



### 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



## Upcoming events:

2020

### Site Management

#### Wire Roll -- Saturday September 19.

From 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Let us know if you can help. Please pre-register by email--- [info@wagnerfen.ca](mailto:info@wagnerfen.ca)

Wire to roll. Training/tools provided!!  
Meet at Wagner parking lot at 10 a.m.

\*\*\*\*\*

Fall Clean-Up Day -- October 17,  
10 a.m. to 2 p.m. (rain date Oct. 24).  
Meet at Wagner parking lot.

### 2020 Annual General Meeting

Members and Voting Members are needed to attend our Annual General Meeting following its postponement from March.

**When:** Sat., Sept. 26.  
**Where:** Percy Page Centre,  
11759 Groat Rd. NW, Edmonton  
Park in the NE parking lot.  
**Drive-In Style!**  
**Time:** 2:00 to 2:30 p.m.  
**What:** Quick business meeting to comply with the Societies Act.  
**Register:** at [info@wagnerfen.ca](mailto:info@wagnerfen.ca)

Visit our website:

[www.wagnerfen.ca](http://www.wagnerfen.ca)  
for more information about Wagner Natural Area.

All stories and photos by Dave Ealey, unless otherwise noted.  
Queries to [info@wagnerfen.ca](mailto:info@wagnerfen.ca)  
Submissions welcome!

## Roll, Roll, Roll the Fence Wire--- Merrily Near the Stream

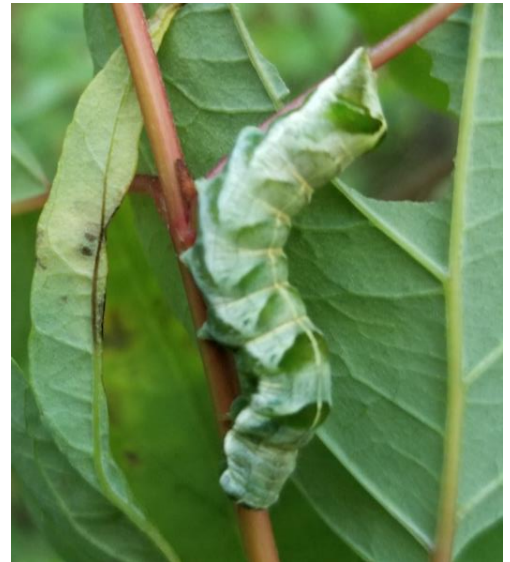
Featured on our front page are the merry crew of barbed wire collectors who gathered about 1000 m of wire. Removing this wire is an important task in reducing the hazards for wildlife and humans in the natural area. Mark, Robert, David and Alan joined me (Dave Ealey) on a glorious Saturday at the end of August. Can't be much better things to do during a pandemic, while staying physically distant!

There's still a fair bit more wire to roll and we're doing it again on Saturday Sept. 19. Volunteers are welcome!

## Late Summer Nature.....

When the birds have stopped singing and most of the flowers are no longer blooming, there can still be lots of nature to be on the look out for, especially when you're looking closely. Here are a few characters and vegetation. I'm looking for the species' names for the insects and their food plants as well as the berry species shown. The first person with all of the correct species names (3 insects, 4 plants) who submits their response to the Wagner email [info@wagnerfen.ca](mailto:info@wagnerfen.ca) will win a special prize: a copy of our orchid poster. Note: the two photos on the next page are of the same species: one dressed, one undressed.

I look forward to a number of entries!





## Creative Sentencing Leads to Creative Conservation

In the January/April issue of the *Friends of the Fen*, I referred to a research project into the creation of eco-islands on Wagner Natural Area (WNA) by the Edmonton Native Plant Society (ENPS). This project is supported by funding under the Creative Sentencing program of the ministry of Alberta Justice and Solicitor General and has taken a great deal of work in the planning, preparation and creation. Most of the work is being undertaken by members of the ENPS and their contractor; however, some Wagner members have pitched a hand (including handling a pitchfork!) at the different stages.

We already have a couple eco-islands that were started several years ago in the Osborne field, on the south edge of WNA and are now growing very successfully. This new eco-island project was intended to have two eco-islands—one in the Osborne field and another in Villeneuve field on the NE corner of WNA. Problems with the high level of wetness this year in the Villeneuve field led to a second eco-island being created in the Osborne field as soil preparation conditions were much more favourable there. Conditions improved enough for the Villeneuve field eco-island to get to the planting stage, so in fact we have three eco-islands under way, which will be a bonus for WNA to advance the naturalization of these formerly cultivated fields.

There will be reporting from ENPS about the success of the research as the project develops over the next few years, but I believe readers will be interested to see some of the work that has gone into the creation of these eco-islands.

The first stage is the most intensive work, undertaken by the ENPS contractor, and involves clearing and tilling the study plots. Here, shown, is the Villeneuve eco-island. This site presented significant challenges for the clearing and tilling because of the thick turf of the mature forage crop, which remains from the original field cultivated by Mr. Wagner.



While conducting conifer tree survival studies in May 2020, Derek and David are seen inspecting the eco-island plot.

The more northerly eco-island plot in Osborne field shows its proximity to the edge of the field and the complete deer fence surrounding it. This photo is taken during the planting stage. Note the fiber mats scattered across the





study plot to help protect individual plants, including a large number of shrubs and tree seedlings, which are clearer in the second photo of this plot.

Planting in the Villeneuve field was delayed substantially owing to the very wet conditions, but eventually the soil dried enough to allow planting. The species of shrubs planted were selected for the wetter portions of the plot.



The Villeneuve plot with fence and individual fiber mats surrounding the shrubs, seedlings and some hardier forbs. Note the field outside of the sample plot was hayed in late August, which is part of the WNA fire management plan. Planning is underway for how the eco-island can be incorporated into the long-term naturalization options for the field.



After the planting, comes the weeding, which is strictly a manual effort! This northern Osborne eco-island shows quite thick weed cover in the spaces between the fiber mats...it's important to make this effort to give the target species a chance to grow. After a few hours of vigorous work, the plot looks much tidier and the target plants have less competition as they head into fall. (Photo above and to right, ENPS member)



An interesting challenge with the southern Osborne eco-island was the dense incursion of Timothy grass from the forage crop into the sample plot. Such grass is very difficult to weed out and this was compounded by the large

amount of clay in the soil at that plot. The final stage in preparation for the fall and winter is the adding of mulch to reduce the growth of weeds in the fall and into the spring, hopefully giving the planted species a better chance of growing next year. These last photos show the labour-intensive process taken to gather, transport and spread mulch for the benefit of the sample plots.

