



Native Plant News

Vol. 16, No. 3

Fall 2011

A true, blue flag day



PHOTO BY MORLEY MAIER

A stand of blue flag irises (*Iris versicolor*) wave in the wind along a slough near Sheho, Sask.

By *JOAN WILSON*
NPSS member

It's funny how an adventure can start. During a discussion after a power point presentation on wildflowers that I presented at the Yellowhead Flyway

Birding Trail Association's Symposium in April, I was asked if I'd ever seen wild irises. I answered in the negative. To my surprise a local veterinarian, Kenn Wood, quickly volunteered that during his travels around the countryside he had seen irises over by Sheho, Sask.

Well, my curiosity was quickly aroused. The location was identified and duly noted for a visit to that area in mid June.

Come June, a tour was planned with Paula and Morley Maier to Sheho to

Continued on Page 6

3 Mark your calendars for 2012 NPSS AGM

4 Featured Flora: Smooth Arid Goosefoot

5 Your likes helped NPSS win online funding challenge

6 Rare Plant Rescue summer field update



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Native Plant News is a quarterly publication of the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan (NPSS) and is one of the benefits of membership. Members are invited to submit articles, news, views, photographs and comments. Views expressed by the authors are not necessarily those of the NPSS.

Deadlines:

	Submission	Publication
Winter Issue:	November 1	December 15
Spring Issue:	February 1	March 15
Summer Issue:	May 1	June 15
Fall Issue:	August 1	September 15

Membership Dues (Year End November 30th)

- Individual \$30
- Family \$45
- Student/Low Income \$15
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- Life \$500

Please contact the NPSS office for information about the lifetime membership instalment payment option.

Dr. Steeves was a great mentor

This fall I was sad to hear of the passing of one of my very favourite botany professors, Dr. Taylor Steeves.

As he did for countless biology students at the University of Saskatchewan, Dr. Steeves – and his wife, Peggy – played a major role in shaping my appreciation for the botanical world.



TARA SAMPLE
President's message

A decade has passed since I was a student and but I can still recall lectures and conversations with the Steeves that I know changed my life.

Mentors put in the time necessary to guide another's development. There is no expectation of personal gain. Mentors may never fully understand the impact they have. All the same, the world is slightly better for their efforts.

I believe that the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan is a strong mentor as well. There is no doubt that the programming our Society delivers has a lasting and important impact on the province's botanical community.

However, to continue our impact we always need the support and efforts of our members.

In February, at the Annual General Meeting, the current board of directors will be asking for new volunteers to help guide the Society in 2012 and beyond.

For me, serving on the board has been a rewarding experience.

Over the past six years, I have had the privilege to work with a variety of interesting people who all share a passion for native plants. The Society has become stronger through the collaboration of these talented and eager individuals and I'm glad to have been a part of that.

Please consider bringing your knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm for plants to the board so the Society may continue its mentoring legacy. If you are interested, I encourage you to contact Chet Neufeld before the AGM. ✿

Correcting a past wrong

In our Fall 2010 article entitled "Land of trees 'n sand" on the research occurring in the Athabasca Sand Dunes, we neglected to recognize the Parks Service of Saskatchewan Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport as a major proponent and contributor to the project.

In 2009, the Ministry funded a large portion of the project, as well as contributing significant staff time in preparation and execution of the project. Additionally, they submitted a proposal to the Habitat Stewardship Program that was successful in adding a further \$50,000 toward the project.

Our sincere apologies to the Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport as well as the Habitat Stewardship Program for the omission. ✿

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A living legacy



PHOTO BY CANDACE NEUFELD

On Monday, Sept. 19 Provincial Environment Minister Dustin Duncan met with NPSS Executive Director Chet Neufeld at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum in Regina to plant a tree. The ceremony was held to begin National Tree Week and commemorate 2011 as the International Year of Forests as declared by the United Nations. The tree that was planted was a white birch (*Betula papyrifera*), Saskatchewan's provincial tree. ☘

Save the date, AGM nears

The NPSS annual general meeting is fast approaching, so be sure to keep your calendar free in February.

The NPSS will be holding its AGM on February 17 and 18 in Regina at the Conexus Arts Centre. This year's theme is Balancing Profitability and Sustainability, and will delve into the Saskatchewan ecotourism industry.

Ecotourism has never been showcased before at an NPSS AGM, so it is sure to be interesting with many great new speakers. The format will be much

the same as in previous years, with the keynote speaker and other activities on Friday night and a full day of speakers and activities on Saturday.

Once the agenda is finalized, we will be sending it out to all NPSS members, as well as posting it on our website and announcing it to our partner organizations. Keep your eyes and ears open for details.

