



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



(Left) Northern Pearly-Eye (*Enodia anthedon*) butterfly perched on a leaf near the picnic shelter taken July 10, 2022.

Photo courtesy of Sydney Cantu



(Right) Common Alpine (*Erebia epipsodea*) butterfly sunbathing on clover leaves in the central field taken June 16, 2022.

Photo courtesy of Sydney Cantu

Visit our website: <http://wagnerfen.ca/> for more information on more upcoming events at Wagner Natural Area that are not listed in this month's newsletter.

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

Upcoming Events:

Wagner Natural Area Fall Clean-Up

It's time for our bi-annual natural area cleanup!

What: Come out and volunteer with Wagner to clean the area of litter or waste before winter comes!

Who: You! Please dress for the weather as well as bring rubber boots, conditions may be wet!

Where: Meet at the Wagner Natural Area parking lot

When: Saturday, Sept. 24th—10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Please RSVP to info@wagnerfen.ca beforehand.

Snacks and refreshments will be provided as well.

Wagner Natural Area Casino Event

Mark your calendars for WNAS' first ever casino event! Volunteers needed to help fundraise for our beloved natural area's site maintenance, research, outreach and educational materials.

Where: Century Casino, located at 24 Boudreau Road in St. Albert.

When: Saturday, February 4th & Sunday, February 5th, 2023, from 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 a.m., both days

Please contact info@wagnerfen.ca if you are a fast counter and would like to volunteer for our casino. There are still some positions available.

FALL OPEN HOUSE

WAGNER 40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION AND OPEN HOUSE ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16, FROM 2 TO 4 P.M. AT PIONEER CENTRE, SPRUCE GROVE. MORE DETAILS TO COME.

GUEST SPEAKER: JOHN ACORN

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 experiences, and support on-going research studies and surveys.

Please see page 10 for the donation/volunteer form.

EDUCATION:

Sydney's Summer at the Wagner Natural Area

Hello again, patrons of the Wagner Natural Area and readers of "Friends of the Fen." In case you are not aware or may not remember I am Sydney, Wagner's 2022 summer student. Summer is now dwindling and that means that my time at Wagner has come to an end, and I will resume my final year of my university degree in Environmental Studies. This summer has certainly been unlike any other that I have ever experienced. Working for the Wagner Natural Area has truly been an unforgettable and immersive work experience that has surrounded me with natural history, research and people who have a similar love of environmental conservation and education.

I firstly would like to thank everyone, affiliated with WNAS or not, who has very kindly taken the time to help me learn the Wagner ropes this summer and provide me with resources, advice, and assistance when I needed it. I have learned a huge amount of environmental and personal knowledge that I could never have learned in a classroom or from a book.

I would also like to extend a very big thank you to Past President of WNAS, Dave Ealey, who has very kindly taken the role of my mentor this summer. Dave has exercised a great deal of patience with me and was always willing to answer any questions I had, no matter what crazy notions I had or how I struggled to remember bird calls at first. Now I can confidently say that bird calls and songs do not intimidate me nearly as much as they did in May. In fact, I feel much more excited to continue my bird education and birding journey. I also appreciate Dave's willingness to take me under his bird banding 'wing' and teach me about the amazing people who volunteer their time as citizen



(Above) Dave Ealey banding a young tree swallow at Atim field's bird boxes. Taken June 23, 2022.

Photo courtesy of Sydney Cantu

scientists by contributing to bird research all across Alberta and Canada. Having the chance to watch bird banding up close was definitely a highlight of my summer—even if it was at the crack of dawn in June!



(Left) Summer student, Sydney Cantu teaching children about bird diversity in wetlands at Nature Alberta's Family Nature Night at Lois Hole Provincial Park in St. Albert. Taken August 10, 2022.

Photo Courtesy of Abigail Stosky-Rahman.

However, my favourite part of working at Wagner was the ability to travel the Edmonton area and present at various nature/environmental/conservation themed events. I had the opportunity to be a part of six events over the summer, all with different goals, at different locations and with different people and other organizations with similar objectives and achievements to Wagner. My favourite events were definitely those that included and encouraged children's participation. I hope that my excitement for nature inspired a few kids to take a closer look at the nature that surrounds them all the time. It was wonderful meeting so many individuals who were just as excited about natural area conservation as I am! I certainly hoped that I inspired a few people to come out to visit Wagner Natural Area and experience the lovely slice of nature for those who are craving something a little wilder than the city has to offer.

