



# PRAIRIE BREEZE

THE LIVING PRAIRIE MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2015

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## SUMMER INTERPRETIVE CENTRE HOURS

Open seven days a week, 10-5 pm, until the end of August.  
Sundays in Sept. to Thanksgiving.

## Thursday Theme Days

Fun, free  
education  
programs

See p. 4 for details.

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## What's New: Invasive Species

### Smoky-winged Beetle Bandit

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is a serious threat to ash trees in Winnipeg. This invasive jewel beetle was first introduced to Canada in 2002. It has now spread through Quebec and Ontario, and is making its way into Winnipeg.

In order to monitor the spread of the beetle, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the University of Guelph are working together to share a successful form of biosurveillance: survey for the predators of EAB.

The Smoky-winged Beetle Bandit (*Cerceris fumipennis*) is a predatory wasp that specializes in jewel beetles. When EAB is present, they're found as prey in the sandy burrows of the wasp. The wasps are efficient hunters, making this method more successful than beetle surveys or pheromone traps.

Previous records show the wasp is present in Manitoba. Surveys for wasp colonies in Winnipeg began this July, assisted by LPM staff.

Links:

**MB Forestry Branch** and the  
***C. fumipennis* biosurveillance  
booklet**

### Tufted Vetch

Tufted Vetch (*Vicia cracca*), also known as Bird Vetch, has become a big problem in prairie habitat this summer.

Tufted Vetch forms dense creeping mats of vegetation in both disturbed and undisturbed areas. It can quickly become the dominant species through rapid growth, spreading through rhizomes, and producing large amounts of seed.

We've initiated intensive control methods, including mowing large patches followed by seeding with prairie plants.



If you see this plant, attempt to remove it before it goes to seed.

Link: **Invasive Species Council  
of Manitoba**

## EcoAction Grant: Education for Conservation

We're pleased to announce that we received a two year EcoAction grant for our new project, *Education for Conservation: Prairie Pollinators and Beneficial Insects*.

Despite a longstanding ecological relationship with plants and pollinators, public perceptions of insects are often negative, or there are gaps in our understanding of the benefits of insects and why they require our protection. Many insects that are feared or viewed as distasteful are anything but, providing important services that maintain ecosystems and support agriculture.

### Why focus on insects?

The majority of flowering plants within natural, agricultural, and urban habitats benefit from the visits of pollinating insects. Movement of pollen between plants increases genetic diversity in the following generation, which translates to a hardier population of individuals better equipped to withstand a variety of environmental stressors. For tall grass prairie, of which less than 1% of remains, maintaining genetic diversity becomes extremely important.

Much of the food grown in North America relies on insect pollination. Wild pollinators increase yields in crops such as canola, and recent research suggests that establishing wild bee habitat adjacent to cropland improves production while protecting local pollinators.

Pollinating insects in urban settings are also important. Early flowering fruit trees and shrubs such as cherry, plum, and saskatoon are pollinated by many species of newly emerged bees. Backyard gardens produce a variety of food and flowers with the assistance of pollinators, while at the same time providing habitat and food for visiting insects.

Pollinators face a number of challenges to their survival, including climate change, pesti-

cides, introduced pathogens, and habitat loss. As a result, research into pollinator declines has gained attention in recent years, and action is being taken to protect native pollinators through education.

The Living Prairie Museum is working to protect pollinator habitat, create awareness of conservation issues, and create pollinator habitat in urban areas. With this EcoAction grant, we will be able to increase public awareness of the biology, conservation, economic, and environmental importance of native pollinating insects through the development of a series of educational materials.

### Project goals

- 1) Establish a collection of the pollinating insects that occur in prairie habitat within the City of Winnipeg. This collection will provide important records of occurrence, and may yield new records for the province.
- 2) Create a new exhibit for the museum that features pollinators and beneficial insects. The exhibit would include specimens, photography and important information about biology and conservation.
- 3) Create mobile exhibits that can be used for environmental education programs. These exhibits could be used in schools or during community events.
- 4) Develop community outreach programs that introduce common pollinating insects, including identification, biology, economic relevance, and conservation.

### Partners

We're looking forward to working with Insect Control Branch and the Agroforestry and Woodlot Extension Society (Alberta). Our partners will help us reach a broad audience across the prairies.

