

MEEWASIN EXPLORER

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2018

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Meewasin and EcoConnexions Plant 1680 Trees and Shrubs

Meewasin received \$25,000 from the EcoConnexions program for the purpose of planting 1680 trees and shrubs in the Meewasin Valley to enhance restoration of disturbed riverbank lands and contribute to biodiversity.

Meewasin staff members were joined by 30 volunteers at the initial planting on Tuesday, September 19, 2017, and another 30 volunteers attended the second planting on Friday, September 22, 2017, at Chief Whitecap Park. Volunteers included students from the Eco Justice program at St. Edwards School.

The formal event held on October 26, 2017, with 45 volunteers featured comments from Saskatoon's Mayor Charlie Clark, and Whitecap Dakota First Nation Chief Darcy Bear. Manager of CN Public Affairs Robin Speer, Tree Canada Representative Cassandra Almeida, St. Edward's students Ronin Sawitsky and Fraya Seitz and Meewasin's Interim Chief Executive Officer Doug Porteous also spoke.

Thanks to CN, Tree Canada and the Government of Canada who partnered together to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation. The CN EcoConnexions program promotes community sustainability through the greening of communities and First Nations across Canada. These organizations assist Canadian communities and First Nations groups in establishing tree planting and green space enhancement initiatives in a sustainable, environmentally responsible manner.

In recognition of this support, a plaque has been placed on the site. It was unveiled at the event on October 26, 2017.



Meewasin Receives \$1.34 M from City of Saskatoon

On Tuesday, November 28, 2017, the City of Saskatoon approved a total of \$1,344,400 in funding support for the Meewasin Valley Authority. The support of Saskatoon City Councillors was unanimous and much appreciated by Meewasin. The money will be used for trails funding, operating the Meewasin skating rink, and support for Meewasin's core operations in Conservation, Development and Education. This funding is the first step in securing a funding package from the three participating parties for the up-coming Meewasin fiscal year (April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019).

Created in 1979, Meewasin is a partnership of the City of Saskatoon, Government of Saskatchewan and University of Saskatchewan who felt they could best manage their riverbank lands through one organization. The three partners agreed at that time each would provide a percentage of the annual budget with statutory funding. When we see what has been conserved and developed in the river valley in the past 38 years, the concept has been a tremendous success.

However, during that time, the value of the annual statutory funding from the three partners has been on a gradual decline going from \$35 per capita to less than \$10 per capita this past fiscal year. On March 22, 2017, Meewasin received \$409,000 less from the Government of Saskatchewan and \$34,000 less from the University – a 17% decrease in funding, resulting in a decrease in programs and services.

Along with this reduction, the Meewasin Valley Authority Act (1979) was amended removing the statutory funding requirements of the Government of Saskatchewan and the University. As a result, the funding Meewasin will receive from the Government of Saskatchewan and the University in 2018 is unknown. An analysis has been prepared which captures 'The Meewasin Advantage' - the remarkable efficiencies that derive from Meewasin's holistic and agile capability to provide services at rates considerably more efficient than any of our partners can achieve individually, in some instances up to 4.6 times more effectively.

At this time, Meewasin donors and supporters can help by:

- Thanking the City of Saskatoon City Council & Administration for their support;
- Making a donation to Meewasin at meewasin.com; and
- Letting your leadership candidates in the Legislative Assembly know your thoughts.

