



Saskatoon Nature Society Newsletter

February 2025

Vol. 47 No. 2

“Wildlife, Landscapes, & Geology” Dr. Dale Leckie

Online Only!

7:30 PM Thursday February 20, 2025

Explore Grasslands National Park, the Great Sandhills Ecological Reserve, the Missouri Coteau, and the Saskatchewan River valley with Dale to observe how the geology of Saskatchewan controls where wildlife lives. Dr. Leckie will talk about his new book “Wildlife, Landscapes, & Geology”.

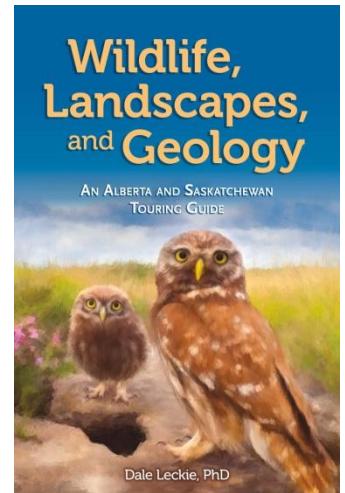
From the vast rain shadow of the prairies to the Rocky Mountains, from deeply entrenched rivers and their prairie oases, and glaciated terrain, geology has a strong impact on wildlife. The relationship between wildlife and landscape is explored and exemplified in the lives of burrowing owls on glaciated plains, and greater short-horned lizards surviving in semi-arid badlands, of golden eagles and the Rocky Mountains, the American pika and eroding mountains.

In the prairies, pronghorn antelope require semi-arid, flat to gently rolling glacial terrain and expansive mixed grassland for survival. This setting allows antelope to use their long-range vision to escape predators using intense bursts of speed. The vegetation on which antelope feed is controlled by aridity in the vast rain shadow of the Rocky Mountains. South-facing slopes of entrenched eroding river valleys, glacial meltwater channels, and badlands coulees provide favourable habitat and warmth for the greater short-horned lizard, prairie rattlesnakes, eastern yellow-bellied racers, and bullsnakes.

After the glaciers melted, large lakes formed across the prairies which then drained. Strong winds constructed extensive fields of sand dunes of which Ord’s kangaroo rat take full advantage.

During the last glaciation the kilometres-thick Laurentide Ice Sheet depressed the Earth’s crust across the prairies. When the ice melted, the heavy load was reduced causing the prairies to uplift and river valleys to become deeply entrenched. Today, meandering rivers in valley bottoms allow for the growth of towering cottonwood forests, which are oases providing specialized refuge from sun and heat for birds, reptiles, and mammals.

Dale Leckie, Ph.D., P. Geol., is a geologist who worked at the Geological Survey of Canada and as chief geologist at Nexen, a large Canadian energy company. He has edited numerous books and published widely on the geology of western Canada. He is adjunct professor in Earth, Energy, and Environment at University of Calgary. Dale is recognized for his long-term contributions to geology and is an honorary member of Society for Sedimentary Geology (SEPM) and Canadian Energy Geoscience Association. Dale’s most recent book “Wildlife, Landscapes, and Geology – An Alberta and Saskatchewan Touring Guide” is third of his best-selling trilogy. Most recently, Dale is the recipient of the 2024 AAPG Geoscience in the Media Award in recognition of his books.



Please note that if the link to join online requests a passcode, please enter SNS. If you have trouble connecting via the Zoom link, please text or phone LeeAnn at 306-880-9027. Please consider joining the meeting a little early so we can address any problems.

*All members who have registered an email address with SNS will receive an **email containing the link to join the meeting through Zoom**. If you have not registered an email address with us, but would like to do so, please contact Claire Bullaro at c.bear@sasktel.net.*

Field Trips

All are welcome to participate in field trips, except those described as “members only”. In some cases pre-registration may be necessary.

Invite your friends! Carpooling for out-of-town trips is arranged at the meeting place. There are no fees or restrictions unless indicated; however, participants are expected to share gasoline costs and should make arrangements with the driver to do so. Phone the trip leader if you have any questions. Participants can return early if they wish. Members with FRS radios should bring them on out-of-town trips. For information on city buses, phone 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/>

If the predicted wind chill is below -30C, check with the leader in case the trip is cancelled or rescheduled.

