

Better Late Than Never!

Well, after a few delays and false starts, spring is finally here. The joyful flocks of beautiful migrating **warblers** have passed through and it is time for the summer residents to hunker down and get on with the important task of rearing families.

Owl in the Family

One area resident has informed us that two **great gray owls** are nesting in his backyard! They staked claim on an old crow nest at the end of March and since then the female has been guarding the nest while the male brings food for her and the little ones. Even after the owlets leave the nest at 5 weeks, they will remain with their parents and continue to be fed by them until they are 4-5 months old. It is very exciting to have Manitoba's provincial bird nesting so close to the Preserve! Though great grays more typically inhabit coniferous regions, high mouse and vole populations have been known to persuade these owls to locate to other areas.

Eagle Eyes

In other great news, two **bald eagles** are also nesting in the vicinity of the Preserve! They have constructed a massive nest in the fork of a large poplar tree that affords them an unobstructed view of the river. Typically, eagle nests measure 1.8 m across on the outside with an inside diameter of .5 m and depth of 10-13 cm. As the nests are re-used and new materials added, nests can become as big as 2.6 m across and 3.7 m high!

The bald eagle is making a slow but steady comeback after experiencing a dramatic decline in the 1960's due to pesticides. Stiff competition among nestlings often results in the weaker one starving to death or being pushed out of the nest. In the 1980's many bald eagle nestlings were taken from nests in Manitoba and relocated to U.S. states where populations were previously extirpated (wiped out).

Thank-you very much to those who shared these discoveries with us. This is very exciting, indeed!

Where There's Smoke, There's Fire!

Three controlled burns were conducted on the north block of the Preserve this spring. We are thankful to The Nature Conservancy in the U.S. for sending their fire crews and special equipment north of the border to help with these burns. Combined with the rash of "wildfires" that occurred in this area, over half of the Preserve's 6000 acres were hit by fire this year. The Stuartburn Wildlife Management Area saw flames for the first time in 15 years.

Summer Events

Guided Walks – available by request.

Summer Day Program – July 31. For kids aged 9-12. Join Preserve staff for a day of nature oriented activities including hikes, bird, insect and edible plant identification, wildcrafting, games and more! Register by July 10. Space is limited. (phone 425-3229 or e-mail tgpphq@escape.ca)

Prairie Day – August 10. Come out and celebrate the rich diversity of the tall grass prairie!

For more information about the cultural history of the Preserve area, visitors may wish to stop by the Gardenton Ukrainian Museum and St. Michael's Church. Phone 425-3072.

The Preserve was established to protect and conserve the native species found there.

Please do not pick, dig or collect any of the plants or animals.

Hey kids! Check out your nearest pond, marsh or ditch for these cool aquatic organisms!

Fairy Shrimp

Fairy shrimp move through the water by making waving motions with their many hair-like legs. They eat bacteria, other microscopic organisms and decaying plant and animal material, which they bring to their mouth by the beating of their legs. They are eaten by amphibians and the larvae of caddis flies and beetles.

Tadpole Shrimp

As the name implies, they look like tadpoles, but take a closer look and you'll see that they are like the fairy shrimp with a large, protective shield covering their head and body. They eat earthworms, frog's eggs, dead tadpoles and microscopic organisms. Watch how gracefully they glide through the water!

Send us an e-mail (tgpphq@escape.ca) and let us know what other cool things you find or call us at 425-3229. We'd love to hear from you!

Manitoba Tall Grass

Prairie Preserve

Prairie Ponders

Spring 2002