

The Trumpeter

A Publication of the Friends of Elk Island Society
Fall, 2002



Website: <http://www.elkisland.ca>

E-mail: membership@elkisland.ca

FEIS Summer Finale a Huge Success

by Liz Watts

Elk Island National Park lies to the east of Edmonton, in the heart of Alberta. A well defined jewel in the countryside, it offers a taste of the wilderness, the serenity of lakes and ponds as well as a rich diversity of wildlife, large and small. Everything is within easy reach and yet only a relatively small number of visitors know and appreciate the charms it can offer. Many Edmontonians do not even know of its existence! The Friends of Elk Island aim to change the overall lack of knowledge and interest, and promote the park and its facilities to a wide audience. To this end the FEIS hosted their first Summer Finale, which was held at the Astotin Lake recreation area, in the heart of the Park.

Although the day started cool and crisp, by lunch time the sun was shining and doing its best to heat up the breezy air. Rod Blair, Park Superintendent, opened the event. He warmly greeted the aboriginal representatives, the local producers and crafts people who made up the farmer's market, and the general public. He also spoke of the Friends and the work and support they have provided to the Park.

From 11 a.m. there was something for everyone. Fifteen vendors made up the farmers' market, with goods ranging from food to chairs. Although they were buffeted by mischievous breezes and winds all day, they had a good time, took home less than they brought and can't wait to be asked again. The weiner roast kept everyone full and satisfied. Visitors lined up for three solid hours as people waited to get their hot dogs fresh off the BBQ. Several interpretive sessions were offered by the Park's associates and these were enthusiastically received, in particular the display on the Uses of the



The Kickin' Mule Band provided spirit-lifting music with their mix of bluegrass, country, folk, and R&B tunes.

Bison, which took place in the theatre. It is planned to incorporate more of these lively and educational presentations into future events.

The White Buffalo Dancers and Drummers Society performed under the sun by the shore of Astotin Lake. They thrilled the audience with the challenging and intricate Hoop Dance, depicting the forms of butterflies, eagles, flowers and

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The Friends of Elk Island Society is proud to announce their new website which can be found at <http://www.elkisland.ca>. The site is still in the early stages of development but ideas and contributions from the membership would be most welcome. We want to make this your site and an authority on the Park. Key features of the site will include:

- News relating to the FEIS and the Park
- Details of upcoming events
- Bulletin boards for public discussion and publication of Park notices
- Details of current research projects

To contribute to the site or make comments please email membership@elkisland.ca

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tornadoes with a skill and dexterity that was enchanting to watch. The stately Women's Dance illustrated the spirit and connection of the First Nations to the earth. The lively Fancy Shawl Dance was pure energy in motion. The proud young women that twirled and glided to



Members of The White Buffalo Dancers and Drummers Society contributed grace and beauty to the afternoon's proceedings, by sharing several of their traditional dances.

the steady beat of the drums are an example of the spirit and heritage to which they belong.

Floyd Wood, a Cree Medicine Man and Elder, delivered a simple but compelling presentation on aboriginal culture. He shared some of the traditions with the audience, including the Eagle stick and its connection to the very soul of its owner. He spoke about the talking stick and its power to discipline meetings and deliberations. Floyd clearly gave voice to his determination to help direct the youth of today to grasp values of respect, love and tradition. Floyd also demonstrated craft and artist skills with Joanne Steinhauer, an aboriginal artist of repute. They presented an impressive display of crafts and imagery and were keen to answer all questions concerning their work.

Throughout the afternoon the entertainment alternated between the dancers and the 'foottappinhighslappinhand-clappinribticklinheartpumpin-spiritliftin' Kicking Mule band featuring Rose Suter on guitar and vocals; Dave Johnston on guitar and vocals; Harry Johnston on lead guitar, vocals, fiddle and bass; Chris Wakelin on banjo, guitar and vocals; Bob Glidden on dobro, lead guitar, mandolin

and bass; Anne Glidden on double bass and Ted Glidden on guitar. They played an impressive selection of bluegrass, country, folk and R&B music that had everyone tapping toes and wanting more. If the audience had been a little less shy and not so full of hot dogs, they would have been dancing in the street! With the 'Wardens on Horseback' sedately cruising the recreation area it can be declared that the day was a success and a taste of more to come.

