



Our Mission -

"TO ENSURE THE PRESERVATION OF THE CHARACTER AND BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY OF WAGNER NATURAL AREA FOR EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND RESEARCH PURPOSES."

Friends of the Fen

WAGNER NATURAL AREA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



We'll get back to field trips when it's safe for all!

Upcoming events:

Spring Clean-up

**Saturday May 8, 10:00 a.m.–
2:00 p.m.**

Meet in Wagner parking lot. Help us tidy up after a messy winter. Pick-up sticks and bags provided. Bring your rubber boots and gloves and dress for the weather. COVID-friendly physical-distancing will be followed.

Snacks and water available!
Register info@wagnerfen.ca .

2021 Activities

The pandemic is still affecting our ability to lead field trips or host gatherings. Stay tuned!

May Species Counts planned for birds (Sat. May 29–Dave Ealey at 6, 8 and 10 a.m.) and for plants (Sun. May 30–Patsy Cotterill). Results in newsletter.

Orchid Walk–June 13–anticipated peak for Yellow Lady's-Slipper. Walk at your own time.

Check website for work bees.

Visit our website:

www.wagnerfen.ca

for more information on upcoming events at Wagner Natural Area.

All content by Dave Ealey unless otherwise acknowledged.

Governance

Annual General Meeting On-line!

Another first for Wagner Natural Area Society is the use of the Zoom app to conduct the AGM for 2021 on March 27. The annual report, highlights and volunteer hours were presented and are included below.

We elected three new members to the WNAS Board for the terms that expire in 2024: Chris Saunders, Melissa Chisholm, and Cheryl Johnson. Another recent addition to our Board is Morgan Higginson, an Appointed Director and our liaison with Nature Conservancy of Canada. You'll get to know more about these individuals in subsequent newsletters. Welcome to the Board!

2020 Annual Report Wagner Natural Area Society

Dave Ealey, President

I'll refrain from quoting Dickens in my assessment of 2020...there have been far too many who have invoked Charles' spirit in trying to put into words what a year with the novel COVID virus has done, or perhaps I should say undone.

But before I go there, I should note that our year started off with great promise—a January Board meeting after a busy 2019, the anticipation of a wetland assessment led by Laurie Hamilton of Zanshin Environmental under provincial guidelines to document the environmental values of the Wagner wetland complex, further anticipation of funding from Parkland County for a project to consolidate much of the research completed on the natural area (funding confirmed on Feb. 5), and a group of eager Board members ready for the year.

In February we said goodbye to a friend, Leota Cummins, a former Board member and a keen photographer and plant enthusiast. I was honoured to speak at Leota's memorial on behalf of Wagner Natural Area Society—Leota's daughter had informed us that donating to WNAS was part of the legacy she wanted to give.

We held our next meeting at the end of February and hoped to still get our AGM in March under the wire of increasing restrictions due to this new thing called COVID-19. Not to be!

Alberta Parks labeled WNA as temporarily closed on Google Maps: they even locked the bathrooms, under their COVID protocol. As everybody's understanding of what to do during a pandemic evolved, we eventually figured out a way to do some activities on the natural area in a COVID-safe way. We held clean-ups, weed pulls, wire roll-ups. Before the second wave, we even held a "drive-in" style AGM in the Percy Page Centre parking lot!

Support us!



The **Wagner Natural Area Society** welcomes new supporters, volunteers, and all people interested in natural history and the preservation of the ecological integrity of this delightful natural area.

VOLUNTEERS / MEMBERS

People of all talents and interests are desired and welcomed to become more closely involved with the Natural Area and the Society.

Email: info@wagnerfen.ca

DONATIONS

All donations help maintain the integrity of the Natural Area and its surroundings, provide education material, enhance visitor's experiences, and support on-going research studies and surveys.

Please see page 6 for the donation/volunteer form.

With the adoption of Zoom meetings, thanks to Ben Rostron's leadership, we returned to conducting our Board business meetings, which helped us work toward completion of the wetland assessment, the research consolidation project and in our efforts to challenge the Acheson Area Structure Plan (ASP). On the latter activity, we were able to voice our concerns at the public hearing held on December 8 [reported in detail in the September–December newsletter] and will be following further developments on the ASP in the coming months.

