



the HOOTER

| February 2024 |

*A monthly newsletter from the
Peace Parkland Naturalists &
Friends of Saskatoon Island*

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Banner Photo Credit:
Rick Scott,
January 2024

editor's MESSAGE

Greetings from the unreasonably warm north. Oh no, wait, it's now an extremely deep freeze. Wait, never mind, it's balmy again. It was always stressful working construction and checking the forecast to see if the roads would hold. I can only imagine what things are like this year.

But enough about Rick's illustrious career as the world's most softspoken man on any given construction site. This newsletter is about nature: an appreciation of and advocacy for, all the little pieces that make up the world. Or, at least that's what I'm going with. No real instruction manual on this so feel free to write to me if you have the finer details on what a person should write about in the Editor's Message.

An exciting bit of gossip for the community: Inside Education has hired an Education Programs Coordinator for the Grande Prairie area to delivery K-12 programs on wetland and forest education. Very exciting to get the kids out on the land and learning about these ecosystems.

How do I always know these things? I have an extensive environmental network which allows me to keep my finger on the pulse of the community. There's that, and also my partner came home and told me she got hired.

PPN Badge: Champion Networker
(We give badges out, right?)

Rick Murray
Editor



Carol Smiegielski | January 2024

what's NEW?

Next Meeting

On February 12th, join City of Grande Prairie staff Amy Clarkson and Kase DeVries for a presentation and discussion about the City's naturalization project and other environmental topics. The meeting is in the Library large meeting room at 7:00 p.m.

Grande Prairie Environmental Network

The next GPEN meeting will be February 7th with a speaker about industrial recycling/converting waste (biosolids, chem waste, lime, slurries, and soil mixtures). Stay tuned to the [GPEN facebook page](#) for more details.

Squirrel!

Join Dr. Jessica Haines on February 8 as part of the Nature Alberta Speaker Series discussing all things squirrels: the various types, distribution, adaptations, and where one can download a free squirrel guide ([registration required](#)).

Pressure, Pushing Down on Me

Join Dr. Richard Schneider on February 13th through the [Alberta Native Plant Council](#) webinar series as he discusses ongoing threats to Alberta's Native Plant Communities ([registration required](#)).

Loon!

Join Kim Blomme on February 15 as part of the Nature Alberta Speaker Series discussing all things loons: the various types and the citizen science groups studying conservation efforts ([registration required](#)).

Native Plant Opportunities

Interested in getting a native plant project off the ground? [Small project grants](#) for \$1,000 are available from the Alberta Native Plant Council. Be sure to submit by February 29!



Rick Scott | January 2024

Special Announcement

If you hadn't heard already, it's now official - see the social media release from Nature Alberta.

We're excited to share a momentous announcement: On January 23, all the Kleskun lands, excluding the Natural Area quarter, have officially been designated a Provincial Park!

Kleskun Hills Provincial Park is located about 30 kilometers east of Grande Prairie and protects over 1,000 hectares of ecologically rare and sensitive grassland ecosystems that are endemic to the geographically constrained Peace River Parkland Natural Subregion, which covers only 0.5% of the province.

You can read more about this special northern area of Peace Parkland and badlands on the Alberta Parks website [here](#).



Photo Credit: Nick Carter



Rick Scott | January 2024

what's NEW?

Won't Someone Please Think About the Bugs!?

Join the [Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute](#) on February 22 for this webinar on how aquatic invertebrates are often overlooked as part of aquatic ecosystems and their valuable insights into how they contribute to the health and intactness of our waters ([registration required](#)).

Save the Dates!

As usual, one weekend in May is always busy so make sure to save the dates:

- May 25 & 26—Come out to the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation got the annual [Song-bird Festival and Bird Run/Walk \(5k/10k\)](#). Fun for the whole family!
- May 25 & 26—Alberta Native Plant Council May Plant Count—contact [Rick](#) to join the group collecting flowering plant data as part of this 30+ year citizen science project. Beginners welcome!

Alberta Community Bat Program

Join this webinar February 29 put on by the County of Grande Prairie No.1 in association with the [Alberta Community Bat Program](#) to learn more about the management and conservation of Alberta's farmland bats and how you can support populations in your backyard ([registration required](#)).

