

# The Trumpeter

A Publication of the Friends of Elk Island Society  
Fall, 2003



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## Butterflies Are Harder To Catch Than You'd Think!!

by Saska Vanhala  
Heritage Interpreter

Elk Island National Park (EINP) held its 5th annual Butterfly Count on July 23, 2003. A slight breeze and temperatures reaching close to 25°C brought perfect weather for the event.

Butterfly counts are held every summer across Alberta in an effort to help catalogue the locations and diversity of over 150 butterfly species found in the province. Catching butterflies is not always as easy as you'd think, but it's a lot more fun than you'd expect!

Over 35 species of butterfly are found in EINP, and with this in mind, my volunteer Jennifer-Ann Eagleson and I headed out to our first stop of the day, the Hay meadows near the Plains Bison handling facility. Jennifer-Ann had the fun task of catching the butterflies. My job on the other hand was to act as a compiler and identify every butterfly that we caught. With identification book ready and butterfly net in hand, off we went in an enthusiastic search for the day's first butterflies! It was not long until she caught a Cabbage White, one of the more common butterflies to be found in that area of the Park.

I was careful to handle the butterfly properly so as not to damage its scale-covered wings as I gently removed it from the net. After showing the proper way to hold a butterfly and pointing out a few of its identifying characteristics to Jennifer-Ann, I gently opened my fingers and watched it fly away.

This was the first of 22 species that we eventually caught, identified and released that day. Butterfly count volunteers help collect valuable information for research being conducted on butterflies in



Kirk Harrold

*The White Admiral butterfly is a common butterfly sighting in late June.*

Alberta, and a sunny day spent catching butterflies is a great way for a family to spend an afternoon outside.

Why catch butterflies you may ask? Well, besides that fact that they are large beautiful insects that don't bite or sting, the presence of certain butterflies may provide very important information to scientists about sensitive habitats. During the five annual butterfly

counts at EINP many new species such as Northern Pearly Eyes and Cranberry Blues that were never known to have lived in this area before have been found. Compiling a good inventory of both the rare and common butterflies in Alberta will help scientists to determine important habitat areas for the conservation of biodiversity. As more and more butterfly species are found each year, EINP really is a great place for all kinds of wildlife. The next time that you visit, see if you can spot the little butterflies flying around the bison feeding in the fields.

For further information on butterfly counts being held in Alberta this year, check out the following URL: <http://owlnut.rr.ualberta.ca/~barb/countlist.html>

### Elk Island National Park

#### Butterfly Species List for 2003:

*Western White, Mustard White, Cabbage White, Clouded Sulphur, Orange Sulphur, Pink-edged Sulphur, Western Tailed Blue, Greenish Blue, Great Spangled Fritillary, Atlantis Fritillary, Northwestern Fritillary, Purple Fritillary, Northern Crescent, Tawny Crescent, Green Comma, Milbert's Tortoiseshell, White Admiral, Northern Pearly eye, Inornate Ringlet, Common Wood Nymph, European Skipper, Long Dash Skipper.*

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# Take a Hike Event

by Ola Cupial, Visitor Services

Parks Canada celebrated our National Parks System and our vastly distinct Canadian wilderness by inviting all nature lovers to a free-entry day into all National Parks on July 19, 2003.

At Elk Island National Park (EINP), the day's events included guided hikes (both interpretive and bird specific for all the birding folk), as well as a hot dog lunch to wind the day down.

I had the pleasure of leading an interpretive hike on the Simmons Trail in the mid-afternoon heat and in the company of some hikers and a swarm of buzzing mosquitoes. Simmons Trail is located in the southwestern corner of the Park and follows the knob and kettle terrain popular in this area. Beaver ponds, rolling hills, and forests intertwine with majestic stands of birch, aspen and poplar as well as a plethora of flowers and shrubs



Rick Watts (left), his daughter Katie (center) and Mark Degner (not shown) led this group of Chinese visitors on the Amisk Wuche Trail interpretive walk as part of the Parks Canada Day celebrations. (Photo by Mark Degner)

like fireweed, fleabane and wintergreen. The two-hour excursion was not only pleasing for the legs but also the eyes and nose.

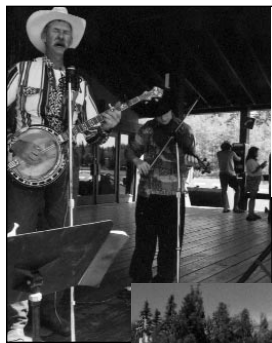
This area, the Beaverhills in its entirety, was formed by deglaciation some 50,000 years ago leaving behind depressions we commonly call "sloughs" today. This feature is a great attraction to a variety of waterfowl, land and shore birds that call EINP home.

