



PRAIRIE BREEZE

THE LIVING PRAIRIE MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2016

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SUMMER INTERPRETIVE CENTRE HOURS

Sundays
June, 10 - 5 pm

Open daily starting
July 1st, 10 - 5 pm

UPCOMING EVENTS

Friends AGM and BBQ
Prairie Plant Sale
Monarch Butterfly
Festival
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Sparrow Songs of Living Prairie Museum

Prairie sparrows sing the musical intro to summer, and with a little practice, those songs can become an important tool for identification. Here are two to get you started.

Savannah sparrows

This little sparrow can be hard to see, but easy to hear. Savannah sparrows can be found perching on long grass, shrubs, and fence posts. If you get too close, they disappear into the grass to hide. Savannah sparrows typically have a streaky breast and flanks, a dark mark on the breast, and a yellow patch of feathers before the eye. Savannah sparrows nest on the ground, which is why it's so important to stay on the trails and keep dogs on-leash while enjoying the preserve.



Photo: N.
MacPherson

Song: Male sings a three-part song that lasts 2 to 3 seconds: opening with a few quick notes; then a high,

thin, insect-like buzzy middle; and, ending with a quick lower trill.

Click for song

Clay-coloured sparrows

These lean little sparrows enjoy singing on elevated areas in grasslands, like posts and stands of trees or shrubs. They have a long tail and what looks like a white moustache near a darker cheek, with white above the eye. They also have a greyish band of feathers around the neck, almost like they're wearing a scarf.



Photo: Ecobird

Song: The male's song is a very simple repetition of 2 to 8 low, drawn-out buzzes lasting about 2 seconds in all. It sounds very insect-like. **Click for song**

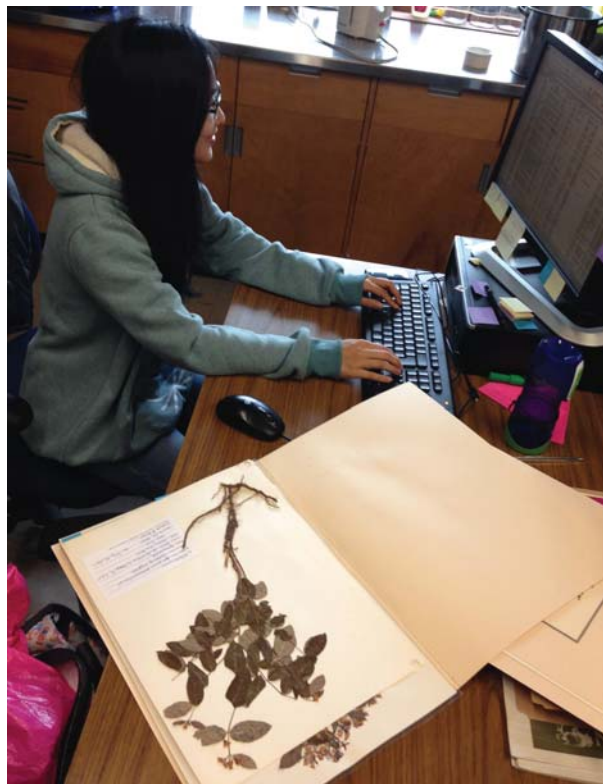
Song descriptions are from allaboutbirds.org, an excellent resource for bird identification and life history.

Updating the Living Prairie Museum Herbarium

Herbarium Goals

A herbarium is a collection of plants that have been pressed, dried, and preserved. Specimens are mounted on sheets of paper for scientific study, or as records of occurrence. A herbarium offers historical floral data on a region, allowing scientists to record changes in plant distribution and diversity over time. This allows for long-term studies of the region's flora.

Founded in 1967, the Living Prairie Museum Herbarium has over 250 specimens and includes many species found in our native tall grass prairie habitat. Unfortunately, our herbarium hadn't received much attention since 2002. Through support from the City of Winnipeg, we were able to begin updating and adding specimens to our herbarium this spring.



Our new student technical assistant, Ka Man Choi, has a lot of experience working in a herbarium setting. She has studied plant

biology and preservation techniques at the University of Manitoba, and has dedicated many hours to the WIN Herbarium on campus.

Her goal for the summer is to increase the number of species in the collection, while also collecting specimens that will be used in a new display (hopefully launching in spring 2017!). She is also working to ensure that our collection's data base will adhere to national standards for accessioned collections. This ensures that our herbarium data can be shared online in searchable data bases like Canadensys.

