturesask.ca/get-involved/fall-meet>

Saskatoon Bridges Nature Notes Publication

Nature Notes can now be viewed and downloaded from the SNS website. Find it under the heading "Printed Resources" on the homepage. Here's the direct link:

<https://saskatoonnature.org/printed-resources/nature-notes/>

Advancing Women in Conservation Summit

The Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation (SWF) is holding a Summit in Saskatoon on November 4-6th, 2022. The Summit will focus on creating a better working culture for women who devote their lives to conservation. The SWF is looking for speakers and participants. For more information check out the SWF website at this link:

<https://swf.sk.ca/awic/>

SEEKING A VOLUNTEER!

Would you like to be more active in the Saskatoon Nature Society without making a big commitment? The SNS Programme Committee is seeking a third person to join us in delivering our fall/winter speaker series. We are looking for someone from the general membership to volunteer 2 to 3 hours during 2 months from September to April. Your role would be to recruit a speaker and confirm arrangements – a checklist is available. You choose which months to have your say. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact the Committee Coordinator at habrenneman@sasktel.net.



Snow Geese

May Haga

Sustainability Speakers Series – Fall 2022

At these free events, guest speakers discuss environmental sustainability. The series is hosted by the Saskatoon Public Library in partnership with the Saskatchewan Environmental Society. These events will be in the Meeting Room in the basement of Frances Morrison Central Library (311 23rd Street E). The events will start at 7:00 p.m. and end at about 8:30 p.m. The program will be presented simultaneously both in-person and as a live stream on Facebook.

Date: September 20

Title: Electric Vehicle in Saskatchewan

Description: Tyler Krause and Bill Hale have each been driving electric vehicles (EVs) for more than four years in Saskatchewan, summer and winter. Fast forward to the present and they both still drive EVs and aren't going back to gas cars. Come and find out how EVs work, what affects their range, where to charge them, and more.

Date: October 18, 2022

Title: Compressed Air Storage for Electricity Generation

Description: Brian Brunskill, Professional Geologist, will explain why Saskatchewan's low-carbon electricity generation plans should include compressed air storage technology. This cost-effective technology uses electricity generated from renewables, such as wind and solar, to compress air into underground storage caverns. The compressed air is released later to generate electricity. This process converts intermittent renewables to electricity on demand.

For live streaming of these events see the Facebook page of the Saskatoon Public Library:

<https://www.facebook.com/stoonlibrary/>

Recordings of earlier presentations in the Sustainability Speakers Series are available at:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLRUK7BHZUVfrHCXuJyBeO0lgjjeqBwseY>



Saskatoon Nature Society

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Newsletter



The deadline for the next newsletter is Sep 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.

Chairs and Coordinators


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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 GE: Clavet Honey Farm	2	3 Factoria Warblers
4	5	6 Fall Picnic	7	8 GE: Cranberry Flats, Beaver Creek	9	10 Fall Bird Count
11	12	13	14	15 September Meeting (Zoom) GE: Shorebirds and Waterfowl	16	17
18	19	20 Chief Whitecap Park Sandhill Cranes	21 Heritage Park Nature Walk YN: Sandhill Cranes	22 YN: Sandhill Cranes	23 GE: Humboldt Telegraph	24 Nature Sask Meet Duck Mountain 23 rd – 24 th
25	26	27	28 YN: Sandhill Cranes	29 YN: Sandhill Cranes GE: Shekinah	30	



OCTOBER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Whooping Cranes 1
2	3	4	5	6 GE: Whooping Cranes	7	8 Whooping Cranes 2
9	10 Woodlawn Cemetery Bird Walk	11	12	13 GE: Redberry Lake	14	15 Whooping Cranes 3
16	17	18	19	20 GE: Fall Migration	21	22
23	24	25	26 GE: Fall Turkey Supper	27	28	29
30	31					

YN: Young Naturalists; GE: Golden Eagles