Many thanks to everyone who participated, lent a hand and offered sponsorship - Alberta Pork for their fine Hot Dogs, Alberta Bison Commission for their marvellous Bison Hot Dogs and Smokies and to Lakeland IGA for the buns, condiments and drinks. Special thanks go out to Paddy Sparkling Eyes of the White Buffalo Dancers and Drummers Society for her help in arranging the dancers, to Rose Suter and Dave Johnston for rounding up the band, to the parks staff for all their help, and to the Friends, Denise Hammel, Neil Darlow and in particular those who singed their eyebrows and will never look at a hot dog in anger again: Sandy and Tom Nakashima, Les Campbell, Rick Watts and Leslie

Sept 1 was a success and in order to continue and improve on this, a call for volunteers to make up a Special Events Sub-committee is issued. This group will be responsible for planning and arranging more events throughout the year, starting with a Christmas party for the membership. Please contact Liz Watts on 780-922-5203 or via e-mail at events@elkiland.ca

Our sincere thanks to STAPLES, Sherwood Park, for their support and sponsorship of The Trumpeter

Meet the New Members of the Board – Friends of Elk Island Society

Les Campbell: Chairman

This is my first year as a member of the Friends of Elk Island Society. I have belonged to a several service clubs over the past few years and now look forward to working for the benefit of Elk Island Park. I am retired from the trucking/construction industries. My time is now devoted to caring for our small herd of horses, and helping neighboring farmers with various chores.

Terry Cossey: Vice-Chairman

I was born on September 30, 1945 and educated in Lamont County, Chipman and Lamont Schools. I attended NAIT to obtain a Business Administration Diploma. I also attended the University of Alberta programs in Local Government Studies - Assessment major and attained AMAA designation (Alberta Municipally Accredited Assessor). I am married to Diane and we have three children—Curtis, Leslie and Carmen. I worked for the City of Edmonton as a Regional Director of Assessment Services and retired after 32 years. I presently work with CDC Consulting Services, a company that provides assessment and appraisal services to the Western Services. I have been a Councillor on Lamont County Council for 7 years, serving on several committees and boards. I currently operate a farm in Lamont County and maintain a small cow-calf operation.

Sandy Nakashima: Treasurer

I was born and raised in California and moved up to Edmonton with my husband Tom, some 30 years ago when Tom got his first job at the University of Alberta after his post graduate studies. This was supposed to be a few years stay but ended up much longer. For the past 15 years I have worked at the University of Alberta in various office positions and currently I administer the graduate student program in the Department of Renewable Resources. My hobbies and interests include mostly outdoor activities, such as

WELCOME to all the new Board Members and THANKS for your commitment to the Friends of Elk Island Society!

Front Row: (l-r) Les Campbell, Georgina Campbell, Denis Hammel, Nicole Girard

Middle Row: (l-r) Tom Nakashima, Tina Hunt, Sandy Nakashima, Neil Darlow, Glynnis Hood

Back Row: (l-r) Liz and Rick Watts

Missing: Stephanie Grossman, Terry Cossey



hiking, biking, skiing, gardening, golfing and fishing. I enjoy wildlife and wildflower viewing and accompany Tom on bird watching trips around Alberta. One of our favorite spots is Elk Island National Park. By volunteering with the Friends, I hope to help promote the many opportunities to view its natural beauty and diversity of flora and fauna.

Nicole Girard: Secretary/ Newsletter

I was born in Edmonton and have lived and worked in many different places. I am currently working for a school portrait company in Edmonton. I love coming to Elk Island for the tranquility and to rejuvenate my energy when I am exhausted by the pace of city life. I joined the Board to give back what I could to the Park.

Liz Watts: Special Events Director

Born in Ontario, raised in B.C., I hold fond memories of summers spent in a wilderness logging camp on the B.C. coast. Transplanted to the UK for far too many years, I graduated as a Microbiologist from London University and entered the world of research, ending up working within the pharmaceutical sector and running my own Contract Research Organisation with my husband Rick. We have 2 daughters, 2 cats and 2 dogs. I have now returned to Canada and settled with my family on an acreage, east of Sherwood Park and bordering the Waskahagan

staging area. I have always loved the countryside and the flora and fauna it supports. I also love throwing a good party, BBQs in particular! As Special Events Director, I plan to ensure that visitors to Elk Island National Park and Members of the Friends of Elk Island Society have fun-filled events to attend and memories to store.