Sat. February 8 8:30 am – 7:00 pm

Northern Owl Trip 1

Members only. We plan to drive north of Prince Albert in search of Great Gray Owls and possibly Northern Hawk Owls.

Register in advance with Marten Stoffel (text to 306-230-9291)

Limit: 5 vehicles. We will try to car pool.

Meet at Flying J Truck Stop NE of Idylwyld at Marquis Drive
Trip may be cancelled due to bad weather.



Great Gray Owl May Haga

Sat. February 15 8:30 am – 7:00 pm

Northern Owl Trip 2

Members only. We plan to drive north of Prince Albert in search of Great Gray Owls and possibly Northern Hawk Owls.

Register in advance with Marten Stoffel (text to 306-230-9291)

Limit: 5 vehicles. We will try to car pool.

Meet at Flying J Truck Stop NE of Idylwyld at Marquis Drive
Trip may be cancelled due to bad weather.

Sat. March 1, 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm Weir birding tour

We plan to view the ducks and geese on the river and walk the riverbank and residential area in search of winter songbirds.

Leader: Joshua Erikson (306-270-5430)

Meet at the main parking lot and wear your binoculars.

Weir parking lot pin:

<https://goo.gl/maps/MnAsCM2HpCmw1ZHy5>

Guide to Nature Viewing Sites: Page 100.

Sat. March 15 10:00 AM – 12 Noon

Forestry Farm Bird Walk

Meet in the small parking lot near the former Superintendent’s brick house on Rosy Bloom Lane.

Parking Lot Pin:

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/pAbqotMXFhXYqfor9>

Leader: Kerry Hjertaas (306-260-6602)

As a volunteer or participant in the activities of the Saskatoon Nature Society (SNS), you are fully responsible for your own safety, and for your own personal insurance in case of injury. Please exercise great caution and care on field trips or any other outings. The Saskatoon Nature Society is not responsible for damage incurred to vehicles or other personal property while participating in any SNS activity. If going onto private land, always ask for permission, be friendly and respectful, exercise caution, and please be aware that participants may be responsible for damage to landowners' property.

President’s Message

2025 is shaping up to be quite a year for SNS – I’m sure of it! I’m confident that we will have some new faces around the executive table particularly as we recruit a new treasurer and vice-president – could that be you? If you have some skills and the interest, give us a good look. We are a great group, doing some really exceptional things!

The exceptional thing I’m writing about is of course the NCC Asquith partnership that the executive continues to work on. We are at a crossroads on this project as we have completed 2 terms (6 years) of partnership with NCC at Asquith - developing trails and signage, fence clean ups and of course an amazing wildflower pamphlet. This was all made possible by a bequest from Pat Thomas’ estate of \$40,000. Now it may be time to look at our restricted funds to pay for the next terms. The conservation partnership fits well the requirements of how this money should be spent but I am mindful of the hard work fundraising is and the dedication of past members to provide this reserve for us to use! Again, if you have comments on directing existing reserves to the NCC

Asquith project, please let me know. In uncertain times like these, it is a positive to lead by example – Conservation in Action!

The recent (Jan 6, 2025) Birds Canada article, *RECENT UPDATES TO EXTINCTION RISK ASSESSMENTS FOR CANADIAN BIRDS* really underscores why partnerships with NCC are so vital to protect and enhance bird and plant species at risk. I was shocked to read that 94 bird species are now being assessed for being at risk for extinction in Canada. Many of the species such as the Killdeer and Ruddy turnstone are familiar to us, but they are facing challenges including habitat destruction and climate change that threatens their future!

By the way – did you get to see some of the Gray Partridges that were out and about for the Christmas Bird Count? This year (2024) over 1000 Gray Partridges were counted in the Clark’s Crossing count smashing the old record of 210 birds! They definitely made an impression right across the province! Even bird line on CBC’s noon show was abuzz about them. And of course, the Long-tailed duck that seemed to stay around on the river for a few weeks – quite a sight!!



GrayPartridge May Haga

Good news as we review last year’s happenings! Members of SNS, Robin and Arlene Karpan, have earned national recognition for their work in sustainable tourism through photography tours and workshops that capture Saskatchewan’s unique landscapes and wildlife. Last fall, Robin and Arlene Karpan were nominated as Finalists for the Travel Media Professional of the Year Award. It was noted that their practices reflect a deep commitment to environmental stewardship, educating visitors while also showcasing the province’s natural beauty.

