

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

WAGNER NATURAL AREA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Spring has officially sprung in the Wagner Natural Area! Pictured left is a group of blooming marsh marigolds in a stump pond on the marl pond trail.

Photo by: Sydney Cantu

Upcoming Events:

Father’s Day Orchid Walk:

What: Come out and walk the trail to see the spring orchids in bloom.

Where: Meet at the Wagner Natural Area Parking lot.

When: Sunday, June 19th from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

2022 Summer Activities

Stay tuned for more announcements for future events, activities, and volunteer opportunities this summer!

Visit our website:

<http://wagnerfen.ca/>

For more information on upcoming events at Wagner Natural Area.

All newsletter stories, unless otherwise noted, were prepared by Sydney Cantu, WNAS summer student

EDUCATION:

2022 Summer Student at Wagner Natural Area

Hello all, my name is Sydney. I will be spending the summer months this year as a summer student of the Wagner Natural Area. This fall I will be entering my fourth and final year of my Environmental Studies degree at the University of Alberta. I am very interested in wildlife biodiversity, environmental conservation, and legislative policy. I grew up in Spruce Grove and have visited Wagner many times in my life making this job quite the dream for me. I am excited to spend the next few months learning and working outdoors for the betterment of the Wagner Natural Area. I am also extremely passionate about not-for-profit organizations and hope that I can spend plenty of time with the WNAS board members and community of Wagner this summer.



It is likely that you have already seen me at the Natural Area walking the marl pond trail, cleaning up litter or peering through my binoculars at a nearby

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 accompanying Society.

Email: info@wagnerfen.ca

DONATIONS

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

Please see page 8 for the donation/volunteer form.

bird, so please do not hesitate to say hello, stop me for a chat, or show me a picture you took on the trail, I am more than happy to know more about the patrons of the Wagner Natural Area so I can learn how my upcoming projects can benefit everyone who visits Wagner!

Speaking of projects, I plan to undertake frog count surveys in Wagner's ponds and wetlands which will allow me to become more comfortable in identifying amphibians by their calls and the different observations that need to be made when doing so. I will also be assisting WNAS board member Chris Saunders by mapping invasive weed species for the annual summer weed pulls. Additionally, I also hope to greatly improve my birding knowledge and skills of identification by participating in Tree Swallow bird banding, breeding bird surveys and spending plenty of time birding. This is nowhere near the full extent of the projects I will be completing this summer, but they are the ones that will be taking place within the Natural Area over the next few months.

So far this summer I have already experienced and led many avenues of public outreach and education for the Natural Area. For instance, I have led elementary field trip groups, attended the 2022 Lois Hole Provincial Park Migratory Bird Day as an ambassador for the Wagner Natural Area and attended a board meeting with the WNAS! This summer I hope to contribute to this wonderful community of nature and conservation enthusiasts through my projects as well as getting to know everyone who loves the Natural Area as I already have come to over the past few weeks.



Figure 1 - The Wagner Natural Area showcase booth at the Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park 2022 Migratory Bird Day on May 14, 2022.

Photo by: Sydney Cantu

Oh right! I will also be taking over the Friends of the Fen newsletter for the summer months (May through August) of this year. I am excited to share all of the exciting events and news from Wagner Natural Area with everyone this summer.

The Wagner Natural Area is very pleased to announce that we are once again host to field trips for classroom groups in and around Parkland County!



*Figure 2 – Grade 3 class walking to the beaver pond in search for frogs on May 3, 2022.
Photo by: Debbie Montaomerv*

We extend a big **thank you to the Prescott Learning Centre** for sending 4 fantastic classes of grade 3 students to walk the marl pond trail to get a hands-on learning experience about nature, life cycles of different animals and a little bit of natural area conservation. All of the participants asked enthusiastic questions, shared their own experiences with nature, and provided us with exciting walks around the Natural Area.



*Figure 3 – Grade 3 class inspecting lichen on a fallen tree on May 3, 2022.
Photo by: Debbie Montgomery*

RESEARCH:

Species Highlight of the Month – Compton Tortoiseshell Butterfly, *Nymphalis vaualbum*

One of the first butterflies to appear in the spring months, these insects are easily found throughout boreal forested regions of Alberta and prefer trail openings and forest edges. Like many other Nymphalids, Compton Tortoiseshell butterflies are patterned with orange, brown, and black to blend in on tree bark or the forest floor where they tend to sit and bask in the spring and summer sun. However, Compton Tortoiseshell are identified by their irregular wing margins and white spots on the outer edge of their wings.