Georgina Campbell: Editor of the Trumpeter

This is my first year as a member of FEIS. I enjoy the Park and many of the people who work in it. I look forward to working with Nicole and Trudy Harrold to produce regular copies of The Trumpeter. I have been involved in freelance writing and public relations duties for 25 years. I am a full time freelance writer and a field editor for the Grainews magazine.

Rick Watts: Public Relations

I moved to Canada from the UK in July 2001 and have an honours degree in Biological Sciences. I joined the Friends of Elk Island in order to contribute to my local community. I bring to the Friends my experience in Information Technology and Management after working for ten years with Britain's largest 'high street' bank. I also have research experience, gained setting up a successful Contract Research Organization (CRO) with my wife Liz before moving to Canada. In my spare time I joined the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and am a trained 'Pond Warden'. I also have

experience working as a volunteer Research Assistant on a number of Friends-funded projects within Elk Island National Park. My special interests are aquatic invertebrates and also the Internet. I am currently producing the Friends web site. (<http://www.elkisland.ca>).

Denise Hammel: Education Director and Gift Shop Coordinator

I am presently finishing my last year of studies at Concordia University College of Alberta and will graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental and Biology studies. I am also actively involved in enforcing Conservation and Environmental Protection as a Seasonal Conservation Officer with the Alberta Government. I have been actively involved with Elk Island National Park in the Aboriginal Interpretation program, Trumpeter Swan Reintroduction Program, and the Elk Management program over the past five years as either a Parks Canada employee or as a volunteer. Now I am looking forward to maintaining my connection and enjoyment of Elk Island National Park as a volunteer with the Friends of Elk Island.

"The importance of our water, lands and skies are a gift to be passed down through the generations, never to be let astray or abandoned, as we ourselves will not only be condoning it but condemned in it." Denise Hammel 2002

Glynnis Hood: Membership Coordinator

I have worked with Parks Canada since 1988, formerly as a Park Interpreter (1988-1992) and currently as a warden (1992-present). I am a PhD candidate at the University of Alberta in the Department of Biological Sciences. I study beaver/ungulate interactions in Elk Island National Park. I have been the Membership Coordinator for the FEIS Board since June 2002.

Neil Darlow: Volunteer Coordinator

This is my first year volunteering for the FEIS. I am a second year PhD student at the University of Alberta. I am originally from the U.K. and look forward to experiencing the great outdoors of Canada. I am researching the effects of habitat fragmentation on red squirrels. I wanted to contribute to furthering the mandate of Elk Island National Park

Stephanie Grossman: Fundraising

I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta in Biological Sciences and have conducted research in and around Elk Island National Park for the last two years. My research involves surveying all species of owls and determining landscape characteristics associated with their presence and absence. I am a true bird-nerd, having been involved in studying and admiring birds of all varieties and their ecology for the last five years. I am now responsible for fundraising for the

FEIS and look forward to working with the other board members, our general members, and the Park.

Tom Nakashima: Director-at-Large

I was born and raised in California and came to Edmonton 30 years ago to accept a position in the Chemistry Department at the University of Alberta as Supervisor of a research lab. I'm married and have two sons. My outside interests include fly fishing, golfing, birdwatching, cross-country skiing and most outdoor activities. I became a Board Member because my wife and I enjoy visiting the Park and would like to promote its attractions to other people in and around Edmonton.

Tina Hunt: Director-at-Large

Born in the UK, I emigrated to Canada in 1978. Taking time off to raise a young family, I started working for Lamont County in 1986, and today wear many different hats, including Secretary to the Manager, Returning Officer and Economic Development & Tourism Coordinator. I enjoy the challenges of my position and I like to meet new people through participation on various groups and committees. A long time resident of Fort Saskatchewan, I am a board member for the Volunteer Programs Association, a group that administers the Volunteer Centre, Victim Services, Community Justice and Mediation, and STATS.