Many of us in SNS know Greg Fenty quite well for his work with SNS and with the Young Naturalists in particular. Greg was awarded the 2024 SaskOutdoors’ Bernadine Melanson Lifetime Achievement Award in environmental education. As Greg says “I spent a large portion of my career with the Saskatoon Zoo Society and had the opportunity to develop education programs with some of the best educators I have ever encountered. A lifetime achievement award has the implication of an acknowledgement of things done in the past. But for

those that know me, I’ve still got a lot of years of adventure, discovery, and education ahead!” Congrats Greg – very much well deserved!!

Over the past few months, a few people have brought an incredible book to my attention: *Woman, Watching: Louise de Kiriline Lawrence and the songbirds of Pimisi Bay*, by Marilyn Simonds. Absolutely fascinating life story of Louise, a woman very much an unsung hero of Canadian history and ornithology. We have driven by Pimisi Bay several times travelling east and I’ve never realized the significance of this place. Interestingly I read this book right after I finished *The Birds That Audubon Missed: Discovery and Desire in the American Wilderness* by Ken Kaufmann - what a contrast in values and approach in appreciating our bird world in North America! I think about this particularly as we reflect on our own Society history with the likes of Stuart & Mary Houston who may have known Louise and with Nature Sask’s 75th anniversary and the Blue Jay history right here in our province! I highly recommend Simonds book, a truly wonderful Canadian story we should know more about! This book is available at the library.

Stay tuned for more Asquith details and of course our own Annual meeting in March!
Thanks!

David Forbes

WANTED: Treasurer, Vice President and Directors! Mentors in place to ease the transition!



The board of directors of the Saskatoon Nature Society is elected at the March Annual General Meeting. If you would like to serve on the board, please contact the president, David Forbes: email (davidforbes@sasktel.net)

Golden Eagles

The Golden Eagles is an informal group of Saskatoon Nature Society (SNS) members. Our interests include all aspects of the natural world (birds, plants, etc.), as well as social and multicultural history. We engage in out-of-town and city field trips. Participants should be SNS members and consider membership in Nature Saskatchewan.

Leaders may request pre-registration for certain destinations. Participation is free, although some destinations may charge admission or encourage donations. Please contact the trip leader if you have any questions.

Thursday, Feb 13: 9 am – mid-afternoon.

We will travel to visit Harold Fisher's property near Prince Albert to see forest songbirds and maybe northern owls in the area. Meet at the Flying J Travel Center, 3850 Idylwyld Dr N. More information to follow.

Leader: Marten Stoffel. 306-230-9291

Please contact Valerie Martz vmartz@shaw.ca or call/text 306-229-0419 to register.

Thursday, March 6: 12:30pm

Tour of the new SPCA Location, 2250 Hanselman Ave. With Trina Mortson, Director of Development

Meet at the SPCA.

We will meet after morning care for the animals. SPCA is able to accommodate 20 split into two groups.

Leader: Diane Wells. dmwells@shaw.ca or text 306-229-0328

Please contact Diane to register for the tour. As always if your plans change, please contact Diane as there may be a wait list for the tour.

Calling all Volunteers

Nature Saskatchewan obtains funding from Sask. Culture. One of the factors influencing the success of Nature Saskatchewan's application is the support it and affiliated societies receive from volunteers as evidenced by the number of hours worked. **We ask that each member of SNS tally the hours you have volunteered in 2024** and send your totals to the treasurer at treasurer@saskatoonnature.org or to any board member. Once compiled, they will be forwarded to Nature Saskatchewan early in 2025. Thanks to all for your good work on behalf of SNS during 2024, and for the additional time that, I hope, you will be willing to spend on this request.

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. Visit the Young Naturalists web page for more details. <https://saskatoonnature.org/young-naturalists/>

Chickadee Pishing - Saturday, February 1, 2025

Owl Pellet Dissection - March 8, 2025

Birdhouse Workshop - April 5, 2025

Join us for Gardenscape 2025 on March 28, 29 or 30 as a volunteer for the Saskatoon Nature Society booth.

There will be a variety of exhibitors and events including the **Superdogs, Media Challenge and the Art Show** as well as the **Speaker's Theatre and Gardening 101**.

