



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:

2nd WNA Mini-Bioblitz

What: Come out and help survey the fauna and flora of the Marl Pond Trail!

Where: Meet at Wagner Natural Area parking lot

When: Saturday August 10th, from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Who: Anyone who wants to join is welcome. Please pre-register by sending an email to info@wagnerfen.ca

Format: Please bring rubber boots, bug spray, clipboard, extra food & water, and suitable clothing for the activity and weather.

August 2019 Activities

Wagner Walkabouts: Come join Wagner leaders for a guided tour of the Marl Pond Trail to see what's new at Wagner! Every Saturday @ 10:00 a.m. in August (weather permitting). No need to register.

For every activity, plan to meet at the Wagner parking lot.

Visit our website:

www.wagnerfen.ca

for more information on upcoming events at Wagner Natural Area.

All Newsletter stories, unless otherwise noted, were prepared by Bob Underschultz, WNAS summer student

Of all the Natural Areas in all the towns...

A Summer Odyssey

As the summer student for the Wagner Natural Area, I've been fortunate enough to have participated in the conservation actions the Wagner Natural Area Society champions: conservation management, public outreach, and research & monitoring. I've trekked throughout Wagner, removing weeds, picking up litter, and maintaining the trails. I've presented at schools and workshops on the ecological significance of Wagner and toured groups along the Marl Pond Trail showing firsthand the wonders of the WNA. I've surveyed flora and fauna throughout the remotest parts of Wagner, fighting through thick bush, mosquitoes, and fens. It's been a wild ride in a wild place, and I am proud to have helped keep the "natural" in Wagner Natural Area.

The Black Sheep of Diptera

The mosquito. It's been around since the Triassic period. It's outlived the dinosaurs. It's survived an asteroid impact. And now in the present day, it laughs at our feeble attempts to keep it away, as we spray and swat with reckless abandon. Here at Wagner, I've spent the last three months experiencing firsthand its annual return in the spring, like a phoenix rising from the ashes. The "mossies" plague the Edmonton area, like the locusts from ancient times. People flee from the buzzing swarms, losing all hope of an enjoyable summer outdoors. But all is not lost, for the flying little Lazarus has its kryptonite. Dry, hot summer days, winds from simple breezes to fierce gales, impenetrable attire, and the lovey little chemical N,N-Diethyl-m-toluamide, more commonly known as DEET, put the incessant bug in its place. Together these abiotic forces help keep the little devils at bay, but Mother Nature isn't done evening the odds, she has another weapon up her sleeve: a biotic line of defence. Squadrons of nature's assault helicopter, the dragonfly, seek out the little vermin in the air, chowing down on their delectable tenderness. Those mosquitoes that do survive, hoping to find solace during the night, are not so lucky. Attack formations of bats dogfight with the buzzing insects, snatching them from the evening air with visible grace. Alas, the seemingly invincible mosquito is not so invincible after all. Rejoice central Albertans, for as mammals, we too emerged from the Triassic, we too outlived the dinosaurs, we too survived the asteroid, and we will show the mosquitoes that the mammals called *Homo sapiens* are a force to be reckoned with.

An Interpreter Ode (à la Romeo & Juliet) - By Bob Underschultz

A pleasant good morning it shall be
Trust not? Then open your window and you shall see...
The birds shall be singing, and if they are not
At least they are out there, modelling in spot
They do this for you, cause as you must know
Good mornings come, when graced by your soul

The sunlight dances through the swaying trees
Playing catch with your eyes so mischievously
They do this for you, so often it's done
Because you're the light that wakes up the sun

You may see geese leaving, but don't worry at all
They are not fleeing, but bringing back fall
They do this for you, because when you sleep
The warmth you give summer ceases to keep

If you look closely, perhaps you shall see
The bees on the flowers, buzzing happily
They do this for you, a humming tune
Because it's your smile that blooms flowers anew

Now if you open your window, on this very day
To find outside is all doldrums and grey
Do not despair, and stand resolute!
Those poor little guys are probably all pooped!

The sun may be tired and sleeping in cloud
The birds and the bees may be warming up now
The trees may be stretching before they can sway
The geese may have even slept in today!

If this be true, give them a second
If it is false, and it's the morning I reckoned...
Then a pleasant good morning it shall be
A pleasant good morning for you, my interpretee

The Amazing Volunteers of the 2nd Pale Yellow Iris Weed Pull



Many thanks to David Fielder, Robert Holt, and Chris Saunders who came out to help Dave Ealey and I eradicate some more Pale Yellow Iris along Morgan Creek. Your heroic efforts in dealing with the heat, mud, and mosquitoes were most appreciated!

Fun Times at the WNA Mini-Bioblitz!



We held our 1st WNA Mini-Bioblitz at the end of July. The highlights of the blitz were the many interesting bugaboos we found, from striped spiders to giant grasshoppers. The WNA will be hosting another bioblitz on Saturday, August 10th, starting at 8 a.m. So come on out and help us search for some birds, bugs, and blooms! You can find an information poster under the events page on the WNA website.

A letter from the WNAS President: Dave Ealey

I estimate that I have travelled the Marl Pond Trail nearly 200 times, start to finish, over the past seven years since I retired. Some readers have probably made that trek many more times. For all of us, getting to know a special area well is very satisfying. You see the changes from one season to the next, from one year to the next. You get to know when and where to expect to see the first yellow lady's-slipper orchids, where to find frog eggs if the spring is wet enough, and what time of the day you're more likely to see deer prancing over the Central Field. Two years ago, a massive blowdown of big trees blocked the trail; this year, the water on the trail in mid-July has been deeper than I (and many others) have ever seen, even higher than in spring after the snowmelt. It's nice to know that my good friend, the Marl Pond Trail, can still surprise me!