From the Chairman's Desk

The current Board of Directors for the Friends of Elk Island Society (FEIS) has faced a number of challenges since its formation in July 2002. All of the Board members are new to their jobs. It has been a question of determining the questions so we could look for the answers.

Thanks to the enthusiasm of all Board members we now have not only found many of the questions but we also have some answers.

The Society hosted its first event in the Park on

September 1, 2001. Thanks to the enthusiasm and dedication of Liz Watts, Special Events Chairperson, and her group of volunteers the "Summer Finale" was an outstanding success.

We look forward to an eventful year as the Board strives to support EINP and gains new members to carry out its endeavours. Please contact Membership Chairperson Glynnis Hood at 490-7764 and join us "at the Park".

Les Campbell

Did you know that both the LARGEST mammal species in North America (wood bison) and the SMALLEST (pygmy shrew) can be found within Elk Island National Park?

EINP Superintendent Forsees A Win-Win Situation

Rod Blair, Superintendent of Elk Island National Park, (EINP) will mark his 4th anniversary with the Park in November.

Rod began his National Parks career at Klondike National Historic Sites in Dawson City as the general works manager. He later worked at the Regional Office in Winnipeg and at National Parks Headquarters in Ottawa before transferring to the Pacific Rim National Park on Vancouver Island.

His duties, as Park Superintendent include overall Park management as well as working with the Park's neighbors and various levels of government. He also works as one of the senior managers in the Parks Canada Agency.

Rod explains that Parks Canada became an Agency, rather than a federal government department three years ago.

"An Agency is about half way between a department and a Crown Corporation," he explains. Agencies still report to the Minister while a Crown Corporation reports to the Federal Cabinet. However the move to being an Agency gives us a different structure. We are headed by a Chief Executive Officer rather than a Minister. It also gives us the authority to retain revenue. Any fund-



Rod Blair- Elk Island National Park Superintendent

ing that comes to a department must go into general revenue whereas an Agency or Crown Corporation can keep its revenue. Revenue made in EINP stays in EINP."

He notes the Agency is applying for additional funding to recapitalize and repair facilities in the Park.

Rod says he wants the Park to continue in the direction it is going.

"Right now we are leading the country in some aspects," he says. "We are working with our neighbors in the five counties that border the Park to protect

the ecosystem that the park sits within. EINP is the only Park in the country that is doing that now. Those counties are Lamont, Beaver, Leduc, Camrose and Strathcona."

"The counties control much of the development directly around the Park and will be able to control impacts on the Park and within the Beaver Hills system," Rod says. We were able to offer them some expertise that they don't have and we are willing to work together with them on social-economic issues as well as environmental issues. That is what brought us together. It is a win-win situation. I think everyone will benefit."

Rob Kaye Goes to Australia

Senior Park Warden Rob Kaye is taking a cue from Elk Island National Park's (EINP) Trumpeter Swans and heading south for the winter.

Rob is participating in an exchange program that allows him to spend the next year in Australia. His base, during his stay, will be Lake Eildon National Park in southeast Australia near Melbourne, Victoria.

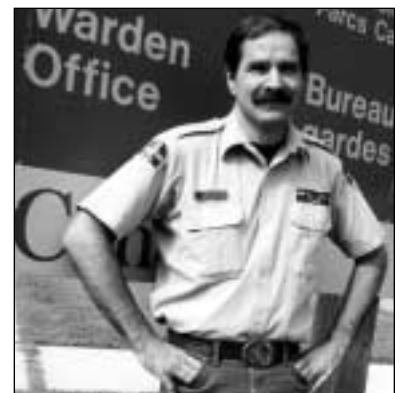
Australian Park Ranger Kane Weeks, initiated the exchange program. He will join EINP at the end of September, shortly before Rob leaves for Australia.

"It will be a new environment, with new wildlife, new experiences and new challenges for both of us," says Rob. "I will take over many of his goals and duties and he will

assume many of my responsibilities. I know I will be involved in exotic species management and environmental assessment as well as some forms of wildlife management programs. Lake Eildon National Park has red kangaroos and koala bears. I have heard there are several species of poisonous snakes and a host of bird species."

Rob and Kane Weeks hope to develop a program that allows them to work in other national parks on a short-term basis.