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Meewasin 

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT MEEWASIN

Dark Skies at the Creek 2017



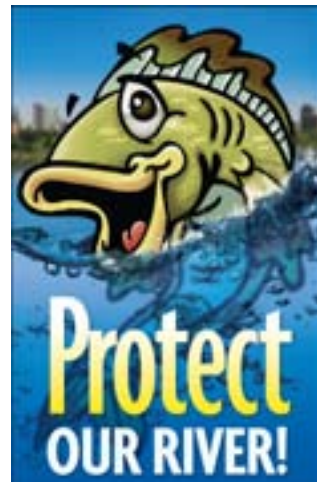
In association with Bat Awareness Month and the International Observe the Moon Night, on October 28, 2017 Beaver Creek Conservation Area held its annual Dark Skies at the Creek event. The event was a great success with over 500 people visiting the site to learn about the importance of dark skies for nocturnal wildlife, the negative effects of light pollution, and what Meewasin is doing to actively monitor light pollution within our river valley. The event included a guest speaker from the Saskatchewan Light Pollution Abatement Committee, a create your own planet station, viewing the moon through telescopes with members of the Royal Astronomical Society, and visitors getting a chance to meet live bats from the University of Saskatchewan Ecology Camp for Kids program. This project brings a unique opportunity for visitors to experience nature at night and to educate residents of the city of

neighboring ecosystems.

With over 20% of the terrestrial surface of our planet experiencing light pollution in its many forms, we are now beginning to understand the importance of maintaining dark skies for human health, plant physiology and nocturnal wildlife populations. Many studies have identified the negative effects of light pollution on human health, correlating greater light pollution with disrupting sleep patterns, negatively affecting the regulation of a variety of hormones, and lessening memory retention. Light pollution has been shown to negatively affect nocturnal wildlife and ecosystems as a whole by changing animal behaviours, disrupting seasonal movements, and altering the structure of ecosystems. Recent research has indicated that many native species residing in and around the City of Saskatoon depend on dark skies for their survival. Nocturnal species, such as the endangered common nighthawk and the big brown bat, rely on natural darkness for their daily or seasonal behaviours, such as foraging and movement patterns. Northern leopard frogs and tiger salamanders, both recognized as threatened under the Species at Risk Act (SARA), depend upon dark skies for the timing of their vocal calls during their reproductive seasons. Even small changes to the illumination of our natural areas can drastically affect their ecological health and the survivability of the species that encompass them.

Launched in 2015, the Saskatoon Dark Sky Initiative is both a monitoring and educational program aimed at alerting the public about the negative effects of light pollution on nocturnal wildlife within Saskatoon. The program was designed to engage public and students of all ages through in-class programming, Dark Skies public awareness events, and citizen science projects aimed at collecting valuable information on local light pollution within the Meewasin river valley. By mapping the extent of light pollution, future research will be able to identify areas of concern for nocturnal wildlife while also determining the direct effects on wildlife movements and behaviours within Saskatoon.

The Meewasin Valley Authority would like to thank the Saskatoon Nature Society for providing funding for the event through the 2017 Kid's in Nature grant program. We would also like to thank the Royal Astronomical Society Saskatoon Centre, the Saskatchewan Light Pollution Abatement Committee, our public presenters, and the volunteers for participating in the event. We hope to continue this successful program in future years to come, but for now keep your eyes to our dark skies!



Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin, Meewasin Valley Authority, and the City of Saskatoon would like to thank everyone who took part in Yellow Fish Road™ in 2017. This program reminds us that what goes down our storm drains directly impacts our river.

Please join us again in Spring 2018 to spread the word that "Rain Only" should be going down storm drains. Contact sbouchard@saskriverbasin.ca for more information. Learn more about safe disposal of household hazardous waste: saskwastereduction.ca or saskatoon.ca/hazardouswaste or call 306-975-2487.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT MEEWASIN

INVASIVE SPECIES!

We don't realize it, but invasive species are everywhere today... where we live, work and play. They are in our gardens, our back alleys, farmers' fields, native prairie and in our waterways. They are in many of the wildflower seed mixes we plant, and on the boats that we take to the lake. Many of these alien plants came from Europe and Asia over the last 150 years and invasive species like Leafy Spurge are taking over. In the U.S., there are millions of acres of rangeland now covered with Leafy Spurge, which means the lands are lost to production for cattle producers and wildlife habitat is degraded. Leafy Spurge is out-competing grass, which is essential for stabilizing soil. This in turn affects our roadways and at times our drinking water, during periods of heavy rainfall.

