

Yellowhead Flyway Birding Trail Association Inc.

What's flying around....



A Decent Proposal: Connect the Dots

Editorial: Rob Wilson

Note: An expanded version of this editorial, containing additional (expand) information and seven references, has been placed on the YFBTA website (www.yfbta.com).

- As citizens, we have shared responsibilities - some relevant to conservation of the natural world. (see website – expand one).

Shared responsibilities imply planning and managing (stewardship actions). These actions further imply a long-term viewpoint and public participation. Because of human dominance, the natural world can no longer sustain itself – it only continues to exist with the engagement and support of humans (unfortunately, many species have already become extinct due to human actions). Lacking voice, the natural world depends upon humans to be a “voice for nature”.

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Saw-whet Owl near Saltcoats (January: Over-wintering?)



Photo: YFBTA member Ken Trowell

- I suggest that recent changes and developments create opportunities to address, simultaneously, a “handful” of these responsibilities within one framework (see website – reference one).

Adoption of a framework invites public support. Actions taken together (the power of synergy) will accomplish more than individual actions.

These changes and developments are evident in diverse domains:

1. The general public, through the recent federal election, has expressed interest and concern in some relevant areas (see website – expand two and reference two).
2. The Government of Saskatchewan (see website – expand three and references three and four).
3. Non-governmental organizations (see website – expand four).

continued...

- Research (see website – expand five and references six and seven).

I believe that, in Saskatchewan, there is opportunity for a long-term conservation effort. I propose the establishment of one or more wildlife corridors utilizing managed land along a natural water course.

- Such a corridor can be managed and monitored by a team of invited stakeholder representatives. (see website - expand four). Effective management can provide goals and policies that determine required actions, benefiting both human and non-human life-forms (see website – reference eight).

This kind of initiative requires land. Land can be provided by the Government of Saskatchewan. The land along a water course will require managers (eg. the province’s Water Security Agency has developed proposals and policies for management of flooding and mitigation of drought).

The government can strategically select, from among its leased lands (those intended to be sold), parcels that create the “backbone” of an eventual wildlife corridor (the federal Trans-Canada Trail continues to be formed in a manner similar to that suggested in this proposal).

Here are examples of “strategic” lands:

1. along a natural watercourse leading to a river (water management, pollution mitigation)
2. proximity to community (public access)
3. potential site for renewable energy production (wind, solar, hydro, geo-thermal).

With political will to initiate a wildlife corridor and given some strategic acres, a “stage can be set” to form a management organization. Such an agency can begin to assemble a wildlife corridor.

I have provided some “dots” (●) for you to connect ... do you think that this is a decent proposal?

Some readers may want to flock to this youtube video. You will see some “starling sites”.

Google “murmuration” - enjoy

YFBTA member, Morley Maier, wonders if anyone “nose” the species of this moth?



Photo: YFBTA member Laurie Murray

Newsletters for you in 2016? Support for YFBTA in 2016?

YFBTA sends the 2016 Issue 1 newsletter to all 2015 members who have provided us with contact information.

If you are choosing to NOT RENEW or if you have FORGOTTEN to renew (or if your contact information) has changed), this will be the LAST newsletter that you will receive.

YFBTA plans to hire a post-secondary student (a “Summer Program Facilitator) to offer nature programs to organizations in our region (May through August). A focus will be to “connect youth with nature”.

Together, YFBTA’s advocacy is stronger and our voices are louder.

Please consider supporting the work of YFBTA by taking a 2016 membership or by making a special donation to support our 2016 Summer Program Facilitator Initiative.

It seems to me that the natural world is the greatest source of excitement; the greatest source of intellectual interest. It is the greatest source of so much that makes life worth living. (David Attenborough)

Submitted by YFBTA member, Kathy Morrell

About Bald Eagles?

Submitted by Dr. Dale Mierau

The Greek term for Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus eucocephalus*) translates to 'white-headed sea-eagle'. Bald Eagles are fish eaters, which explains why some people assume that Bald Eagles live only in coastal areas.

