

**President's Report 2010**  
**Saskatoon Nature Society**  
**March 18, 2010**

**Introduction**

On behalf of the board of directors, it is my pleasure to report on the activities of the Saskatoon Nature Society in 2009. Before I begin, I want to thank all the people who volunteer their time to keep our society running smoothly. It is remarkable that field trips happen, and membership lists are maintained, and speakers are scheduled, and the Newsletter gets mailed, and all the other things necessary to run our society get done, and get done well, all with no intervention on my part. This is a refreshing change from my day job. I will try to acknowledge the people who do these things, but let me apologize in advance if I should forget someone.

**Membership**

At the end of 2009 there were 355 memberships in the society. Of these about 30% are family memberships so the number of members is 519 as near as we can tell. Of these 64 have taken advantage of multi-year membership with one having paid through 2016! Although these numbers are up 6% from the previous year, membership over the last five years is static or slowly declining. We mainly rely upon word-of-mouth and attendance at monthly meetings or on field trips to attract new members, and perhaps the board needs to consider other forms of advertising the society to potential members. I thank Claire Bullaro for maintaining the membership list and Michael Williams for heading the membership committee.

**Major Events**

There were two major events in 2009 that absorbed much of the board's time. The first was closing the resource centre. The resource centre was established in the 90s in a space sublet from the Saskatchewan Environmental Society on 2nd Ave. in the downtown area. In April, the SES received notice from the building's management that the rent would increase substantially to bring it more in line with rental rates for downtown office space. Although the numbers kept changing, the cost to maintain the resource centre would likely have doubled. As the yearly cost was already \$3,200, such an increase would have been untenable without an increase in membership fees. The board met several times to discuss options and eventually decided to vacate the space. Over the past few years, Donna Bruce has been instrumental in reorganizing and culling the materials stored in the centre and Joan Feather, May Haga, and others joined in that task. So that in September when the remaining materials were moved to a storage locker at the Budget facility near the airport, the operation was completed by the legion of volunteers in just a few hours. As part giving up the resource centre, we also decided to subscribe to a telephone mailbox service so that the SES would not need to handle our phone calls. The storage locker rents for \$1285 per year and the telephone service is \$580 per year for a yearly total of \$1,865 resulting in a savings of \$1,335 per year over the old costs of the centre. As it turned out, the SES also vacated the space sometime later.

The other major event was the decision to host the 2010 spring meeting of Nature Saskatchewan. Since the invitation to host the meet came quite late, we have had to move quickly to establish a committee, find a venue and caterers, plan field trips, and set pricing.

I thank all those who have volunteered to help with the meet; you will be hearing from us in May.

### **Program**

Our program coordinator, Peter Flood, organized another excellent set of speakers on a diverse variety of subjects. I would particularly like to thank him for filling in at the last moment when the speaker in October was ill. Special thanks to Hilda Voth and Lucille Bradatsch for managing the coffee and cookie hour after each meeting and to all the cookie makers for crafting their delectables.

### **Field Trips and Counts**

The field trip committee, chaired by Stan Shadick, organized 60 field trips, ranging from local walks within the city to all day marathons far afield. Two migratory bird counts were organized by Michael Williams and the results from these (and some previous counts) will be available in the very near future. Society members also participated in three local Christmas bird counts organized by Michael Williams and Hilda Noton and a butterfly count.

### **Newsletter**

Leslie Tuchek stepped down as *Newsletter* editor after doing a stellar job for several years. In a moment of insanity, I agreed to be the editor mainly because I had filled in for Leslie for several months and already had an electronic template. I am grateful to Claire Bullaro for maintaining the membership database and printing the address labels, and especially grateful to Bev and Orval Beland who come into the city from Denholm each month to pick up the Newsletters, stuff them in envelopes, and mail them to members.

### **Nature Notes**

Ron Jensen provided the following report.

#### Nature Notes Column Committee Report, 2009

Nature Notes continues to be published in the Saskatoon Sunday Sun with 51 issues in 2009. Sunday Sun publishers, CanWest, pays the society \$ 50.00 for each column that is published. Thus, the Nature Notes columns provide an alternate source of society revenue.

The Nature Notes committee was comprised of: Lucille Bradatsch, Ron Jensen, Anna Leighton, Audrey MacKenzie, Frank Roy and Hilda Voth who work diligently to find interesting column topics and authors who agreed to write a column or two. The committee's efforts were confined to two to three months of hard work to develop the Nature Notes list of columns and recruit authors for each column. Audrey MacKenzie works year round contacting column authors to remind them of their agreed commitment to write a column.