Just **3 ½ hours** of your time is needed to meet and share with others the appreciation of nature and value of the natural world. <https://www.gardenscapeshow.ca/show-guide/>

And best of all, you'll receive a **free admission pass**.

Interested? Contact Jan Spencer at spencerjan9@gmail.com.

Great Backyard Bird Count Feb 14-17

For information see birdcount.org



Sustainability Speakers Series

The Sustainability Speakers Series is a monthly event hosted by Saskatchewan Environmental Society volunteers and the Saskatoon Public Library. These **free**, in-person events are held in the Auditorium of **Cliff Wright Library** (located in the Lakewood Civic Centre, 1635 McKercher Drive) on Tuesday evenings.

February 25, 2025 from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Plastic's Price: Understanding the environmental cost and how to reduce it

Bobbie Duns of the Saskatchewan Waste Reduction Council will discuss plastic's effect on the environment around us, its end-of-life options, and ways to reduce the amount of plastic in your home.

March 18, 2025 from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

SES Solar Co-operative project updates

Since 2016, the SES Solar Co-operative has installed eight commercial and industrial sized solar power projects with its site partners in and around Saskatoon. **Jason Praski** will provide short descriptions of the different projects and provide the audience with experiences gained to date.



More information about the series is available on the SES website:

<https://environmentalsociety.ca/events/sustainable-speakers-series/>

Recordings of previous presentations in the series are available on the SPL YouTube

Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLRUK7BHZUVfrHCxujyBeO0lgjjeqBwseY>

Congratulations to Regina's Bird Friendly City group on receiving a Conservation Partner award from Nature Canada



WANTED:

Bird walk volunteers for ornithology conference



100+ birders from across Canada will "flock" to Saskatoon for the Society of Canadian Ornithologists conference, August 14-16, 2025.

The conference will have morning bird walks to teach visitors about local birds.

We'd love to highlight SNS's birding talent. To learn more, or if you'd like to help lead a conference bird walk, contact Mercy at mercyeharris@gmail.com

Seedy Sunday event March 9, 10am-3pm Station 20 West

Hosted by CHEP Good Food Inc.

Providing community access to seeds in Saskatoon for 27 years! For more info:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1280134893222298>

Membership information

Invite a friend!

SNS memberships run from January-December.

Find a membership form at:

<https://saskatoonnature.org/membership/>

Saskatoon Nature Society Members are eligible for the following discounts:

- Early's Farm and Garden Centre provides a 10% discount on regular-priced seed, birdhouses and books;
- Wild Birds Unlimited provides a 10% discount on many regular-priced items;
- Don's Photo offers a discount on photo-finishing

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 **February 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


Conservation	Sara Bryson.....306-261-6156	
Display	Greg Fenty.....306-370-8839	
Facebook Editor	Sara Bryson	306-261-6156 (text please)
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Golden Eagles	Valerie Martz.....	306-249-0468
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Webmaster	Trent Watts	web@saskatoonnature.org
Young Naturalists	Greg Fenty	306-370-8839 naturekids@saskatoonnature.org

Board of Directors


President	David Forbes.....	306-230-5611 president@saskatoonnature.org
Past President	Jim Lee	
Vice President	vacant	
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Treasurer	Laurette Lefol	treasurer@saskatoonnature.org
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Director	Blair McCann	
Director	Diane Wells	
Director	Kathy Meeres	306-343-8590
Director	LeeAnn Latremouille	
Director	Sara Bryson.....	306-261-6156
Director	Joshua Erikson	
Director	Heather Brenneman	
Director	Bill Robertson	
Director	Jan Spencer	j.spencer01@sasktel.net
Director	Robert Johanson	306-653-2610

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.

FEBRUARY

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 YN: Chickadee Pishing
2	3	4	5	6	7	8 Northern Owl Trip 1
9	10	11	12	13 GE: Harold Fisher's PA property	14	15 Northern Owl Trip 2
16	17	18	19	20 February Meeting	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	

MARCH

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Weir birding
2	3	4	5	6 GE: SPCA tour	7	8 YN: Owl Pellets
9	10	11	12	13	14	15 Forestry Farm birding
16	17	18	19	20 March Meeting / AGM	21	22
23/30	24/31	25	26	27	28	29 

YN: Young Naturalists; GE: Golden Eagles