Saskatchewanians know that a sizable population of Bald Eagles spend the breeding season in north central Saskatchewan, including the Lac La Ronge, Besnard Lake and Churchill River areas. Bald Eagles require open water to feed so they must leave the breeding area in Saskatchewan for warmer places in the late fall. Some Saskatchewan Bald Eagles cross the Rocky Mountains to winter in California's San Joaquin Valley.⁽¹⁾

Bald Eagle pairs do not migrate together but they mate for life and re-unite each spring at the breeding area. The pair uses the same nest for many years unless something happens to one of the pair or the nest is damaged. If a nest becomes unusable, or unsuitable, the pair builds a new nest nearby. Shortly after arriving at the nest, the female deposits two, sometimes three, eggs. The eggs hatch three days apart after an incubation period of thirty-five days.

Active Bald Eagle nests are obvious, even before the hatchlings are visible, because one adult remains at the nest until the eggs hatch. Brooding continues for yet another three weeks until the nestlings have a fully developed thermoregulation system. The tawny, fuzzy heads of hatchlings can be seen above the rim of the nest during the first week in June. Both adults care for the young equally; one adult provides protection while the other provides food. The first to hatch has a much greater chance of survival than its younger sibling due to its larger size and due to preferential feeding. It is my experience that a nestling on Lac La Ronge has a good chance of surviving to fledge if it remains alive after the long weekend in July. Nevertheless, even after the July long weekend, the adults continue to feed the older nestling first.



Photo: Dale Mierau

Female Bald Eagles are 25% larger than the males, a phenomenon known as sexual dimorphism. The obvious difference in size of males and females can be observed when the nestlings are nearly fully grown at only eight weeks of age.

The time that a fledgling leaves the nest is quite variable. Some leave the nest as early as August 1 while others do not leave until the second week in September. If there are two fledglings, the male leaves the nest before a female even if the female is the first to hatch. The adults continue to bring food to the nest for some time even after the fledgling has left the nest. The time at which a fledgling must fend for itself seems fairly constant despite the variability of time to leave the nest. The adults stop bringing food to the nest during the third week of September.

In early October, the adults actively discourage the company of the fledgling and, while it might pester the adults for food, the youngster is no longer welcome at the nest. During this time the adults are often seen hunting together or sitting close to one another near the nest.

Bald Eagles leave the Lac La Ronge area for wintering grounds in early November. The migration south might take six weeks or more depending on the destination.

¹ <http://www2.ucsc.edu/scpbrg/baeamigration.htm>

Dodder Plant

Submitted by Glen Lee

On August 23rd, 2015, 15 members of the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan participated in a field trip to Nature Saskatchewan's Crooked Lake Fen property, located in the Qu'Appelle Valley north of Grenfell. One of the plants we found growing in the fen was a species of Dodder (*Cuscuta*).

This was the second time I have seen Dodder in Saskatchewan. The first time was in early August, 2008, when I found it growing among shrubs on the shore of the Red Deer River, just south of Hudson Bay, SK. There is a very good description of this plant in the book *Rare Vascular Plants of Alberta*. I was able to identify it as Dodder from having read its description in that reference.

Dodder, a member of the Morning Glory family, is a parasitic plant, which does not photosynthesize but instead derives its nutrients and water from a host plant. Upon emerging from the soil as a seedling, time-lapsed photography shows the stalk of the seedling rotating around in a circle, almost like it's sniffing the air. The seedling is searching for a nearby host plant. You can see short videos of this behaviour on *Youtube*.

When a Dodder seedling contacts a host, it will coil itself around the stem of the host plant like a snake does around its prey. Out of Dodder's stems grow *haustoria*, tooth-like appendages which penetrate the host plant and allow Dodder to extract nutrients. Once the Dodder seedling attaches to a host, the base of the seedling and root wither away and die, leaving the Dodder plant completely dependent on its host. If you find Dodder, see if you can find any roots beneath the Dodder plants (you won't find roots).

