

*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

# 2019

# Year in Review



We do many things every year to help conserve Wagner Natural Area for the future.

Here's a brief photo essay to show what happened in 2019.

# PUBLIC EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

We organize, lead, present, and support activities that help to engage with our members, visitors, students, Parkland county residents, Capital Region residents, neighbours, businesses, elected officials, government staff, environmental and natural area organizations, and regional naturalists.

In 2019, we conducted field tours on orchids, birds, flowering plants; collaborated with other groups to hold events about birds, bats and amphibians; prepared content for our regular newsletter and website, and continued to attend local information fairs with displays about Wagner Natural Area.



Clockwise from top left: display at Tri-Municipal Information Fair; attended Migratory Bird Day event at Big Lake; a surprisingly late toad tadpole seen on a late summer field trip; display on groundwater research conducted at the Wagner natural area presented to North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance groundwater forum; kiosk signs promote Wagner events; and night-time photo of amphibian tour participants watching a

moth sheet to see what prey are available in late August. **Bottom left:** three generations of Wagner visitors invite WNAS president, who just happened to pass by, to take their picture and chat a bit.

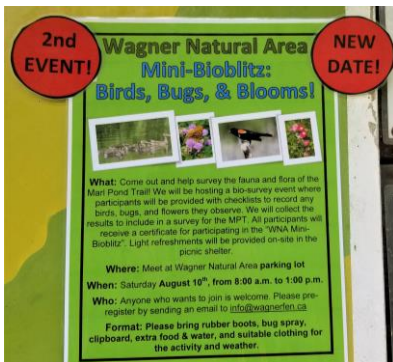
# SITE MANAGEMENT

**Photos in sequence:** summer student Bob preparing to haul long-abandoned metal debris from natural area during spring clean-up; documenting area of significant blow-down—luckily not near trail; a “boot blow-out” from a weed pull event!!; new sign reminding visitors about rules for natural area protection; a flock of rampaging Pale Yellow Iris before being trimmed and an iris close-up; a friendly band of weed baggers; documenting rash vehicle behaviour near the parking lot; temporary lumber trail for the wettest year in nearly 40 years; and fall clean-up day meant clearing out lumber once the Marl Pond Trail was finally dry.



# RESEARCH

**Photos in sequence:** Summer student Bob inspects ecosite on south side of Wagner Natural Area to assess naturalization of former farm field; Dave pacing off transect for browsed shrubs and ungulate pellets; Tree Swallow nestlings before banding, Villeneuve field—but birds abandon nests at Atim field, likely due to a cold spring; first year for bioblitz—learned how to organize citizen science activity along Marl Pond Trail; Ruby-crowned Kinglet is familiar songbird on May Species Counts at Wagner (photo from banding station in NE Edmonton); European Skipper(to confirm); Roesel’s Katydid (*Roeseliana roeselii*)—subject of study by MacEwan University student and professor; three-beetle day for our summer student—potential for further bio-blitzes to ID these Wagner residents; Pig’s Knuckle fungus—one of our more bizarre mushrooms; and an orb-weaving spider—perhaps to be identified following comparison with specimens collected by Robin Leech that are deposited in the E.H. Strickland Entomological Museum at U. of Alberta. **At our November Open House, we discussed a project for 2020 to consolidate data from biodiversity and other research so we can share with Wagner visitors.**



In lieu of a President's Message, I include the following story about a lost dog at Wagner Natural Area. As I was completing the Annual Review photo essay and getting the newsletter ready for distribution, the story of a missing dog was unfolding. On January 4<sup>th</sup>, as I returned from doing the Wabamun Christmas Bird Count, I found a sign (see pic) on the Wagner gate and planned to follow up with the owner in the following week. Carolyn's story arrived during the week and answered my questions.



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### **A Great Ending!**

**By Carolyn VanderVeen, Osborne Acres**

*On Christmas Eve day the Great Dane, Rune, escaped from her humans while walking in Wagner Natural Area and disappeared into the forest ...*

*A two-week extensive search was coordinated by her owners, Kirk and Sierra, via posters, Facebook, Parkland County, tracking dogs, and vigilant drives along the roadways. The residents of Osborne Acres were all on the alert, walking through our properties, looking for tracks, and searching the Wagner lands. It was truly a community effort, keeping in touch via e-mail.*

*Sightings had been reported from time to time but Rune remained elusive.*

*On the afternoon of Monday, January 6, 2020, almost two weeks after the fateful day, my husband, Henry, and I decided to go for a Wagner/Bush Walk with Skeena, our Akita.*

*It was Skeena who found Rune.*



*It was surreal. At first Henry thought it was a deer. We stood very still and very quiet. So did Rune. I began talking to her softly, saying her name, coaxing her. Thankfully she had the good sense not to resist capture. An improvised leash was made out of my boot laces and we made our way home. She was incredibly "unscathed", with most damage coming from the dog coat which had rubbed her upper forelegs raw. They were scabbed over and skinless. Apparently, Rune had been 120 pounds before she got lost. Now we figured she was about 80 pounds. Her ribs and hip bones jutted out horribly.*

Picture of author with Rune and Skeena.

*She was reunited shortly after with a very happy and tearful owner, Sierra. It was an incredibly emotional moment and an answer from above to many prayers.*

*Sierra sent this message a short time later:*

*“So, we just got back from the vet, she lost between 45-50 pounds. The vet says her vitals are good and she’s a bit dehydrated but other than that she should be okay. My mom has tomorrow off so she said she will be at home with her all day to watch her. We are just so happy to have her back and safe. I don’t think I have ever cried that hard 😊 she also gave us some cream for her scabs and paws and some eye drops and some painkillers to help ease her. I cannot thank you guys enough for finding her and bringing her home for us.”*



*Skeena, Rune’s owner and Rune.*

*It is quite impressive that Rune survived that long in the wilderness, with the surrounding dangers of coyotes, moose, highway traffic and elements. She was only nine months old. Young. But obviously had the savvy to keep out of trouble. After our dog, Skeena, caught her scent and alerted her to us, Rune stood stock still. She didn't move a muscle. She stayed like that for a couple of minutes. Not moving. She was like a statue. She just blended into the trees. If not for Skeena, we would have walked right past her.*

*Later that week the temperature plummeted to extreme cold temperatures. I do not think Rune would have survived.*

*On Monday, January 6, 2020, Henry and Carolyn decided to go for a Wagner/Bush Walk with their dog, Skeena.*

*It was a good day.*

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## Wagner Natural Area Society Annual General Meeting

Saturday March 21, 2020

Time: 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Percy Page Centre, Groat Road and 118 Ave., Edmonton

*Come to hear about progress over the past decade and join us as we muse about what the Roaring Twenties will bring!*