I also very thoroughly enjoyed the research tasks that were given to me. Firstly, writing these newsletters each month containing a research column has allowed me to expand my knowledge on plants, animals, insects, birds, and fungi while also balancing a scientific yet easily understandable article about each organism. I was also asked to carry on the traditional summer student research projects of auditory amphibian monitoring and the breeding bird survey, both of which

contained research that I personally did not know anything about when I started. But Dave seemed to have faith in me that I could figure it out and it seemed that he was right! There were absolutely pros and cons to each type of research. If I was doing amphibian observations in late May, I was in for a late night. Breeding bird season began in early June which meant for (extremely) early mornings. But both experiences were absolutely worth it to see first-hand how these incredible animals interacted in a protected area where they felt safe. These experiences definitely gave me a new appreciation for field researchers who have to brave the bushes while having to translate data quickly and efficiently because nature can change at any moment!



(Above) A small boreal toad leaped into the central field to say hello! Taken July 12, 2022.

Photo courtesy of Sydney Cantu

I would like to thank everyone once again who has helped contribute to an unforgettable summer for me. The excitement and encouragement I received from everyone I met and got to know this summer has really brought out the best in my work and has inspired me to further pursue my goal of working in the environmental conservation field. What exactly does that mean, you may ask? Well, I'm not too sure either. There are so many more facets to environmental careers than I ever thought possible, and I only learned about more possibilities from my work at Wagner this summer. However, I do hope to continue working for non-profit organizations as that has become a recent passion of mine in the past year and I hope to use my degree and knowledge I have gained this summer to help me along the way to making positive change, whether it be for communities, individuals, or natural areas.

I wish Wagner Natural Area and its Society of board members well and I look forward to speaking at this fall's open house. I assure you I will not be a stranger and visit whenever I'm feeling particularly nostalgic or looking for a mosquito bite or two.

RESEARCH:

Species Highlight of the Month – Spotted Touch-Me-Not (*Impatiens capensis*)



(Above) Touch-me-not flower growing on the Marl Pond Trail at the stump ponds. Taken July 23, 2022

Photo courtesy of Sydney Cantu

One summer day in late July, I was walking the Marl Pond Trail and happened to notice an unfamiliar flower out of the corner of my eye. It seemed like a rather magical looking flower, so I took a few pictures to later figure out what it was that I saw at the stump ponds that day.

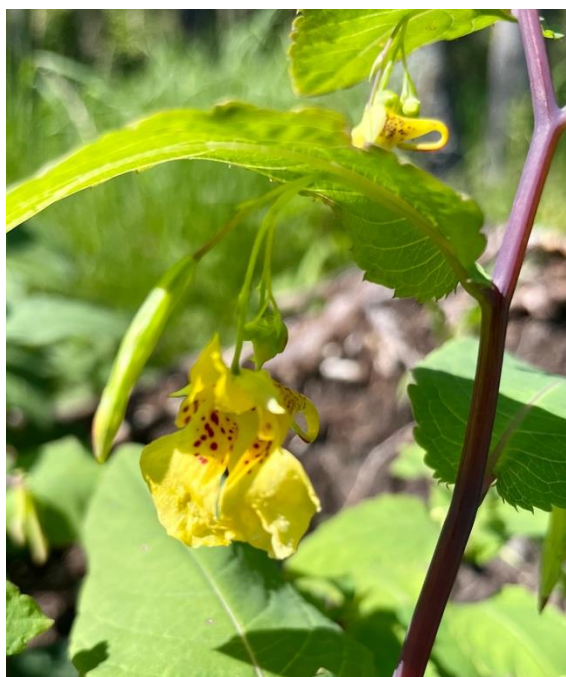
A quick look in my reference book, *Plants of the Western Forest*, helped me identify this unique flower with large strangely shaped petals as a spotted touch-me-not. The plant's rather peculiar name does not stem from any poisonous traits of the plant but rather its seed pods which when ripe, explosively burst open at the slightest touch, throwing the seeds in all directions (Johnson, et al. 2017). These seeds remain dormant during winter and germinate in early spring.

Touch-me-not's unique flowers are about 2.5 centimetres long and have sepals that grow in a funnel-like shape with a long narrow spur at the back that curls under the funnel where the plant's nectar is stored (Johnson, et al. 2017).

Native across North America, spotted touch-me-nots come in various colours, such as red, orange, or yellow like the one I have discovered. The plant tends to thrive in wet forests, along streambanks and lakeshores. After finding the yellow

variation of the plant in Wagner, I have actually located orange spotted touch-me-nots at Lois Hole Provincial Park at the John E. Poole Wetlands boardwalk system near the lookout point at Big Lake. It seems like both of our wetlands are far more alike than in just water systems and fauna!