The committee greatly appreciates those authors who annually agree to write one or more columns. Many thanks to all the contributing authors. The committee greatly appreciates the photographers who provide suitable

photographs to accompany that week's column. A special thank you to the two photographers, May Haga and Nick Saunders, who have provided many of the photographs in 2009.

As coordinator, I appreciate the cooperation of the column's Sunday Sun contact Scott Larson for his efforts to provide an interesting space for the column. A society founding member noted the column heading no longer had the society's logo the American Avocet. A discussion with Scott Larson and provision of the feeding avocet as a digital file from previous columns resulted in the return of the American Avocet to the Nature Notes column headline.

Respectfully submitted by Ron Jensen  
Nature Notes Coordinator

I would like to add that Nature Notes is extremely valuable to the society. Not only is it a significant source of revenue, but it provides our best advertising for field trips and other events that bring the society to the attention of potential new members.

### **Conservation**

In June, Stan Shadick and I attended the Stakeholder Information and Discussion Meeting regarding the pre-feasibility phase of the Hydro Power and White-water Park proposal, and we presented our views about this project. We emphasize that the weir creates a de-facto bird and wildlife sanctuary because human activity on the river is restricted in the vicinity. Building a white-water park would likely be to the detriment of the birds that use Goose Island and the area below the weir for nesting or foraging. There is little to report on the likelihood the project will go ahead or even what form it would take since there is as yet no detailed plan. We will continue to monitor the situation in the coming year.

The board continues to be concerned about the rapid development in and around the city and the effect this has on natural areas. We invited two members of the city planning committee to speak to the board on future expansion. From their presentation and the discussion afterwards I have concluded that the most effective way to conserve important natural areas around Saskatoon is for the city to adopt an effective wetlands policy and by collecting reliable information about wildlife and plant life in the natural areas. The society can play a direct role in the latter, and to that end Stan Shadick did a preliminary survey of the northeast swale. We hope to continue such surveys of important local natural areas in the coming year.

Joan Feather participated in two consultations on behalf of the society at the invitation of SEN on the Uranium Development Partnership and Climate Change Legislation. We continue to have contact with the MVA through Jan Shadick.

We made two \$750 donations to Beaver Creek in 2009, ostensibly for winter bird feeding—one in January and one in December. The January contribution was actually a late contribution for 2008. We sent \$500 to the Last Mountain Bird Observatory. In addition, we are members of the Saskatchewan Eco-Network, the Yellowhead Flyway Association and Partner's FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin.

### **Young Naturalists**

The following report is from Greg Fenty

The Young Naturalists is nature-oriented programs and field trips for children aged 5 to 11 years and their families. The goal is to introduce kids to nature and develop a life-long respect and passion for our environment. In 2009 we took part in 15 outings with approximately 300 participants. Special thanks to Marten Stoffel for leading the Great Horned Owl and the Northern Saw-whet Owl banding programs.

Greg Fenty

### **Web Site and Displays**

The following report is from Branimir Gjetvaj.

The Society continues to maintain a web site, with current information about the programs, field trips and events of interest. We are also taking advantage of a feature that allows for on-line donations to the society, managed through a non-profit organization CanadaHelps. SNS will be hosting a Nature Saskatchewan Spring Meet in June of 2010, and we expanded the web site with several new pages that provide program and field trip information for this meeting.

The Display Committee put together a new display set-up which we will be using to promote the society and its activities at various public events in Saskatoon. The new set-up consists of three display panels with messages on the theme of Learn, Enjoy, and Share, and a 6 ft panel designed to attract visitor's attention to the SNS booth. Many thanks to Donna Bruce, Joan Feather, Greg Fenty and Branimir Gjetvaj for updating the display material.

Branimir Gjetvaj

### **Publications**

The publication and distribution of *For the Love of Nature—History of the Saskatoon Nature Society, 1980-2005* by Attila Chanady was completed. All members at the time of publication should have received their complimentary copy.

Also "published" last year was our new society button (available for purchase at monthly meetings). Thanks to Donna Haugen for leading the effort to have them made and Karen Wiebe for the drawing of the avocet.

### **Directors**

I would like to thank the members of the board that are retiring for their diligent efforts and dedication to the society—Donna Haugen, Doug Schmeiser, and Karen Wiebe. May Haga is retiring as treasurer but will remain on the board. Donna Bruce, who has given more to the society in recent years than we had any right to expect, is stepping down as special advisor to concentrate on her role in Nature Saskatchewan.

In closing, I would like to thank everyone for their support and encouragement in my first year as president. When I came to Saskatoon 17 years ago, the Saskatoon Nature Society was the first organization I joined, and it continues to be the one I most enjoy.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Johanson

President, Saskatoon Nature Society 2009-2010