Because the plant does not photosynthesize, it has no need of leaves. Its leaves have evolved into scales – little bumps along the stem. The stems lack chlorophyll and are typically yellow or orange in colour.

The survival rate of its seedlings is low, therefore Dodder's reproductive strategy is to produce clusters of many flowers (white), and a great deal of seed from its flowers. My field notes from Hudson Bay list the flowers as bell-shaped, 5-lobed, 4 mm in diameter and 5 mm in length. We measured the vines growing to about 1 metre in height on its host plants (Willows).

Wikipedia states there are 100 -170 species of Dodder worldwide, with the greatest species diversity found in subtropical and tropical regions. Dodder can be a serious weed in some areas.



Photo: Glen Lee

Dodder (*Cuscuta*) is found in Saskatchewan on shores and moist sites, and uses shrubs or forbs for its host plants. Dr. Vernon Harms lists 6 species of *Cuscuta* as possibly native to Saskatchewan. In his book *Checklist of the Vascular Plants of Saskatchewan*, Harms lists the *Cuscuta* species (all annual) as uncommon to extremely rare.

Identification of each species is difficult. You need to examine minute flower characteristics. Dr. Harms has produced a one page taxonomic key to identify *Cuscuta* species in Saskatchewan. There were also specimens from Manitou Lake and the South Saskatchewan River Valley, south of Saskatoon. The *Cuscuta* specimens were using Willow, Golden Rod, Meadow Rue, Mint, Water-Horehound, and Stinging Nettle as host plants. It appears herbarium staff had a difficult time in identifying the specimens, as many were initially identified as one species and later renamed as a different species. A couple of the specimens were listed as 'probably' being identified correctly as the species under which the specimen was filed.

A Colorado State University Extension fact sheet lists the following other common names for Dodder: love vine, strangleweed, devil's-guts, goldthread, pull-down, devil's-ringlet, hellbine, hairweed, devil's-hair, and hailweed.

Glen Lee and his wife Maureen are avid wildflower photographers who live in Regina, SK. They have published photographs and descriptions of nearly 600 Saskatchewan wildflowers on their website: saskwildflower.ca. Check it out.



Remembrances of Jim Jowsey

YFBTA member Joan Wilson

Well known naturalist, Jim Jowsey, passed away November 17, 2015. After the passing of his wife, Shirley, in 2014, Jim moved to Aspen Bluffs Care Home in Yorkton, where he passed away after suffering a stroke.

I came to know Jim when he retired to his home town of Saltcoats in 1985. Just after the third edition of his co-authored book "Wildflowers Across the Prairies" was published, with my autographed copy in hand, I set out to find as many of the plants as I could. I often talked with Jim and Shirley about the wildflowers I found.

Jim was a kind and generous man and very giving to our community. There was usually a hint of seriousness and careful consideration in his responses. Colleagues described him as tenacious and persistent in his work. These attributes no doubt contributed to the success of "Wildflowers Across the Prairies". Jim was the biologist while Shirley documented and catalogued information for the book with work contributed by F.R. Vance, J.S. McLean and Frank Switzer. The book is a tremendous companion to many naturalists. It has been a wonderful companion for me. Each time I find myself searching for an elusive wildflower I remember the Jowseys.

Photo: Courtesy Christie's Funeral Home



Pine Grosbeak (male)



Photo: YFBTA member Raymond Lacusta

Letters to the Editor On the death of Jim Jowsey

I see Mr. Jowsey's obituary in yesterday's Regina Leader Post.. He was such a great guy and did lots of interesting stuff during his lifetime. He was so gentle and had all the time in the world for whoever he was talking to. I have a Jowsey figurine, donated to YFBTA to raise money for one of the YFTBA summer students. I have it prominently displayed in my kitchen where I use it for daily inspiration.
Fraser Hunter (Former Nature Sask. Board Member)

I just read the obituary of Jim Jowsey. My sincere condolences to you and all the nature people of Saltcoats area. My wildflower book is always well used and I will continue to think of the great couple who were part of it whenever it is pulled out of my backpack.