## Secrets to a Butterfly Garden and a Green Roof

### Building a Butterfly Garden

Summer visitors to the museum are greeted with a large butterfly garden as they enter our parking lot. While our garden has flowers from April to October, by late June the garden is looking its best with a cornucopia of yellows, pinks, whites and even the blues of Giant hyssop. We started the garden in 2010 and learned a lot about how to successfully attract butterflies.

1) **Start with a clean slate!** We rototilled our area three times to ensure that the existing grass would not return once we planted. We also allowed two weeks between rototilling so that any weed seeds in the soil could germinate. This took time, but trust us; it will make your life easier in the long run. When weeds are only days old, rototilling is an effective method to kill them. Once we were confident that the weeds and grass were dead, we raked the area flat and started planting.

2) **Diversity!** We made sure to include as many different species as possible. This ensured that there was always something in bloom to attract and nourish adult butterflies, and that the host plants for their caterpillars were present. It also guaranteed that we'd have flowers spring, summer and fall.

3) **Educate yourself!** Knowing common butterflies and their favourite foods will simplify plant selection. There's no point in planting the host plant for a butterfly not found in Manitoba!

4) **Enjoy your garden!** Include some seating, and if large enough, a pathway. Seating doesn't have to be fancy; a stump or a boulder will do nicely.

Remember: Butterflies don't care if the flowers are at your house or at Living Prairie Museum; they just need to find them!

### Constructing a Green Roof

In 2013 we completed construction of our shade structure and workshop. To date, it has sheltered thousands of visitors and countless school groups who come to learn about the prairie. We have received many compliments and questions related to the features that make this cleverly designed structure unique, particularly our green roof and building materials.

Green roofs are designed to slow storm water runoff, reduce the heating effects on the building, and contribute to the biodiversity of the area by providing habitat. Rather than washing away, rainwater is absorbed by the soil and plants, and excess water is collected in a cistern to be put to use around the museum.

We made sure to select the right mix of native grasses and wildflowers known to be successful in this application. Species included Yellow Coneflower, Side Oats Grama, Sheep Fescue, Black-eyed Susans, and Blanket Flowers. We planted plugs into 6 inches of growing medium over top a filter sheet, root barrier and waterproof membrane-covered plywood.

This green roof, while small, has been very effective in promoting their beauty and utility.

You may have noticed that the workshop itself has an aged look. Much of the materials used to build the structure were reclaimed from local buildings that were being destroyed. Not only do reclaimed materials possess a unique visual character and embody a sense of history, they also divert these materials from landfills.

Here are some sources: Our benches were reclaimed timber from the Commonwealth Air Training Plane Hangar (Virden), the slats were from the Aqua Books Building and Galaxy Roller Rink, the siding was from the Yellow Warehouse, and our beams were purchased from Salvage Supermarket.

**THANK YOU!!**

We've had a number of new Friends of Living Prairie Museum join us this summer! Your memberships help us deliver high quality education programs.

**Monarch Butterfly Festival**

Thank you for making this event a success. Over 700 people attended this year, and we distributed about 200 free milkweeds for monarchs.

**MUSEUM STAFF**

Kyle Lucyk  
Danielle Trudel  
Sarah Semmler  
Eric Melvin



Thank you for receiving your newsletter electronically.

**UPCOMING EVENTS****Thursday Theme Days**

Join us for free family theme days every Thursday in July and August. Programs offer fun, educational presentations and activities related to prairie habitat. Programs are suitable for children 4 to 10 years of age.

Choose from one of three sessions:

10 am -11:00 am; 12:00 - 1:00 pm; and 2:00 - 3:00pm.

July 9 - Bison Biography  
July 16 - Marvelous Monarchs  
July 23 - Call of the Wild  
July 30 - Beautiful Bumble Bees  
Aug. 6 - Going Batty  
Aug. 13 - Paws and Claws  
Aug. 20 - The Edible Prairie

Call to register a week in advance. Friends of Living Prairie Museum may register at any time.

**Forest Frolics at Assiniboine Forest**

Join us for a new series of theme day activities! Free education programs take place on Tuesdays in July and August, 11-12 pm. Programs are suited to ages 4-12. Call the museum to register.

July 28 - Our Cool-blooded Friends - Herping in AF  
Aug. 4 - Squeeks, Peeps, and Bleeps  
Aug. 11 - A Nature Scavenger Hunt  
Aug. 18 - Wild About Wetlands  
Aug. 25 - Tremendous Trees



C. Millns

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