While we didn't have our beloved Orchid Walk or other field tours with the public in 2020, we did have a lot of use of the natural area once we were able to get control of the biffies back from Parks. We hope to get back to our usual activities some time in 2021 and have face-to-face gatherings, when we can all enjoy our favourite special area together.

Highlights and Activities 2020 for Wagner Natural Area Society

Jan. 21–board mtg
 Feb. 25–board mtg
 Feb. 20–display at Tri-Region Info Fair
 Feb. 22–Leota Cummins' memorial
 May 24–spring clean-up
 May 30–31–May species count (birds)(plants)
 June 20–Pale Yellow Iris weed pull, Morgan Creek and wire roll-up
 June 26–Wetland assessment field trip
 July 27–Pale Yellow Iris weed pull, Morgan Creek
 Aug. 17–Pale Yellow Iris weed pull, Morgan Creek
 Sept. 19–barbed wire roll-up, NCC lands
 Sept. 26–AGM, Percy Page Centre “drive-in style”
 Oct. 13–board mtg
 Oct. 17–fall clean-up
 Nov. 6–gravel on trail
 Dec. 1–board mtg

Volunteer Hours by Wagner Natural Area Society

- Society meetings (incl. AGM)– 195 person-hours
 - *Admin./governance - 195 person-hours*
 - Site Management
 - Clean-ups and monthly monitors– 300 person-hours
 - Weed clearing and wire roll-ups– 100 person-hours
 - Gravel on trail– 36 person-hours
 - *Site Management - 436 person-hours*
 - Research–
 - nest boxes surveillance and maintenance – 15 person-hours
 - May Species counts– 50 person-hours
 - Wetland assessment– 400 person-hours
 - Parkland Cty grant research consolidation 195 person-hours
 - *Research - 660 person-hours*
 - Public Education and Outreach
 - Talks/Booths– 5 person-hours
 - Information Kiosk– 20 person-hours
 - Website and e-newsletter– 60 person-hours
 - *Public Outreach - 85 person-hours*
- Total** 1376 person-hours

Recognizing Board members who have left the Board.

Katelyn Ceh served for a short time on our Board as an Appointed Director, and as a liaison with Nature Conservancy of Canada. Contributing to our meetings and sharing her expertise about managing conservation areas were valued by all on the Board, but Katelyn's talent as a Pale Yellow Iris extractor is inspiring!



Irl Miller has served as a Vice President, President, Past President or a Director during more than a couple decades for the Wagner Natural Area Society. An educator by profession, Irl has the knack of captivating young and old when leading field trips, which we hope he'll have more time to do once Covid lets us get back to guiding visitors.

We'll miss his sage advice at our Board meetings, but will continue to seek his input on the gnarly issues when we're dealing with Parkland County or the provincial government. Another role that we hope continues is his liaison with the Orchid Society of Alberta, a group of plant enthusiasts who have a soft spot in their heart for Wagner Natural Area.

Derek Johnson has been associated with Wagner Natural Area Society since its inception in 1983. One of our past Presidents, Derek's main role on and off the Board has been as the Science Director. Derek's guidance and oversight of the vegetation community inventory projects, which we contracted from professional environmental researchers, have been instrumental in ensuring Wagner's unique biodiversity is properly documented. Consequently, WNAS can use factual evidence to make its case when challenged to prove its "specialness."

Periodic monitoring of plant community plots by Derek has ensured we are aware of changes over time. His regular measurements of the conifer saplings planted by Junior Forest Wardens in naturalization projects on some of Wagner's former farm fields reveal his nurturing side.



One duty Derek will not lament passing on to the next Science Director is bureaucratic management of requests to conduct research on Wagner Natural Area. Under his strict review, and through negotiation with Alberta Parks officials, Derek's done his

bit to discourage inappropriate or doubtful research proposals; yet he's also been supremely helpful guiding serious researchers on site and species selection.

Spring Has Sprung—the Grass Is Riz, I Wonder Where the Birdies Is?

Well, at least some of them are making their way back to the Wagner Natural Area. On a pre-cleanup scouting trip on April 25th, I observed chickadees and ravens occupying their usual haunts. A solitary purple finch sang its heart out near the south fens, and a dark-eyed junco hugged the low branches along the Marl Pond Trail, but these birds may still be migrating. The American crows are back and setting up shop, as are the American robins, calling back and forth in territorial challenges. The tree swallows had not yet returned. Two raptor species seen, red-tailed hawk and northern harrier, may be checking out nesting sites.

