

### ***The First to Spring***

After being enticed out of the ground by a spell of warm weather, crocuses were suddenly buried under a 4-inch carpet of snow. They were well prepared, however, with their dense covering of hairs that traps warm air, much like a fur coat. Being close to the ground also helped reduce their exposure to cold spring winds. By the time most other spring flowers were in bloom, crocuses had already set seed.

### ***Happy Trails!***

Work is currently underway to develop a second self-guided interpretive trail on the north block of the Preserve. The trailhead will be located just north of Hwy 201, one mile east of the Gardenton turnoff. The trail will consist of two loops that wind their way through 320 acres of rich upland prairie, sedge meadows and poplar bluffs, including the habitat of the endangered western prairie fringed orchid. We're looking forward to the completion of this exciting new project!

### ***Managed Fires vs Wildfire***

The Preserve has seen a number of fires this spring of both the managed and "wild" variety. On May 1 and 2, Preserve staff conducted managed fires on 560 acres. Our burn team was assisted by The Nature Conservancy in the U.S, in the form of additional equipment and manpower, to keep these fires under control. These fires are timed to achieve maximum kill of poplar saplings and willow shrubs that would otherwise overrun the Preserve. These fires are conducted under a permit from the R.M. of Stuartburn.

Managed fires are easily distinguished from "wild" fires by the fact that they're always accompanied by many people buzzing around with ATVs, walkie-talkies and serious firefighting vehicles and equipment. (Safety is a key ingredient in these fires.) "Wild" fires, on the other hand, are characterized by a distinct lack of human presence, save the local volunteer fire department. The Preserve was last struck by "wild" fire June 3.

### ***What's in a Name?***

Flowers blooming at this time of year are often called by some pretty nasty names. How would you like to be called "lousewort", "ragwort", "hoary puccoon" or worse, "bastard toadflax"? Yikes! It certainly makes one wonder how these names originated.

### ***Home Sweet Home***

The variety of bird songs heard here on the Preserve is truly amazing. But just as unique as each bird's song are the nests they build. The hummingbird's nest is held together with spider webs (one of the strongest natural fibers known) and is the size of a pop bottle top. The mourning dove's nest is little more than a platform of sticks so sparse that the eggs can sometimes be seen through the bottom. A Sandhill crane nest is often a simple depression made atop an old muskrat lodge surrounded by open water. The oriole suspends a 6" long woven pouch of white cottony plant fibers from the tip of a forked branch 25-30 feet high. The inside is lined with fine grasses, hair and plant down.

Check out this great book for identifying bird nests and eggs:  
*A Guide to the Nests, Eggs, and Nestlings of North American Birds.*  
2<sup>nd</sup> ed. By Paul J. Baicich and Colin J.O. Harrison.

### **Summer Events**

**Guided Walks** Available by request throughout the summer. Contact the Preserve Headquarters at 425-3229 or e-mail [tgpphq@escape.ca](mailto:tgpphq@escape.ca)

**Prairie Day 2003** – Saturday, August 9. Stay tuned for further details.

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

### *Who-oo Said That?*

This is the time of year when birds are actively defending their nesting territory. All birds make at least two types of sounds – a song and an alarm call. Test your ability to identify bird songs by matching the sounds on the left with the correct bird on the right. Clues can be found in any bird identification book. Answers are posted at the Prairie Shore Trail, or contact us at (204) 425-3229, [tgpphq@escape.ca](mailto:tgpphq@escape.ca).

|  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| Animated, Walt Disney-type computer  | Least Flycatcher       |
| “sweet sweet sweet I’m so sweet”   | Mourning Dove          |
| Hoarse “fee <sub>be</sub> ...fee <sub>be</sub> ...fee <sup>be</sup> ...fee <sub>be</sub> ” | Ovenbird               |
| Sky monkey   | Rufous-sided Towhee    |
| Insect-like “zzzzzzzz-zzzzzzzz”  | Phoebe                 |
| “drink your tea-ea-ea-ea”  | Olive-sided Flycatcher |
| “coo- <sup>ah</sup> cooo-oo-oo”  | Yellow Warbler         |
| Raspy “che-bek”  | Bobolink               |
| Whistled “quick <sup>three</sup> beers”  | Common Snipe           |
| “teacher teacher teacher teacher”  | Clay-colored Sparrow   |

# *Manitoba Tall Grass*

## *Prairie Preserve*

# *Prairie Ponders*

## *Spring 2003*

*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.*