"Kane will likely go to Jasper while I go to another Australian park," adds Rob. "We may set up a situation where we each work in 4 different national parks."



Rob Kaye will be off to Australia for the next year on an exchange program.

Kane and Rob will spend one week together in EINP as Kane is expected to arrive September 28, and Rob leaves on October 6.

Trumpeter Swan Numbers Continue to Grow

by Rob Kaye

The population of Trumpeter Swans in Elk Island National Park continues to grow. In 2002, we had 3 breeding pairs. They produced 12 cygnets. Unfortunately the north end pair lost 2 cygnets and the male near the end of July. It may be coincidence but there was a very intense lightning storm that night with a lot of rain and cold temperatures. Those factors should not account for the mortality of an adult swan under normal circumstances. We really do not what happened.

We hope the lone female will bring a new male back to elk Island National Park. Normally the female takes



Rob Kaye and Gerry Beyersbergen weighing a swan.

the male where she wants to nest but we have already proven the exception to that rule. In at least one instance the male has brought the female to where he wanted to nest.

If for some reason she meets a male who overpowers her ruling, and decides to go some where else, we might lose her. We won't know until next spring.

However, the numbers continue to

increase. In 2,000 we had 8 swans including 2 breeding pairs return to the Park and 12 swans migrated. In 2001 we had 9 swans return including 3 breeding pair and had 16 swans migrate out of the park.

This year 18 swans returned to the Park. If the 10 cygnets fledge a total of 27 swans will migrate out of the Park.

The population fluctuation is indicative of any reintroduction program. In 1990, because females take between 3 and 6 years to sexually mature, we could not expect any breeding pairs until the mid 1990s. It was 1995, indeed, that we had our first breeding pair. They hatched 5 cygnets but lost all the cygnets and the female as well.

It was not until 1998 that we had another breeding pair. We call them our first successful breeding pair in Elk Island National Park in the over 100 years. They raised the cygnets to the fledgling stage and they migrated out of the Park.

One or more of the female sub-adults could be sexually mature by 2003 we may have more than 3 breeding pair.

I think the program looks as if has been a success. I

would like to give it a few more years before calling it a total success. If we lose 1 or 2 of those breeding pairs we could be back to 1 or 2 breeding pairs. When we have more than three breeding pairs and 30 swans in the Park, I will consider the project successful.

Our partners in the Trumpeter Swan Reintroduction Program partners have been The Canadian Wildlife Service, Parks Canada Elk Island National Park and The Friends of Elk Island Society (FEIS). The FEIS have been involved directly in helping with the program from capturing to monitoring and helping with our own media stories. Denise Hammel, of the FEIS has donated hundreds of hours to the program. Amy Leach, a former president of FEIS has put in many, many hours of work with the swans.



Rob Kaye and Trisha Lang (Canadian Wildlife Service) taking a swan back to shore to sex, collar, and weigh.



Denise Hammel releasing a swan after it has been collared.

Who's Your Neighbor

By Colleen Gerwing

If you visited the Astotin Theatre in Elk Island National Park any Saturday night this summer you met some of the Neighbours who make up the Beaver Hills ecosystem.

Aunt Flora welcomed coyote, beaver, mosquito, elk, goldenrod, grasses, bison, water, fire, air, earth and many others, to join with some of the people also found in the Beaver Hills neighbourhood: industry, farmers, counties, nature societies, and more.

Elk Island National Park is about 25% of the Beaver Hills ecosystem, made up of aspen parklands and wetlands raised 60 metres above the surrounding prairie.

An ecosystem is like a community or neighbourhood. The Beaver Hills is a community of landscape, plants, animals and human culture now surrounded by 1 million people. There are more roads, buildings, houses, fences and industry than ever before in the area.

The question is how to preserve this ecosystem. The answer is to get everyone involved, from private citizen to National Park, from birdwatcher to Corporation, in expressing their value for the Beaver Hills. In addition, issues must be identified and solutions offered. For example, a village might recognize the importance of a local creek and restore its banks to a non-polluted environment that encourages a diversity of plants and animals.