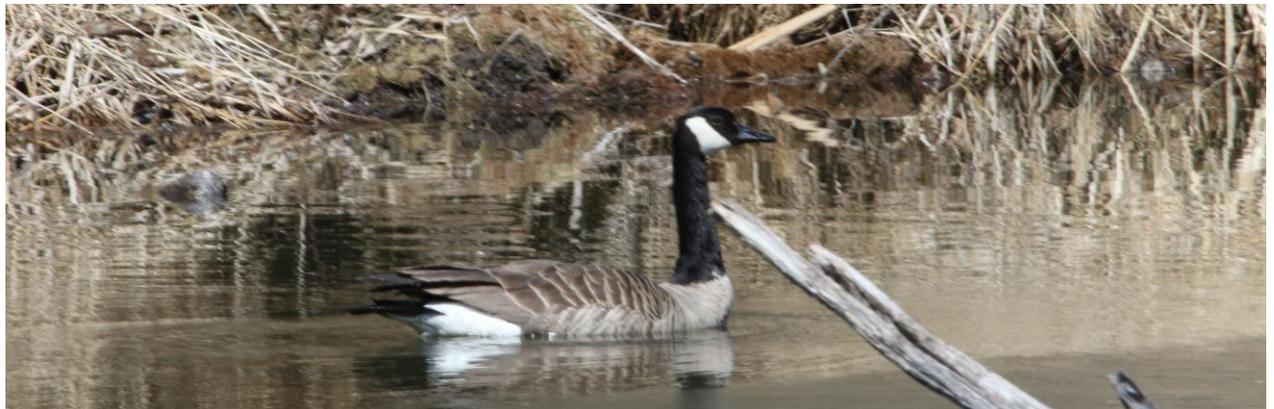
Despite the still mostly frozen marl ponds and beaver ponds, the waterfowl are itching to start their nests as pairs. Much of Wagner Natural Area is heavily forested and the ponds are small and shallow, so it's likely the ducks and Canada geese observed will only nest and then try to lead their young to more suitable rearing waters like Big Lake. The geese are prodigious walkers and can take their goslings many miles to suitable habitat and even mallards can lead their young more than a mile on foot. They'll need to watch out for the vehicle traffic with Wagner stuck between two highways and to watch out for the harriers and hawks. Some of them should make it, as seen by the recent reports of healthy populations of many waterfowl across North America.



Mallards and Canada geese paired up on marl ponds as water begins opening up.



This goose is one of a pair swimming at the edge of ice cover in an old beaver pond.



MEMBERSHIP --- WAGNER NATURAL AREA SOCIETY

Support / Donate / Volunteer

For information about Wagner Natural Area and the Society, and about field trips and other activities organized from time to time for the benefit of all friends of Wagner, go to www.wagnerfen.ca.

Wagner Natural Area Society is a Registered Charity. Donations to the Society will help maintain this very special area. Donations of \$20 or more will be receipted for Income Tax purposes.
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The Society's annual fee is \$10 for Supporters and \$15 for Voting Members. The Society's fiscal year is January 1 to December 31.

Annual fee (Supporter \$10/Voting \$15): \$ _____

Donation: \$ _____

TOTAL: \$ _____

May the Society CONTACT you by: EMAIL: Yes / No

PHONE: Yes / No

Email address: _____

Phone: _____

If you can VOLUNTEER to help the Society with maintenance of the Natural Area (circle): Yes

Name(s): _____

Mailing Address: _____

Mail this form with cheque/money order, payable to Wagner Natural Area Society, to:

Treasurer, Wagner Natural Area Society,
30531-118 Ave., Acheson, AB T7X 6M5

Site Management:



Parks staff leveled our frost-heaved boardwalk in early April—should help keep visitors on their feet.



Science Director Derek musing on how barbed wire rolling was added to his job description.

A letter from the WNAS President: Dave Ealey

Following the Annual General Meeting, the Board met to elect executive members to run the business of the organization. I am pleased they decided to extend my term as President for an additional year, which gives me time to complete some projects and encourage new members to get involved in protecting against challenges, managing for visitors and sharing stories about our unique and precious site. I look forward to seeing you on the trail!