We hope to see you there (and remember to bring your friends!). This is one of the highlights of the year and is an event not to be missed! ☘

Upcoming Events

January 2012

Native Prairie Speaker Series

Wednesday, January 18
Royal Saskatchewan Museum
Auditorium
Regina, Sask.

12:10 – 12:50 p.m. – Protecting Native Grasslands from Smooth Brome Invasion - What's to be Done? **Speaker:** Rob Wright, Saskatchewan Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture & Sport – Saskatchewan Parks Service
7 – 8 p.m. – Stewards of Saskatchewan Programs **Speakers:** Katherine Brewster and Nicole Fergus, Nature Saskatchewan
www.pcap-sk.org

Saskatchewan's Premier Beef Event – "Weathering Change and Forecasting Opportunity"

Wednesday January 18
Saskatoon Inn Hotel and Convention Centre, Saskatoon, Sask.
An opportunity to hear keynote speakers discuss topics important to the Saskatchewan beef and forage industries
Email shannon.mcarton@sasktel.net or call 306-488-4725.

February 2012

2012 Native Prairie Restoration/Reclamation Workshop: Bridging the Gap

February 8 and 9
TCU Place
Saskatoon, Sask.
Registration deadline in February 1
Early Bird Registration: \$150.00 (until January 6) After January 6 - \$175.00
Contact the Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan office at 306-352-0472 or email pcap@sasktel.net.
www.pcap-sk.org

March 2012

Conserving Plant Biodiversity in a Changing World: A View from North West North America

March 13 and 14
University of Washington Botanic Gardens, Seattle, Washington
Email rarecare@uw.edu or call 206-616-0780 for more details.

To submit your native plant related event to our events list, send your information (including date, contact, phone number and location) to info@npss.sk.ca.

Getting to know Goosefoots

By JEN RUMANCIK
Habitat Stewardship Assistant

It isn't easy being Smooth Arid Goosefoot. In the face of wind-whipped sand, scalding temperatures, water shortages and aggressive neighbours ready to invade its territory, Smooth Arid Goosefoot (*Chenopodium subglabrum*) has remained competitive and hopefully will continue to do so!

Let's not tip toe around, here's an overview of everything you might want to know about goosefoots – in particular the rarest Canadian member of the family – Smooth Arid Goosefoot.

First, Goosefoots are quite common, with 100 genera and 1,500 species found worldwide. Have you ever noticed a plant with little green “globe-like” flowers forming along an upright stem? If you have, chances are it was a plant in the Goosefoot family, Chenopodiaceae.

All plants in this family have tiny flowers called globules. If you take a closer look at these plants with a hand lens you will notice that their flowers do not have petals; instead, you will see two to five sepals, usually united. Next, look for the yellow coloured stamens; not all goosefoot flowers have stamens, but if the stamens are present they should be as numerous as the sepals.

Even though all members of this family have similar flowers, their vegetative and life history characteristics may be very different. They range from annuals to perennials, herbaceous to woody, monoecious to dioecious and some are even polygamous!

Smooth Arid Goosefoot is an annual plant that flowers from June to August. It grows 20 to 80 cm high, with many ascending branches. Its leaves are smooth, narrow, alternate and linear with one vein. Its small flowers are green in colour and found widely spaced along the stem. Its fruits are thin-walled with one lens-shaped, black and shiny seed.

This species has only ever been found in Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan in Canada. It grows in sandy soils, usually at the edge of stabilizing dunes.

It has been associated with other rare plants that require similar habitat such as: small-flowered sand-verbena (*Tripterocalyx micranthus*), hairy prairie-clover (*Dalea villosa* var. *villosa*), western spiderwort (*Tradescantia occidentalis*), beaked annual skeletonweed (*Shinnersoseris rostrata*), sand nutgrass (*Cyperus*



PHOTO BY SARAH VINGE

Smooth Arid Goosefoot (*Chenopodium subglabrum*).

schweinitzii), nodding buckwheat (*Eriogonum cernuum* var. *cernuum*) and bur ragweed (*Ambrosia acanthicarpa*).

The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) designated Smooth Arid Goosefoot as a species of Special in April 1991 because of its unique biological characteristics and its loss of habitat. In April 2006, it was reassessed and due to its small, fluctuating population size and restricted habitat (active sand dunes), it was designated as Threatened.

These sand-dwelling plants face threats such as habitat loss resulting from sand dune stabilization, invasive species, oil and gas development and recreational activities. This plant's limited and sometimes isolated habitat acts as an ecological barrier for gene flow to take place between populations.

However, there is still hope for Smooth Arid Goosefoot. It can tolerate high alkali areas where most other plants cannot survive. It can also tolerate harsh sandy sites by surviving windy, arid, hot and eroded conditions.