Wetland Creativity Flowing

Stay tuned for the Community Wetland Forum webinar series in February and March showcasing the work of artists who work to connect people and wetlands via their work (Creativity for the wetlands: Arts connecting people and wetlands). [Registration required](#).



Carol Smiegielski | January 2024

what's NEW?

Below Ground—Soil Health Seminar

Join the [Peace Region Living Lab](#) for this free seminar on February 22 discussing soil related topics including stressors, soil types, compaction challenges, the power of plants ([registration required](#)).

Fire & Water Forum

Wildfires are a part of our landscape and can have devastating effects communities. How can watershed/land use management help address these risks? Join the [Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance](#) for this free, forum in Grande Prairie on February 28th to discuss all things watershed and fire. ([registration required](#))

Wetland Technical Presentations

Many technical presentations coming up regarding wetlands!

- February 15—Methylmercury from peatland permafrost thaw; let's learn more about this ([register here](#)).
- February 15—Sphagnum peatlands and landscape stressors ([register here](#))
- March 13—Beavers, and their role with watershed resiliency and drought ([register here](#))

Grimshaw's Rockin' Aquifer

Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance is at it again! Join them on March 15th at the Grimshaw Multiplex to learn more about Grimshaw's unique gravel aquifer, including an introduction to the water resource, a recap of the recently completed water budget, and ongoing efforts to safeguard this resource ([registration required](#)).



Rick Murray | January 2024

Sightings

Rick Scott

January 5, 2024—Saskatoon Lake—northern harrier, moose

Rick Murray

February 3, 2024 - Wapiti Nordic Ski Club - moose

Carol Smiegielski

January 30, 2024 - white-winged crossbills, flying squirrel outside of GP.

Christmas Bird Counts

Our local 35th CBCs took place on December 16/17. Grande Prairie recorded our first ever mallards and a widgeon, while Beaverlodge got a robin and a great grey owl. The lack of snow meant that each count included a rough-legged hawk but number of redpolls and pine grosbeaks were fairly low. Overall, the GP count had an average number of species and Beaverlodge was just above.

	Grande Prairie	Beaverlodge	Dawson Creek
Widgeon	1		
Mallard	50		
Northern Goshawk			1
Sharp-shinned Hawk			
Golden Eagle			
Bald Eagle	34	8	2
Northern Harrier			
Rough-legged Hawk	1	1	
Peregrine			
Gyr Falcon			
Merlin	2		
Ruffed Grouse	1	1	8
Sharp-tailed Grouse			18
Gray Partridge			
Rock Pigeon	947	502	1105

Sightings

	Grande Prairie	Beaver- lodge	Dawson Creek
Eurasian Collard Dove	2	7	3
Great Horned Owl			3
Snowy Owl			
Short-eared Owl			
Northern Saw-whet Owl			2
Northern Hawk Owl		1	
Northern Pigmy Owl			2
Barred Owl	1		
Great Grey Owl		1	
Downy Woodpecker	2	7	5
Hairy Woodpecker	3	14	6
Black-backed Woodpecker			
Three-toed Woodpecker	1	2	1
Pileated Woodpecker			1
Northern Flicker			
Northern Shrike		1	1
Horned Lark			1
Blue Jay	57	52	23
Canada Jay	10	6	12
Steller's Jay			
Black-billed Magpie	353	172	27
Common Raven	601	199	211
American Crow	97	1	4
Black-capped Chickadee	135	169	145
Boreal Chickadee	4	2	2
White-breasted Nuthatch	7	11	6
Red-breasted Nuthatch	3	3	2
Brown Creeper			
Golden-crowned Kinglet			

Sightings

	Grande Prairie	Beaver-lodge	Dawson Creek
American Robin		1	1
Bohemian Waxwing	855	182	80
Cedar Waxwing			
European Starling	64	41	49
Snow Bunting			
Lapland Longspur			
Dark-eyed Junco			
Song Sparrow			
Tree Sparrow			
White-throated sparrow			
Red-winged Blackbird			
Common Grackle			
Purple Finch			
House Finch			
Pine Grosbeak	9	38	72
Red Crossbill		8	
White-winged Crossbill			
Pine Siskin			
Common Redpoll	8	237	41
Hoary Redpoll			
Evening Grosbeak	16	35	3
House Sparrow	810	136	1697
Total Species	27	28	31
Total Individuals	3786	1838	3683