



OUR MISSION

"To ensure the preservation of the character and biological biodiversity of Wagner Natural Area for Educational, Scientific and Research purposes."

Friends of the Fen



The wood lily is found deep in the natural area, growing in moist soil along ponds. Swallowtail butterflies and the occasional hummingbird pollinate this large native lily.

Photo courtesy of: Zen Hanrahan

WAGNER NATURAL AREA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2025 WEED PULLS

When: July 19-20

August 9-10

Where: Meet at WNA parking lot

Who: Volunteers interested in aiding WNA

What: Pulling weeds and tree management

Gloves/boots suggested. Dress for the weather.

Training, tools, snacks and water provided.

RSVP by sending an email to
info@wagnerfen.ca

CASINO VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Our next casino will need 25 volunteers...are you able to help? All training provided; a free meal included!

When: Friday/Saturday, August 15/16.

Where: Century Casino St. Albert--24 Boudreau Rd

See article; May 2025 newsletter for more details.

To volunteer or ask questions, please email David Fielder, treasurer@wagnerfen.ca

Summer Student 2025

By Zen Hanrahan

Hi everybody! My name is Zen, and I am an Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Biology student at the U of A. I'm very excited to be a part of the WNA team as this year's Environmental Project Specialist. I'll be expanding on the work done last year, collecting more videos and photos of wildlife to share here and on our YouTube channel, as well as creating some educational videos and materials for elementary students.

My brother and I both briefly grew up in Nagoya, Japan, before our family moved back home to Canada. We've been living in Edmonton ever since and are lucky to have a lake lot just south of St. Paul. It's a wonderful, quiet lake, too shallow for sport fish or big boats. All that combined makes it a great place for birds. The Alberta Government recognized its significance and turned many of the islands within the lake into bird sanctuaries. Pelicans, grebes, loons, various sandpipers and gulls are common sights from the shore or aboard a kayak. When I'm not floating at the lake during my time off, I usually spend time with friends in the city, or if we can coordinate it, out in the mountains, climbing to the top.



Photo courtesy of: Zen Hanrahan

I've got a bunch of projects on the go out here. My main project involves producing educational videos for grades one, two, and three, where I'll be focusing on how environments can change, life cycles of various critters, and the food chains found at Wagner. In addition to the videos, I'll be making worksheets and activities that pair nicely with the videos so they can be used in the classroom with ease. Another project I've got is the wildlife camera project. Some of you may remember the previous year's summer student, Isabela, and the wonderful videos she

captured of moose (and her calves!), deer with irregular antlers, coyotes, and a whole bunch of other wildlife. Fingers crossed that I capture videos of the same calibre—time will tell.

I've already had a great time here at Wagner Natural Area exploring the fens, forests, and fields, meeting a bunch of people and developing my environmental outreach skills with things like this newsletter and my videos. I've learned an incredible amount about Alberta's flora and fauna in these two short months and am eager to learn more in the latter half of my term here.

Support Us!



Pink Wintergreen
(*Pyrola asarifolia*)

Photo courtesy of:
Zen Hanrahan

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 educational material, enhance visitor experiences, and support ongoing research studies and surveys.

Visit our website for donation/member form.

Butterflies and Moths along the Marl Pond Trail

By Zen Hanrahan

Wagner has an incredible diversity of arthropods, which includes the floaty butterflies and moths spread throughout the natural area. About a dozen species can be commonly seen along the trail. Central field is a good spot to find a few like the silvery blue (*Glaucopsyche iygdamus*), the common ringlet (genus *Coenonympha*), and the northern crescent (*Phyciodes cocyta*) among others.



Left: Silvery blue (*Glaucopsyche iygdamus*)
Right: Northern crescent (*Phyciodes cocyta*)

Photo courtesy of: Zen Hanrahan

Several caterpillars can be found along the trail as well. Most notably, the caterpillar of the police-car moth (*Gnophaela vermiculata*). It has a bright red head with blue and yellow spots along the length of its black body. They solely feed on lungwort, and if you find a good patch, there'll be dozens of these brightly coloured caterpillars scattered about.

We recently found this interesting grey, white and black caterpillar. By using online tools, we are fairly confident that it is a type of tussock moth (genus *Dasychira*) but aren't sure of the species.



Tussock moth caterpillar
(genus *Dasychira*) Photo

Snapping pics of caterpillars is much easier than getting pictures of butterflies, and catching caterpillars is a walk in the park compared to snagging a butterfly. I've only gone butterfly catching once. It was at my grandfather's place just outside of Dinosaur Park in Patricia. My brother and I were very excited to use our newly acquired butterfly nets, and upon catching our very first butterfly, it was promptly killed by my gardening grandpa as it was a cabbage butterfly (*Pieris rapae*), a common pest of cabbage, broccoli, and kale. When I told John Acorn this story, he laughed, then told me a

cool trick to tell apart the two common white butterfly species in Alberta, the cabbage butterfly and the mustard white (*Pieris oleracea*). Long ago, through agricultural trade between Europe and North America, the cabbage butterfly was introduced to the continent.