Contact Rare Plant Rescue at 306-780-9417, through Nature Saskatchewan's toll free number (Saskatchewan only) 1-800-667-4668, or by email at rpr@naturesask.ca. 🌱

Your online efforts paid off

Recently the NPSS was involved in the Share Your Care initiative, a contest for funding sponsored by Evergreen and Fido and your likes helped get us \$2,500.

Organizations like the NPSS submitted online proposals for projects to be funded and the winners were chosen by **Likes** by Facebook users across Canada.

Our project, called Native Plants in the Classroom, involved engaging students to learn about nature through hands-on exercises in the classroom and outdoors using many of our printed and electronic resources on native plants.

We placed ninth overall in Canada –quite an accomplishment considering we were competing against cities many times larger than Saskatchewan’s population – and third in the Prairie region.

For your efforts, we received \$2,500 toward our project. The NPSS has also just received an additional \$2,000 through Evergreen and Fido’s Quickstart Grant Program. This money will go toward funding our Native Plants in the Community project. This is the third year in a row that the NPSS has received funding from Evergreen.

Thank you to all who voted for our project in the Share Your Care contest and thank you to Evergreen for their continued support! ❁



2011 a year of celebrations

Two of the most important government organizations tasked with protecting Canada’s natural areas celebrated anniversary milestones in 2011 – Parks Canada turned 100 and Environment Canada celebrated 40 years of service.

* * *

On May 19, 1911, the Government of Canada created the Dominion Parks Branch, known today as Parks Canada, the very first national parks service in the world. Today, Parks Canada protects 167 national historic sites, 42 national parks and 4 national marine conservation areas, which together make up one of the most extensive networks of protected national heritage places in the world. A priceless source of discovery and unique experiences, this network is protected on behalf of Canadians today and for generations to come.

In Saskatchewan, Prince Albert National Park celebrated the service’s centennial by adding never seen before content and archival footage to “Song of Waskesiu,” a one-person play highlighting the park’s establishment, management and human history as seen through the experiences of J.A. Wood, Prince Albert National Park’s first superintendent during the 1920’s and 30s. Written and performed by singer-songwriter, actor and park interpreter, Brad Muir, performances were held throughout July and August.

* * *

On June 11 marked Environment Canada’s 40th anniversary – that’s four decades of environmental leadership with action to build the department as a world class regulator.

As a federal department, 40 years is fairly young. However, parts of Environment Canada predate its establishment in 1971 and have had long and illustrious histories of serving Canadians – The Canadian Wildlife Service has been protecting Canada’s wildlife for nearly 100 years while this year the Meteorological Service of Canada celebrates 140 years of serving Canadians!

The department’s overall direction has evolved over time, responding to the needs of Canadians and keeping up with emerging environmental priorities. Environment Canada’s initial mandate in 1971 was to protect the biosphere.

Environment Canada has also become one of the Government of Canada’s most active regulators, administering more than a dozen statutes on issues including trade in endangered species, licensing dams on international rivers, and regulating chemicals and greenhouse gases.

Looking to the future, Environment Canada will continue to work to protect and conserve Canadian air, water, wildlife, climate and spaces, to help ensure a clean, safe and sustainable environment, and to provide weather and meteorological information to keep Canadians informed and safe. ❁

- With files from Environment Canada, Parks Canada and Shannon Bond of Prince Albert National Park.

Get your *Flora* early

By SARAH VINGE

Secretary, *Flora of Saskatchewan Association*

The *Flora of Saskatchewan* is finally starting to take shape and could soon be in your hands!

The *Flora of Saskatchewan Association* (FOSA) has decided to make individual sections available as they are written so that they may be put to use. A final product will be published in the future when all the writing is complete.

Currently, the “Ferns and Fern Allies” and the “Lilies, Irises and Orchids” sections are complete and available for purchase. The “Carex” section is also under development.

The sections are being published and sold by Nature Saskatchewan. Check out the Nature Saskatchewan website (www.naturesask.ca) to purchase the available sections. Each section is \$19.95.

FOSA is also actively seeking funding for the next sections of the *Flora*. If you’d like to become a member of the FOSA (annual membership only \$10) or have further inquiries please contact Sarah Vinge (svinge@naturesask.ca or 306-780-9417), or visit the FOSA website at www.parc.ca/saskflora. ❁

A blue flag day

Continued from Page 1

find the irises. The location was about 12 km south on Grid 617 to an intersection with a slough on the northwest corner.

That slough produced the anticipated result!

Ringling the pond were irises! Lots of irises! We photographed them and I sent images off to Anna Leighton. She was pretty excited. By looking at the images, she felt that indeed the flowers looked like blue flag irises (*Iris versicolor*).

Well, what does one do with this information?