Wendy Paquin (Ft. Qu'Appelle Nature Society)

I met Jim Jowsey at a summer meeting of Nature Saskatchewan when I was an early teen. He was very helpful to me, a youth interested in nature. He helped me to put names to plants; some that I knew by different names and others that were new to me. These learning opportunities happened whenever my path crossed Jim's, usually at naturalists' meetings throughout the province. Jim's detailed knowledge will be greatly missed even though some survives in his co-authored publication, *Wildflowers across the Prairies*.

Ron Jensen (Saskatoon Natural History Society)

Harvey Beck's Bench

YFBTA member Carol Bolt

Harvey Beck was born in Yorkton in 1928. His interest in nature as a young boy remained with him throughout his life. Harvey and his life-long friend, Stuart Houston, were the first members of Yorkton's Natural History Society (which eventually morphed into Nature Saskatchewan). Harvey's interest was bugs – Stuart's was birds (Stuart regularly fell from trees, occasionally breaking bones which caused him to remark that had he not been a doctor he would have incurred enormous expense).



Ruth Smith relaxes on Harvey's bench at Saltcoats

Photo by YFBTA member Carol Bolt

Isabelle Priestly showed Harvey how to mount and frame bugs. He was assisted by his mother who was able to provide ether required for the processing. Soon Harvey's bedroom walls were covered with specimens prompting him to ask, when he had friends for a sleep-over, if they minded sharing the room with the bugs (Mrs. Beck was not amused).

Harvey and sisters, Ruth and Norma, attended sports days in Saltcoats. Exploring was a greater attraction than watching ball. Ruth fashioned, from a pillow-case, a pond-dipping net to assist Harvey with "captures" in Anderson Lake.

Harvey became a teacher, spending a year, remembered fondly, at a school near Cumberland House. A local resident was badly mauled while hunting a bear. Harvey was called to action as a first aider as a result of being the owner of the only first aid kit to be found.

Following treatment, the grateful hunter gifted the bear to a horrified Harvey – horrified because he didn't know what to do with it. He resolved his dilemma by secretly burning the carcass.

Following Harvey's death, sister Ruth Smith, with fond reminiscences of shared childhood memories at Saltcoats, determined to donate a bench, in Harvey's memory, to a soon-to-be-extended addition to the Leflay Trail (along the south shore of Anderson Lake in the Saltcoats Regional Park). Currently, the bench is located, temporarily and conveniently, adjacent to the recently re-located playground area.

It is Ruth's request that, once the trail is extended, the bench be located along the trail and affording a good view of Anderson Lake. It is also Ruth's wish that when you encounter the bench you pause, sit, observe and reflect thus contributing to a sharing of Ruth and Harvey's endless love of nature.



The woodpecker might have to go.

If you have internet access, you can, if you wish, receive email messages from YFBTA. You can also receive an electronic copy of the 2016 newsletters upon request.

Internet communication with members is not without glitches. Unless contacted we have no way of knowing if you are receiving electronic messages. If you value the emails and you suspect that you are not receiving them, please contact YFBTA. (see bottom of page 8).

Young Readers' Corner

A Day at Beaver Creek Submitted by Sarah Sinclair (age 7)



Me and my grandma went to Beaver Creek in the fall. There was a lot of wild life at Beaver Creek. We saw chipmunks and chickadees mostly. We fed the chickadees. The chickadees hid in the trees so it took a while for them to come close to me. I had to stay still or the chickadees wouldn't land on my hand. After a

while, one chickadee landed on my hand, picked up a seed and flew away. And then it came back for another seed. The chickadee felt like a tiny claw was grabbing my finger.



Artwork: Submitted by Sarah Sinclair

Cutline: This is a chickadee because not everyone knows what a chickadee is.