*Figure 4 – Compton Tortoiseshell butterfly seen near the NCC trail on May 7, 2022.
Photo by: Sydney Cantu*

These butterflies overwinter and lay their eggs in a variety of deciduous trees that are present in Wagner Natural Area, such as aspen, birch, and willow. They typically mate in early spring and the females lay their eggs on the newly emerged leaves of the trees they overwinter in. Like many other early-spring butterflies, Compton Tortoiseshells receive their



*Figure 5 – Compton Tortoiseshell butterfly seen near the NCC trail on May 7, 2022.
Photo by: Sydney Cantu*

nutrition via tree sap drips made from sapsuckers or woodpeckers, damp soil and willow nectar.

Many of these medium-sized butterflies have been observed at the Wagner Natural Area this May and have been seen warming themselves up in the spring sun after overwintering and trying to gain energy to breed in later July. Hopefully there will be many more reported sightings over the next few months.

Work cited: Bird, C. D. (1995). *Alberta butterflies*. Provincial Museum of Alberta.

SITE MANAGEMENT:

Trail Planks

If you have visited the Natural Area's marl pond trail over the month of May, you may have noticed the addition of "temporary boardwalks" and planks over particularly wet spots on the trail to help keep your shoes somewhat dry while also ensuring that visitors stay on the trail to protect the plant life of Wagner. If you visit the trail, please remember to stay on the designated path by walking along the planks and trying not to disturb their placement.



*Figure 6 – Trail planks positioned at the stump ponds where the trail has flooded the most on May 9, 2022.
Photo by: Sydney Cantu*

Spring Clean-up

An absolutely huge shout-out and thank you to all of the volunteers who came out to help with the annual spring clean-up of Wagner Natural Area on May 7th. Despite the windy conditions, it was wonderful to see so many patrons and members of the WNAS donate their time and energy to keep the Natural Area a natural area free from the unsightly and damaging effects of litter. Wagner will be looking terrific for the spring and summer months thanks to all of your efforts.



*Figure 7 – Piles of approx. 27 garbage bags from this year's clean-up on May 7, 2022.
Pictures by: Dave Ealey (left) and Sydney Cantu (right)*

BOARD BULLETIN:

The Wagner Natural Area Society Board held its first in-person meeting in two years this past month. This year has already seen quite a few executive changes to the board, and this past meeting was no exception. The WNAS Board is very pleased to announce that we will have a **new president, Cheryl Johnson**, who has very generously decided to take on the role and responsibility of becoming the figurehead for the board. We greatly appreciate her past contributions to the board and greatly look forward to the future of the WNAS board with Cheryl as President.

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Letter from President Cheryl Johnson – As I write this note as the new president of the Wagner Natural Area Society, I am watching nesting birds. Spring is truly here! Wagner has held a special place in my heart for several decades as a teacher visiting with my students or a mom taking my own children out to see the tadpoles.

Retirement now allows me to get involved with valuable non-profits such as WNAS. I have been incredibly impressed with the volunteers' dedication to this unique wetland situated within a busy agricultural, residential, and industrial part of Alberta. My goal as president is simply to listen, learn and see that this commitment to Wagner continues as it always has. A huge thank you goes out to our past president, Dave Ealey, for his ongoing expertise and endless hours of service to Wagner.



Picture courtesy of Cheryl Johnson

Having grown up in the countryside myself but as an urban dweller now, I see how important it is for us all to take responsibility for our green (and wet) spaces. Yes, I'm a tree-hugger, and I love seeing the tamaracks' brilliant new green at this time of year. Join us for a weed pull, a nature walk, or a meeting; we'd love to meet you.

- Cheryl Johnson

MEMBERSHIP – WAGNER NATURAL AREA SOCIETY

Support / Donate / Volunteer

For more Information about Wagner Natural Area or the Society and about field trips and other activities, go to wagnerfen.ca.

Wagner Natural Area is a Registered Charity. Donations will help maintain this very special area; \$20 or more are receipted for Income Tax purposes, CRA B/N119287522 RR 0001

Society's annual fee is \$10 for Supporting Members and \$15 for Voting Members. Voting Members are key to run WNAS; must qualify through nomination. See website. The Society's fiscal year is January 1 to December 31.

Annual fee (Supporting \$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 with 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

Or scan the completed form and pay online. Submit your membership/donation by Interac bank transfer to treasurer@wagnerfen.ca [May 2022]

AMPHIBIANS OF WAGNER



Boreal Toad, *Anaxyrus boreas boreas*.



Frog eggs at the north marl pond.