We collected a sample so the irises could be keyed out and the species verified at the university. A quick note was sent to the NPSS to get the word out so others might be able to come and see the beautiful irises while they were still in bloom.

I was a little nervous about sharing the find because what if I was wrong and they were escaped horticultural plants? What if people took plants and disturbed them? Should they be kept a secret? Well, I took a chance.... and the word got out. I know several did travel to see the irises and they did seem to be the *real* thing!

Paula and Morley had the thrill of taking Jim and Shirley Jowsey (authors of *Wildflowers Across the Prairies*) to see the irises. They were so excited they almost ran down the ditch to see them! It was a first for them as they hadn't seen irises in Saskatchewan before.

Next year maybe you can travel to see the irises!

But take heed of this last word from our bible, *Wildflowers Across the Prairies*: "This plant is rare in Saskatchewan, and it should be rigidly protected." ✱

- written with assistance from Paula Maier.

Rare Plant Rescue continues its search

By SARAH VINGE

Habitat Stewardship Coordinator
and

JEN RUMANCIK

Habitat Stewardship Assistant

The Rare Plant Rescue (RPR) field season got off to a great start in 2011 as many rare plant species were found.

Staff began their hard work in May when they began their searches near the Great Sand Hills. They located 31 new provincially rare plant occurrences: five slender mouse-ear-cress (*Transberingia bursifolia* ssp. *virgata*), which is designated as a Threatened species by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC); seven small lupine (*Lupinus pusillus* ssp. *pusillus*), 16 plains grape-fern (*Botrychium campestre*) and three prickly milk-vetch (*Astragalus kentrophyta* var. *kentrophyta*).

In late June, RPR partnered with the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) to conduct targeted rare plant searches for slender mouse-ear-cress at an NCC owned site in the Eyebrow Plain. The crew did not find its target plant, but did locate some marsh felwort (*Lomatogonium rotatum*).

In early July, staff made their way to Douglas Provincial Park to search for and map occurrences of the Threatened western spiderwort (*Tradescantia occidentalis*) and smooth arid goosefoot (*Chenopodium subglabrum*). These surveys were conducted early in the day when western spiderwort flowers are open and the detectability of the plants was highest. Field staff kept their spirits up through these early mornings, surveying through thick bush and poison ivy, up and down sandy hills and contending with many mosquitoes and hot, humid summer weather.

Throughout July, staff conducted targeted searches for Tiny Cryptantha (*Cryptantha minima*), an Endangered species, for the first time. No target plants were found, however occurrences of slender mouse-ear-cress, low milk-vetch (*Astragalus lotiflorus*) – a provincially rare species – and plains grape-fern were recorded. In August, staff looked for Buffalograss (*Buchloë dactyloides*), also a Threatened species, and continued searches for Smooth Arid Goosefoot.

If you are interested in the Rare Plant Rescue program, please contact Sarah at the program office 306-780-9417, through Nature Saskatchewan's toll-free line (Saskatchewan only) 1-800-667-4668, or by email at rpr@naturesask.ca. ✱



PHOTO BY SARAH VINGE

Slender mouse-ear-cress
(*Transberingia bursifolia* ssp. *virgata*).



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Calling all PlantWatchers!

By DEANNA TROWSDALE-MUTAFOV

PlantWatch Saskatchewan Coordinator

With the year winding down, if you were able to do some PlantWatching this spring, summer or fall, and have recorded any blooming dates for the PlantWatch program, please



remember to submit your data as soon as possible.

You can mail your findings to us at: PlantWatch, Nature Saskatchewan, 206-1860 Lorne St., Regina, SK., S4P 2L7. Or you can fax us at 306-780-9263.

Remember, you can also enter your data online at www.plantwatch.ca. Please let us know if you have submitted any observations on the PlantWatch website, so we can keep track of your data, and enter your name in the prize draw.

Thanks for your participation in the PlantWatch program! All observations to the PlantWatch program are important in furthering our understanding of how plants are responding to a changing climate. *

Membership fees due

Well, it's that time of the year again. For those of you paying by the year, your NPSS membership fees are due.

Renewing your membership is easier than ever! Just go to our online store on our website (www.npss.sk.ca) and pay with any major credit card. It's fast, easy and secure. Of course, if you still want to mail a cheque to us, you can do that, too. You can find a registration form on Page 7.

If you can't remember if you've paid or not, ask us. Or send in your dues and we'll just extend your membership for another year if you've already paid.

Do you want to avoid having to remember to pay altogether? Why not buy a lifetime membership. It's cheaper in the long run and you can pay in instalments. The fee schedule is listed on Page 2.

Thank you to all who supported the NPSS in 2011 with your membership dues and donations of time and money! *

Note: There is a small surcharge added to memberships purchased on our online store to cover internet banking fees.

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