Editor's note:

Sarah is the grand-daughter of YFBTA member Kathy Morrell

Egrets Among our Cattle YFBTA member LaVaughn Duxbury

The Cattle Egret, a member of the Heron Family is native to Africa and south Asia but can now be found worldwide. It is usually seen in the southern United States and Central America but has extended its range further north in summer, reaching southern Saskatchewan. Generally, herons are found on or near a water body as their diet consists of fish, amphibians and insects. We find the cattle Egret has been among our herd of cattle, at Heward, for the past few years (since the flood of 2010).

Since 2010 our waters have subsided little and thus the pastures have sloughs for the Egrets to enjoy. The birds walk among the cattle, seemingly unnoticed.

Cattle Egrets have shorter legs and bills than other herons. Their necks are quite long. They, like other herons, fly with the head tucked and with legs straight back. They are mostly white but adopt a yellowish crown during mating. Some sources say their legs are black, others indicate they can be green or pink. I think ours were dark-legged. I didn't see them wading in the water, only strutting on the pasture. I wonder if they ingest insects found within the cattle dung. Some herons feed by standing; waiting for their prey to make the first move. These birds are constantly walking about, pecking much like a chicken. They are enjoyable to watch. Because the white contrasts with the black cattle, they catch my eye.

**Cattle Egret at
Heward,
Saskatchewan**

Photo:
LaVaughn Duxbury



Three reasons to visit YFBTA.COM

1. Expanded version (with references) of “Editorial” of the 2016 Issue 1 (February) newsletter.
2. YFBTA is searching for a post-secondary student to work as a Summer Program Facilitator. One of the fund-raising initiatives is a raffle. Check the website for photos of raffle prizes.
3. YFBTA will be sponsoring a Symposium in Saltcoats, Saturday, April 23. There will be three presentations and a banquet. Presentation topics:

Dragonflies (David Halstead)
 Bird Identification for the Intermediate Birder (Don Weidl)
 Dendrochronology: learning from tree rings (Colin Laroque).

Soon, on its website, YFBTA will be posting biographies of the speakers, newspaper articles with symposium details, a poster and a registration form. See YFBTA.com for latest information, and to submit to “Members Gallery (photos)” and/or “Writers’ Corner (submitted by YFBTA and/or Nature Saskatchewan members)”.

Small doses of Nature Trivia

Hummingbirds - sleep or stress?
 Google “Hummingbirds snoring”

Foxes using magnetism-some interesting research.
 Google “Foxes using magnetism”

A Bird Rarely Sighted in Our YFBTA Region

YFBTA member Don Weidl

Yellow-throated Vireo

Many birders are familiar with the Red-eyed Vireo and the Warbling Vireo, both often heard within urban habitats. The Yellow-throated Vireo is uncommon, but appears to be more common in the last 10 years with observations from Moose Mountain Provincial Park, Souris River, Qu’Appelle Valley and Pipestone Creek valley.

Like the other two species of vireos, the Yellow-throated Vireo is heard more often than seen. However, unlike the dull greenish and gray plumage of the Red-eyed and Warbling Vireos, the Yellow-throated Vireo is identified by its bright yellow breast. Over the last five years I’ve heard and seen the Yellow-throated Vireo at several locations in the Pipestone Creek Valley, south of Broadview and Wapella, within the Qu’Appelle Valley at #9 Hwy and near Tantallon.



Photo: Don Weidl

The Good Spirit Cross Country Ski Club (YFBTA member) thanks Gloria and her brother, Harold, Rathgeber, for donation of deer fat. It is on offer at the club’s bird feeder at the warm-up shelter in Good Spirit Provincial Park.

Memberships/Renewals:

YFBTA
 Box 252
 Saltcoats, SK S0A 3R0

Newsletter Submissions:

Rob Wilson (editor)
 Box 329 Saltcoats, SK.
 S0A 3R0
 Phone (306) 744-8140

yellowheadflywaybirding@gmail.com

rjwilson@sasktel.net

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