Ka Man has plans to digitize new specimens to improve our virtual herbarium. Having high resolution images will help make our collection more useful and accessible to a broader audience. Images of specimens from our current collection can be found on www.livingprairie.org.

Careful Collecting

Tall grass prairie is sensitive habitat, which means that every plant is important. When collecting, we have acquired the appropriate permissions and guidance from experts on locations, allowable quantities, and how to minimize site impact. We've also made sure that rare or uncommon plants will be left untouched.

Plants that are collected are carefully positioned before pressing, ensuring that the important physical features of the plant that are used for identification are visible. Careful adjustments to the tension of the press, the layering of plants, and ventilation while drying are all important for producing a high quality specimen. This very particular work isn't for the inexperienced, which is why we're very happy to have Ka Man leading this project.

The Prairie in Bloom

It's that time of year again; the snow has melted, the days are longer, and the flowers are beginning to bloom. As you walk our trails, you may notice some of these colourful, interesting species along the way.

The low lying ground plum, or bison berry (*Astragalus crassicaarpus*), is back in bloom. The seeds of ground plum are much too heavy to be carried by the wind, therefore bison grazing was the most efficient way for seeds to be dispersed. The seeds would pass through the digestive tract and exit in the manure, taking this plant to many new locations as the bison moved across the landscape. This was a method of dispersal for many of our prairie species, with a variety of seeds adapting to being eaten through larger size and thicker seed coats for protection.



Photo: J. Barnard

Crowfoot violet (*Viola pedatifida*) is a purple flower found in high quality prairie habitat. The flower's presence along our prairie trails is an encouraging sight. Violets are important host plants for the many fritillary butterflies that call the prairie home.

One of the plants that gave "Silver Heights" its name is blooming as well. The silver-leaved wolf willow (*Elaeagnus communtata*) continues to shine in the sun, and this time of year the strong scent of their small yellow

flowers can be detected along the trails. Silver hairs on the leaves keep the plant cool in the hot sun. Other tall grass prairie plants with similar silvery leaves include silverleaf psoralea (*Pediomelum argophyllum*) and prairie sage (*Artemisia ludoviciana*).



The green leaves and red flowers of three-flowered avens (*Geum triflorum*) give early life to many areas of the tall grass prairie. The long, bushy seed heads become prominent in late spring, and give more meaning to the nicknames "old man's whiskers" and "prairie smoke".

These early season arrivals will soon be replaced by summer blooms. This floral changing of the guard is extremely important to the wildlife that rely on these plants throughout the season. Differences in bloom times mean that there are flowers available for pollinating insects season-long. It also reduces competition between flowering species. If all of our flowering species bloomed at once, it would be a fight for space, water, nutrients, and pollinators!

The impressive diversity of our tall grass prairie habitat is only beginning to take shape. It's a great idea to visit the prairie in the spring, summer and fall in order to experience the seasonal shift of beautiful flowers.

The new web page is up and running!

Living Prairie Museum and Friends of LPM are happy to announce your new page:

FriendsOfLivingPrairie.org

This new page is full of great information about the Friends, museum activities, and volunteer opportunities. You can also become a member online!

Please take a moment to have look if you haven't already. Feel free to share!

MUSEUM STAFF

Sarah Semmler
Lois Grieger
Kelly Ferrand
Nick Moore
Ka Man Choi



Thank you for receiving your newsletter electronically.



UPCOMING EVENTS

JUNE

Friends of the Living Prairie Museum BBQ and AGM Tuesday, June 21st

Stop by for a BBQ dinner and meet your fellow Friends! We'll be joined by Wildlife Haven and their spectacular birds of prey.

BBQ - 5:30 to 6:30 PM

AGM - 6:30 to 7:30 PM - All members are welcome.

Please RSVP by June 15th.

Native Plant Sale with Prairie Flora - Sunday, June 26th

Purchase live plants at the museum from 10 - 4 p.m.

JULY

10th Annual Monarch Butterfly Festival - Sunday, July 17th

This free, all ages event has many activities to enjoy! Presentations by local scientists, displays of live monarchs, crafts, guided hikes, prizes, and more. 12 - 4 p.m., rain or shine!

Thursday Theme Days

Register for free, family education programs every Thursday in July and August. Programs are prairie-themed and suited to ages 4-11. Themes will be posted on our website.

Public Guided Hikes - Tuesdays, July and August, 10 AM

Register in advance to hike our trails with an interpreter.

LIVING PRAIRIE MUSEUM

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www.livingprairie.org

www.friendsoflivingprairie.org