Elk Island National Park offers interpretive programs that educate about our natural and cultural heritage. As well as school programs in spring and fall, summer programs involve visitors from all over the world. Local visitors and people of all ages add to the richness of participants. Aunt Flora (a.k.a. Park interpreter Colleen Gerwing), and her twin sister Fauna, mixed music, mapping and role playing in 50 minutes of informative fun for all ages. Flora's presentation started with the glaciers that created the hills and basins, and continued up to the 21st century showing a highly managed national park surrounded an extensively developed Beaver Hills. Flora helped players express the three Cs behind the neighbourhood block party she organized: Celebration, Concerns, Contributions. Since the party was a potluck, these were mixed into a casserole and fed back as doggie bags revealing the three simple rules Flora still lives by: respect all life, take only what you need, and, for the planet's sake, use all that you take.

"Who's Your Neighbor" finished the 2002 season on August 30 but no matter where you live, Flora and Fauna are nearby. No matter who you are, you live in a neighbourhood, an ecosystem of some kind.

These communities need protection both within and outside of national parks. Your commitment to action may seem like just a drop in Astotin Lake, over which this program took place...but then the lake is just made up of drops. I know, because Aunt Flora said so, and she is as old and wise as the hills.

Bison and Elk Herds Change Routine

The bison and elk that roam Elk Island National Park (EINP) will enjoy a change in their annual routine for the 2002-2003 winter.

"For the first time in several decades no elk are being transferred from Elk Island National Park," said Warden Rob Kaye.

"Years ago excess elk were sold by auction. Recently we transferred them to other regions that were reintroducing elk to natural habitat. The decision regarding distribution is made on a year-to-year basis, dependent on how many surplus elk we have and where the animals will go. Last year elk went to Ontario, Tennessee, Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina and a few went to Kentucky."

Three years ago we had 1,800 elk in the Park. In 2002, the spring population of elk was 900 animals. The number will be slightly higher when

the 2002 calves are counted.

"We feel that is the right number for vegetation sources to sustain," explains Kaye. "We do vegetation analysis every year on a field sense basis, as well as a scientific basis. We look at the vegetation resources and what they can maintain. We feel that the population of elk we now have in the Park, for this time period is probably the right number for the vegetation biomass."

He notes the grass has not grown as high this year so the biomass is lower. However, there may be more sedge meadows created by the shrinkage of the water bodies. Those meadows will provide grasses, shrubs and sedges associated with wet areas that will benefit the elk.

The Park's herd of 430 Plains bison will find a new meaning to the word "roam" during the coming winter. It will be the first time in the

history of EINP that bison are free to roam, and graze, the entire Park during the winter.

"Normally the herd is confined to a large winter pasture, at the south end of the Park," says Warden Wes Olson. "The winter pasture is not grazed during the summer and carries the herd through the winter."

The change in practice came about when Park officials did not need to roundup the herd and sort animals for sale as none were sold this fall. The bison will forage for feed, competing with other animal species for available feed.

The 370 Wood bison, maintained on the south side of Hwy 16, bring the total number of bison to 800, not including spring calves. Wood bison are normally fed from November to March but they, too, will compete with other Park animals for forage in the coming winter.

The Friends' Photo Album



Clockwise from top left: Glynnis Hood (left) and Wes Olson (right) were "Wardens on Horseback" for Summer Finale; Aunt Flora (Colleen Gerwing) struts her stuff in a summer interpretive program; Floyd Wood shares his native culture during summer Finale; Denise Hammel and Barry Baidak with a sub-adult trumpeter swan; the new Board of FEIS meets in July to begin their work.



Mission Statement — Friends of Elk Island Society The Friends of Elk Island Society is a non-profit, charitable organization that co-operates with Parks Canada to promote understanding, appreciation and respect for Elk Island National Park. The FEIS fulfils this mission by participating in conservation, science-based research, the operation of a sales outlet, special events and providing services to its members. The FEIS raises funds and administers donations to further the objectives of the Society.

Membership Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____ Fax number: _____ E-mail: _____

Individual membership (\$10.00): _____ Family membership (\$15.00): _____

Donation: _____

If you are donating \$25.00 or more, please indicate whether or not you would like us to send you a tax receipt. Send your Membership Form and payment to: Friends of Elk Island Society Box 70, 9920-63 Avenue Edmonton, Alberta T6E 0G9 (780) 988-4842