Among those residing here are

the endangered Trumpeter Swan, the funny water-pump sounding American Bittern and all forms of hawks, sparrows, and flycatchers, as the list of over 250 species continues.

Hopefully, everyone or mostly everyone got to enjoy the hot Saturday afternoon with binoculars and water in hand. But if you missed out on all the "hoohah" this season, don't fret- just plan to attend next year for some "natural" entertainment.

## FEIS Hosts "CELEBRATE CANADA" Event



Georgina Campbell



Georgina Campbell

The Friends of Elk Island Society hosted their second "Celebrate Canada" event on June 29th. Catering and entertainment was supplied by a spectacular Romanian dance group while the blue grass band "Home Fire" provided down home music throughout the day. The day was enhanced for many with the rare treat of "bison on a bun" sold throughout the day by FEIS.

## EINP'S United Way Fund-Raising Event a Great Success

by Sue Yakimoski

Each August, the Elk Island National Park (EINP) staff comes together to hold a half-day of games and activities in the effort of raising money for United Way.

On August 12, a large crowd gathered at The Point, off Astotin Lake. A tasty barbecue lunch started the program - hot dogs and coleslaw all around! After feeding and watering, the games began. Barry, Ola and Shannon hit the jackpot with the 'human slot machine'. Jennelle, Barry and Saska claimed prizes in the rubber band shoot. The slave auction was a huge success as well. Nine park staff members were kind enough to donate two hours of their time to the highest bidder. Many thanks to Warden Elaine McNeill, for taking three slaves home with her. Ross Chapman was volunteered as a slave in his absence - let this be a warning to all of you for next year.

The lunch and toonie-games brought in \$247.50 and the auction raised \$276.00. A grand total of \$523.50 was collected for United Way this year, approximately \$100 more than last year. Way to go, team!

Everyone was happy to wrap the hot August day up with Warden Tim Neufeld's Extreme Canoe Race. Spectators pulled up their lawn chairs and a cold soda. Participants braved the green waters of Astotin Lake, and did so at their own risk. The course was laid out as in barrel racing, and points were awarded according to speed, style, and originality. Flying water balloons left some spectators a little more involved than they had planned. Bonus points were of course awarded to several teams for capsizing. The big winners were, Murray & Wayne, Robb & Ola, and Jennelle & Kane.

We would like to thank the United Way fundraiser committee members: Elaine McNeill, Evelyn Henke and Tim Neufeld, and the social committee for donation of several prizes. A special thanks to these generous donors that made this event so successful: Headquarters Salon and Day Spa - from Fort Saskatchewan, Boston Pizza - from Fort Saskatchewan, Sorrentino's - from Sherwood Park, Galaxy Cinema's - from Sherwood Park, Ukrainian Village, and Canadian Heritage - Edmonton. See you all next year!

# Message from the President

Summer is over and we're well into fall. The new Board voted in at May's AGM has met and appointed the Directors responsibilities. The structure of the Board is detailed elsewhere in this issue so I won't go into detail, however key changes are the appointments of Neil Darlow, Pierre Cardon and Mark Degner as Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary respectively. These three are already doing a great job.

The focus of the Board over the winter months will be on business planning and fundraising. As a precursor to this we have established a number of committees focusing on the key elements of the Society's function. These are: Statutory Committee (Business Planning and Legislative Compliance), Communications Committee, Special Events, Conservation, Research and Education, and Gift Shop.

While currently these committees are staffed mainly by the Board we would welcome involvement from the membership. I'm sure many of you could add value to the Society through being involved in this way. If you are interested please call me at (780) 922-5203.

One of the stated objectives of the Society is to support conservation and research within the Park. The Society has continued to support the Trumpeter Swan reintroduction program but in recent years has provided no research funding. In April, a total of \$32,000, which had previously been set aside for grassland research, which has been deemed no longer a priority in EINP, was reallocated for conservation, research and education. As



*FEIS Chairman,  
Rick Watts*

a result we now have a platform from which to provide funding independently of the Society's general finances.

In July the Conservation, Research and Education Committee, chaired by Neil Darlow, met to consider applications for a total of \$4,000 of available funding. Three applications were received, all of which had been reviewed and approved by the Park's Science Advisory Committee and all of which are considered to be priorities for research within Elk Island. The committee approved all three applications for a share of this funding.

