



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



Fireweed

Chamaenerion angustifolium

A familiar plant at Wagner Natural Area, fireweed is a common, native plant on disturbed or post-fire areas. What may not be familiar to some is the scientific name has changed from Epilobium angustifolium. The new genus is derived from the Greek “chamai” meaning low or dwarf, and “nerion” referring to oleander. (Kershaw. 2019. Alberta Plant Names)

Photo courtesy of: Andy Mueller

WAGNER NATURAL AREA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Volunteering Opportunity Fall Cleanup Day

**When: Saturday, September 21.
From 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

Where: Meet at Wagner parking lot.

Who: Anyone to help tidy natural area for winter.

What: Litter pickup, trail maintenance, wire rollup, fence maintenance and weed management.

Gloves and boots are recommended. Dress for the weather. Training, tools, snacks and water provided. Let us know you are coming out by sending an email to info@wagnerfen.ca

Annual Open House & Speaker Sat., October 19, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Join other Friends of the Fen for our Open House at Pioneer Centre, Spruce Grove – 301 Jespersen Ave.

Guest Speaker: Isabela Bernsdorf, one of our 2024 summer students, will talk about the Wagner Wildlife Camera project undertaken this summer. Come to see video highlights of our forest-dwelling wildlife.

Following the talk, hear about Wagner bylaw updates, then refreshments and networking! Please RSVP through an email to info@wagnerfen.ca.

Frog and Toad Walk

By Andy Mueller

One of the many delights that come alongside working at Wagner is the opportunity to participate in the events held by those interested in Wagner’s wildlife, plantlife, and environment. One evening this summer I had the chance to accompany the Alberta Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy as well as the Alberta Lepidopterists’ Guild on a nighttime walk along the trail. It was an excellent experience, as I got to see several different amphibians native to Wagner, including the Boreal Chorus Frog, the Wood Frog, and a Boreal Toad. Since we got to see multiple individuals from each species, I learned to identify several common features among species, and which parts vary from individual to individual. We also discovered amphibians much farther away from the ponds than I expected, including several in the Central Field! That’s a long trip for such small animals!



Support Us!



English Sundew, *Drosera anglica*

Photo courtesy of
Richard Schneider

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.

See p. 10 for donation/member form.



Near the end of the trail, we got to see the station set up by the Lepidopterists' guild representative, which showcased several moths and other insects that were attracted to the bright light. Overall, it was a wonderful experience, and I am very grateful for the opportunity to learn so much more about the amphibians and insects living here at Wagner.

Special Thanks to TELUS – Corporate Work Bee

By Dave Ealey

Originally scheduled for April 30, volunteers from TELUS followed through on their promise to commit some elbow grease at Wagner Natural Area on August 20. Beginning with the convoy of seven matching company vehicles and staff wearing smart-looking uniforms, I could tell right away the crew had come to make a serious effort! This work bee occurred after both summer students had completed their jobs, so Chris Saunders (our weed management specialist) and I had the pleasure of guiding the enthusiastic staff on the property.



The Wagner Natural Area Society is grateful for the willingness of regional corporations to choose us for community volunteering, and for the new friends who will come back to enjoy Wagner with their families!

Ponds dried up

By Andy Mueller

This summer has set a number of heat records all across the country, the wildfires burning in British Columbia and Northern Alberta can attest to that. One of the consequences of that heat has been the drought Wagner is going through. As of several weeks ago, the Marl Ponds along the Marl Pond Trail have lain empty, having dried up in the harsh summer sun. Despite several rainfalls, the water levels have remained below the surface, and new growths have begun to pop up in the nutrient rich mud and marl left behind. This has left me concerned for the amphibians of Wagner, but as the earlier article showed, there still seems to be a healthy number of them lying about at Wagner.

Ever since the water dried up, I've been seeing animal trails plotted through the marl, including what I suspect to be deer and coyote trails. It is interesting to see the paths that these animals take, which would normally be washed away. It's a shame I never got to see animals walking from up close, though! I did get to see a bunch of animals using the wildlife cameras that my coworker set up, which more than made up for it.



Pale Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*)

By: Andy Mueller

Overview: Pale yellow iris originated in Africa, Asia, and Europe, and spread to North America as a decorative plant. It has been found even in isolated areas of Alberta, and is designated as a prohibited noxious weed. All parts of the plant irritate skin and can be poisonous when ingested, both for humans and animals. It can also affect water quality, displace native plants, and disrupt the flow of water through sediment.

Habitat: Pale yellow iris primarily grows along bodies of water, or in wetlands. It prefers full sun, and can tolerate a variety of soil acidity, water depth (if roots are submerged), and salinity.

Life cycle: Pale yellow iris is a perennial plant in the Iridaceae (Iris) family, meaning each plant can survive for longer than two years.

Invasiveness: Pale yellow iris spreads by seed and rhizome fragments. The seeds are buoyant and easily able to spread by water. Root fragments are thick, tuberous and capable of regrowth.

Origin in WNA: Pale yellow iris escaped cultivation, spreading across Canada. Our pale yellow iris came from upriver in the Morgan Creek area, spreading seeds during floods and heavy rainfall.