It spread across the landscape and competed with our native white butterfly, the mustard white. Eventually, it outcompeted the

mustard white, restricting the latter to the forest. So, if you see a white butterfly in the open, it's likely the cabbage white, and if it's in a wooded area, it's most likely the mustard white. Although the best way to tell is to take a close look at the wings.

Prominent black spots and black wing tips suggest cabbage white butterflies, and the lack of black accents suggests mustard white butterflies.



Cabbage white (*Pieris rapae*) Photo
courtesy of: Trisha Snider



Mustard white (*Pieris oleracea*) Photo
courtesy of: Flickr

Visitors of WNA

By Zen Hanrahan

Several groups have visited Wagner in the past month. Vertex Resource Group came by twice, once in late May and then again in early June, to run a wetland assessment training course and bryophyte (mosses, liverworts, and hornworts) identification course. I had the pleasure of attending both courses and got to peer into the world of environmental consulting. I met some wonderful people at Vertex and learned a lot about what goes into assessing an area for approving infrastructure projects and about bryophyte groups, structures, identifying features, and where to find different kinds.



Bryophyte identification booklet handed out
Photo courtesy of: Zen Hanrahan

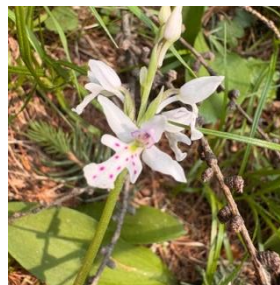
Later in the week, we had some Alberta Parks workers take a slow, meditative walk around the Marl Pond Trail, focusing on mental health and wellbeing. It was nice to join them and be reminded of the serenity of Wagner Natural Area and to take in what the trail itself had to offer, rather than looking for

plants to trim back or being distracted by the unique bird sound that I needed to identify at this very moment on the Merlin app.



Vertex Group, after completing their wetland assessment training course
Photo courtesy of: Zen Hanrahan

The Wild Rose Ramblers paid Wagner a visit in mid-June to see what we had to offer and chat along the way. I joined them for their walk and spoke to many of them about the wildflowers found here and listened to what they shared about other natural areas and what can be found on their properties. One visitor showed me a video of a cougar and her three cubs!



Left: Round leaved orchid Right: Yellow lady's slipper
Photo courtesy of: Zen Hanrahan

We hosted our Father's Day Orchid Walk on June 15th and had quite the turnout. There were three time slots, and each had about 20-30 people show up. Although the charismatic yellow lady's slipper

(*Cypripedium parviflorum*) had started blooming early, there were still many along the trail to show off. In addition, the round leaved orchid (*Galearis rotundifolia*) could be found along the trail in several large patches. There were many other wildflowers to show off alongside the orchids every step of the trail.

Manitoba Maple Management

By Zen Hanrahan

The Manitoba maple is a common tree in Edmonton and the surrounding area. It acts as a shade tree and an ornamental tree scattered throughout parks, the river valley and along some boulevards. As you can guess from the name, it is native to the southern portion of Manitoba as well as Saskatchewan and in small pockets along Alberta's border.



Manitoba maple leaves
Photo courtesy of: Brian Lacey

Just at the tail end of the month, we had 65 grade 6 students from George H. Primeau Middle School out in Morinville visit Wagner for a field trip! Unfortunately, we were maintaining the natural area while they were present, so we were unable to give them a tour, but exciting nonetheless to have youth engage with WNA.

There's nothing inherently wrong with the Manitoba maple; it provides food through its seeds and makes for a good city tree, but here at Wagner Natural Area, we foster a landscape devoted to the native species found in this specific area. When there's a choice of having a stand of Manitoba maples or the native tree species, we always choose the native tree species. For this reason, we have developed a management program that deals with the spread of these trees within the natural area.

The Manitoba maple is a tricky tree to tame. Small saplings we pull, young trees we cut the roots and remove, and large trees we cut down, but these methods don't eliminate their spread and presence in the natural area. It has two methods of dispersal: through its airborne samaras (seeds) and sprouting new growth from roots and stumps. Preventing the trees from reaching maturity by extracting them is an effective tool for reducing the number of seeds produced and dispersed, but the persistence of the roots and stumps allows for new shoots to emerge and grow. To hopefully solve this, we are currently exploring

girdling, the removal of a ring of bark to prevent the movement of nutrients. This treatment, in theory, will kill the roots and the stem over a longer period—months to years—depending on the tree's stored nutrients. Girdling, as well as the removal of seeds from the branches, seems to be the best option for handling the Manitoba maple.

Having a good attack strategy is pointless if you don't know where to implement it. We have a general idea of where the trees are and where the seeds are coming from, but I want to create a map of all the mature female trees within and along our borders so we can focus our efforts. We have a preliminary map of plotted points on Google Maps of some mature female trees, but I'd like to use QGIS to make a more in-depth map that visually depicts the diameter at breast height, which allows for an approximation of age, and the treatment it has received, whether that be none, cut, or girdled. Additionally, with a map and the predominant winds, we can predict where the samaras would land and focus our sapling-pulling efforts in that area.



Girdled Manitoba maple tree
Photo courtesy of: Zen Hanrahan



Preliminary map of Manitoba Maples
Photo courtesy of: Zen Hanrahan