The projects are as follows:

- 1) Habitat fragmentation and the movement behaviour of the red squirrel, *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*: functional connectivity in Alberta's aspen parkland.
- 2) The impact of herbivory and fire on riparian vegetation and maintenance of beaver ponds in Elk Island National Park.
- 3) Canadian and Western Toads in Elk Island National Park: present status and factors influencing current distributions.

I believe the establishment of the CRE committee and associated fund represents a significant milestone in the history of the Society. We will be looking to build on this in future years.

*Rick*

Rick Watts, Chairman  
e-mail: [chair@elkisland.ca](mailto:chair@elkisland.ca)

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## Directors Elect Executive

The first regular meeting of the 2004/2004 Board of Directors of the was held June 10, 2003.

The Board welcomed new members Pierre Cardon and Mark Degner to the Society and to the Board.

The responsibilities of the Directors are as follows::

Chairperson, Rick Watts; Vice-Chairperson, Neil Darlow; Treasurer, Pierre Cardon; Secretary, Mark Degner; Special Events, Liz Watts; Gift Shop, Tina Hunt; Membership, Glynnis Hood; Newsletter, Georgina Campbell; PR/Media Nicole Girard; Admin/Volunteer Coordinator, Les Campbell.

**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 fulfills 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.

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

# Meet the New Directors

## Mark Degner

Having been born and raised in Edmonton, I had an early introduction to Elk Island National Park. However, it wasn't till I started doing nature and wildlife photography in the mid 1980's that I really started to visit and appreciate the Park. Since then my wife, Leslie, and I have been frequent year-round visitors, photographing, nature watching, hiking, canoeing and cross-country skiing. In fact, one of the main reasons for our move to Sherwood Park from south Edmonton was so that we would be closer to Elk Island. Many of the photos that we have taken in the Park have appeared in calendars, books and magazines. I am a biologist with a B.Sc. and an M.Sc. in Zoology from the U. of A. and have been involved in many biological research projects, most recently the endangered Banff Springs Snail and invertebrates of Banff's thermal springs. I currently teach Biology and Zoology in the University Studies Program at Grant MacEwan College in Edmonton.

By becoming involved with the Friends of Elk Island Society I hope to give something back to the place that I derived so much enjoyment from.



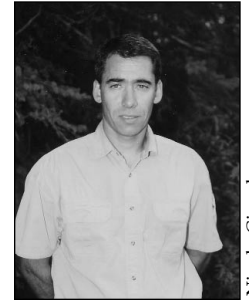
Nicole Girard

## Pierre Cardon

My wife (Tracy) and I have been coming out to Elk Island Park for years. Our visits are usually during the week, first thing in the morning, when there are few, if any, other visitors. I still find it amazing that Elk Island Park isn't teaming with people all the time, given it's proximity to the city.

I didn't know of the Friends of Elk Island Society until last fall when a friend passed along an e-mail regarding a Bison Walk. It was during this walk that I met most of the current board members. Tracy and I enjoyed the talk by Wes and enjoyed the company of the people we met that day. After a few other events, like the Bird Count and Family Ski Day, Sandy invited me to get a bit more involved with the Society..... It's a very short story of how I got here.

I don't have much experience when it comes to being part of a Board of Directors. For the past 17 years I've been employed by the City of Edmonton as a Firefighter. But I do have a strong desire to help preserve this amazing National Park. Thanks to the membership for letting me be a part.



Nicole Girard

## UPCOMING EVENTS

• **October 25, 2003: Beaver Walk** with Glynnis Hood, Park Warden and PhD candidate, University of Alberta. Time: 1 pm. Location: Beaver Pond Trail Head - approximately 2 kms north of the Astotin Lake Recreation Area on the Parkway (about 1/2 hour drive from Highway 16). Duration: 2 hours. Difficulty: Easy walk - 3.5 kms - some small

hills. What to bring: Warm clothes, binoculars, something warm to drink Cost: free to members, \$2 donation for non-members; all must pay Park fee to enter Park. Topic: Beaver Ecology in Elk Island National Park, a fun day with our furry friends.

• **October 23, 2003:** Chief Park Warden Steve Otway explains **The Beaver Hills Initiative**. Join us at the Theatre in the Park at 7 p.m. The

Beaver Hills is a hilly, wooded area between Sherwood Park, Tofield and Lamont. Much of the area remains undeveloped. The Beaver Hills Initiative is a ground-breaking initiative to build partnerships amongst a dozen agencies and governments in the Beaver Hills, and to create a long-term stewardship plan to manage the land in a co-operative manner. Regular Park entrance fees will apply.

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### 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