Additionally, many First Nation peoples of North America traditionally utilized spotted touch-me-not as a topical medication (*Adirondack Wildflowers: Spotted Touch-Me-Not (Impatiens capensis)*, 2012). Sticky juice from the plant's stem that is harvested before flowering has traditionally been used to treat rashes occurring from poison ivy and stinging nettle. However, we still encourage visitors not to harvest plants from Wagner Natural Area.



(Left) A close-up of a touch-me-not flower growing on the Marl Pond Trail at the stump ponds. Taken July 23, 2022

Photo courtesy of Sydney Cantu

Work Cited:

Johnson, J. D., Kershaw, L., MacKinnon, A., & Pojar, J. (2017). *Plants of the western forest*, p. 195. Partners Publishing.

Adirondack Wildflowers: Spotted Touch-Me-Not (Impatiens capensis). (2012, August 16). Paul Smith's College Visitor Interpretive Centre.
<http://www.adirondackvic.org/Adirondack-Wildflowers-Spotted-Touch-Me-Not-Impatiens-capensis.html#:~:text=Spotted%20Touch%2DMe%2DNot%20was,%2C%20nettle%20strings%2C%20and%20burns.>

SITE MANAGEMENT:

A Huge Helpful Thank You to Our Spry Young Volunteer, James!

James, an apprentice carpenter, has very graciously lent his woodworking skills to us this summer and really helped make a difference in Wagner.

With the assistance of his friends Josh and Tristan, James has beautifully crafted not only storage shelves for our equipment shed, but a brand-new park bench on the Marl Pond Trail.



The shed shelves will undoubtedly add an organizational flare to the shed and also save future volunteers time digging around in our previous shed design of “let’s see if it fits!”



Perhaps most impressive is the construction of a brand-new sitting bench on the Marl Pond Trail just past signpost 3.

We have already received many compliments from our visitors on the amazing quality of the bench!

Please ensure it is treated with respect.

BOARD BULLETIN:

Letter from President Cheryl Johnson –

“Summer passes into autumn in some unimaginable point of time, like the turning of a leaf” (Henry David Thoreau). A lot happens in a natural area over our short summers; orchids bloom, frogs complete their metamorphosis, plants ripen and produce seed, surface water becomes less visible. Our Wagner volunteers are also busy as they continue to monitor, research, educate, and maintain our natural spaces. We have thoroughly enjoyed having our summer student, Sydney Cantu, this year; she brought enthusiasm to our mission at Wagner as she represented us at numerous events this summer. She created this newsletter, tackled invasive plants, maintained our trails and so much more. If you are interested in knowing more about Wagner, please consider joining us at our Fall Clean Up in September and our Open House in October before we begin to slow down for the winter. In the meantime, enjoy these sunny blue-sky days!

- Cheryl



(Above) Salt Marsh Moth (*Estigmene acrea*) caterpillar taken August 13, 2022.

Photo courtesy of Sydney Cantu



(Above) Forest Tent Moth (*Malacosoma disstria*) caterpillar taken June 13, 2022.

Photo courtesy of Sydney Cantu

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: _____

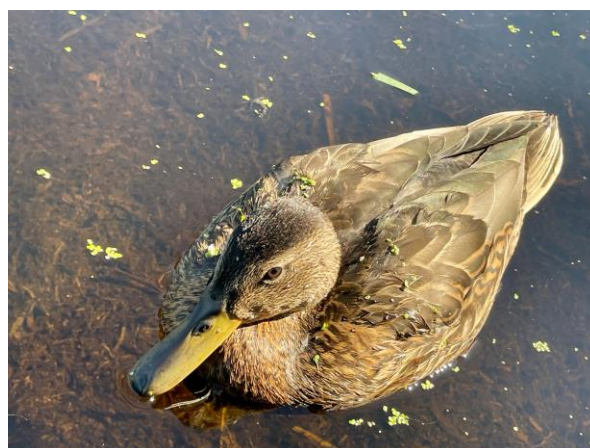
Mail this form with cheque/money order, payable to Wagner Natural Area Society, to:
Treasurer, Wagner Natural Area Society, 30531-118 Ave., Acheson, AB T7X 6M5

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

BIRDS OF WAGNER



Two American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) young in a nest in a White Spruce tree in Villeneuve Field.



Female Mallard Duck (*Anas platyrhynchos*) enjoying shallow water.



Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*).

Photos courtesy of Sydney Cantu