Prevention/Control: Pale yellow iris is best contained by careful hand pulling, ensuring all of the rhizome and root system is removed. As they spread both by root and seed, it is advisable to check within 1 metre around any pale yellow iris, looking for smaller growths that grew from the roots. If you have a stream, creek, or pond with flowing water that extends beyond your property, it is advisable to check for pale yellow iris growths, as once a population has established itself, it becomes much more difficult to remove.

Identification Features:

Size: Stems can grow from 90 to 150 cm tall.

Fruit: Seed pods are three-sided, buoyant, and grow between 2 to 10 cm long.

Leaves: Pale yellow iris leaves are long and sword-like, with a pointed tip that emerges from the ground in an overlapping spread pattern described as fan-like. The leaves also have a distinct raised midrib that is off center.

Flowers: Six large, pale yellow to white flowers, three pointed up, three pointed down. Some have been noted to have brown-purple veins.



Summer Student Reflection 2024

By Andy Mueller

Greetings, Readers! I have been working as a Summer Student worker at Wagner Natural Area, and I want to share some of my thoughts on my time here. One of the great delights of working at Wagner was the people! Both the many visitors I have met along the trail, and especially the fellow WNAS members who have been there throughout the summer. A few names stand out, being my two bosses Dave Ealey and Chris Saunders, both of whom are passionate and dedicated to the maintenance of Wagner Natural Area's unique ecology. I would also like to give mention to my co-summer student Isabela Bernsdorf, who was responsible for the Wildlife Cameras we set out this summer!

Another one of the things that will stick with me long after I am gone is all the new knowledge about all the different plants at Wagner, and how they survive. I learned how they spread, such as by seeds, suckers, and rhizomes. I learned about the different kinds of roots, such as taproots, and how those different roots gather nutrients and anchor the plant. I learned to identify different leaves, flowers, stems, and seeds. The plant life here at Wagner is incredibly diverse, and I have learned so much while working alongside Mr. Saunders.

Next up is the Wildlife Cameras! Through the ceaseless efforts of my co-summer student Isabela, we now have a number of videos depicting the wildlife that cannot often be found along the Marl Pond Trail, including deer, birds, squirrels, and several more! You can find these videos on our website, wagnerfen.ca!

Last but not least, I want to thank everyone who I've met over the summer for making my time here so much brighter! It was an absolute blast working here, and I hope you all have a wonderful rest of 2024!



Society of Vintage Characters Visit

By Andy Mueller

On my second to last day working at Wagner, I met and accompanied the Society of Vintage Characters on a trip through Wagner, guided by Dave Ealey. It was very refreshing meeting and walking alongside individuals with such passion and enthusiasm for learning and nature! I was given permission to take photos, so I did my best to get good shots of everybody.

We got to see a number of plants in bloom, as well as red-osier dogwood that had gone to seed. We stopped a few times at the benches along the trail, both to rest and to hear Dave speak about the plant life and history that surrounded each bench. We learned about the deadfall zone and got to see the enormous root systems that are revealed when clusters of trees fall over. The groups walked alongside the edges of the dry beds of the marl ponds, while Dave explained how groundwater and the surrounding recharge zone affected Wagner, as well as the connection to Big Lake.

Crossing the boardwalks let us witness the sights of rushes and other quickly growing plants that had sprouted in the absence of water above the surface of the ponds, and we had a chance to see the deadfall zone from a different angle. It was at this point that the group passed through the thickest vegetation, and we even saw some wild raspberry! In the end, I was really glad I got to spend one of my last days working at Wagner with people seeing the sights I had become accustomed to, and their reactions to the beauty of the Wagner Natural Area! I hope they come again earlier in the summer, so that they might see all the orchids in bloom!





BOARD BULLETIN

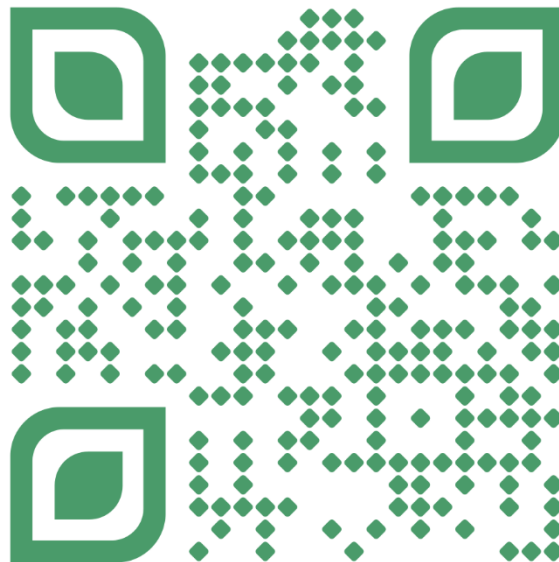
Are you passionate about conservation and the protection of vital ecosystems?

The Wagner Natural Area Society is seeking dedicated and visionary individuals to join our Board of Directors.

Located in the heart of Alberta, Wagner Fen is a unique boreal sanctuary located outside of Edmonton that plays a crucial role in preserving biodiversity and supporting local wildlife.

As a Board member, you will have the opportunity to shape the future of this critical conservation effort.

Please scan the QR Code with your phone camera to access the form to fill out with your information or visit this website address: <https://tinyurl.com/WNASMemberApp>.



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 2024]