The spread of these species is threatening the future of our ecosystem and with it, the health of the communities they support! By their very nature, invasive species crowd out the delicate and diverse balance of natural species in ecosystems. These systems perform life saving functions which filter our air, water and soil of pollutants so dangerous to our health.

Meewasin's donors have been supporting Meewasin's innovative work and programs that so effectively conserve the Meewasin Valley ecosystem such as:

- Leading the way with regional networks and experts, in learning how to manage invasive species, by understanding their impact and how to effectively control or eliminate them using sustainable methods.
- Bringing together government and community partners to change our practices and assumptions about how best to prevent future damage to our fragile ecosystems. The Meewasin Valley today is serving as an outdoor laboratory for learning about the spread of invasive species and those learnings are being shared across western Canada.

WHY SHEEP?

Even though invasive species have been around for more than a century in our green spaces, we have only recently begun to understand their impact and new species are discovered every year. Experts are concerned about the aggressive spread we are seeing. Conservation grazing with sheep is a great example of the innovative practices we are using to tackle conservation problems in the Meewasin Valley. Sheep have a voracious appetite for many types of invasive plants, so they're the perfect ally. Sheep also re-create the conditions that once helped the area's prairie grasslands thrive, as bison herds did hundreds of years ago.

This past fall, our conservation team released 300 sheep into precious grasslands in north eastern Saskatoon (known as the Meewasin Northeast Swale) to do their part for conservation by grazing invasive species. Meewasin staff helped pioneer this novel approach to invasive species management almost two decades ago and have been teaching other cities how to use it ever since. The latest cities to take on conservation grazing are Edmonton and interestingly, London, England. We cannot wait to hear how conservation grazing works in this world class hub of commerce and tourism. To support conservation grazing go to meewasin.com.



HOURS: 9 A.M. - 5 P.M. WEEKDAYS, CLOSED WEEKENDS AND HOLIDAYS

BEAVER CREEK CONSERVATION AREA

INTERPRETING SASKATOON'S NATURAL HISTORY

Hiking at Beaver Creek Conservation Area a new experience for Youth



Thanks to the support from the Community Initiatives Fund through its Community Grant Program Meewasin was able to provide transportation access to Beaver Creek Conservation Area (BCCA) for organizations that support youth, newcomer services, and abilities groups that have transportation barriers.

While on site the groups explored the Interpretive Centre – Discovery Theatre & Beaver Room, hiked a selection of four nature trails, tried the animal silhouette scavenger hunt, hand fed sunflower seeds to the Black-capped Chickadees, and visited the deck to enjoy the sights and sounds of the Beaver Creek Valley. On site interpretive staff provided introductions to the site, direction for activities, and answers to questions.

Beaver Creek Conservation Area is a microcosm of the Meewasin Valley and is located where a prairie creek meets a prairie river. It contains one of the few uncultivated short grass prairie sites in Saskatchewan. The beavers that live here play an important role in keeping the creek habitat teeming with wildlife. Beavers build dams that flood waters upstream, creating beaver ponds. Many plants and animals make their homes in these sheltered ponds.

Thanks to the support provided by the Community Initiatives Fund over 300 people from the Saskatchewan Intercultural Association, Saskatoon Open Door Society, Saskatchewan Association for Community Living and Boys and Girls Clubs of Saskatoon were able to visit BCCA, hike and discover the natural world of the Saskatchewan prairie and South Saskatchewan River system.

A Creek Forming A Valley; A Valley Forming Habitats

BEAVER CREEK CONSERVATION AREA - FOLLOW LORNE AVENUE SOUTH 13 KM ON HIGHWAY #219

CHIP'S HOT LINE: 306-374-2474 FAX: 306-665-6117 E-MAIL: MEEWASIN@MEEWASIN.COM MEEWASIN.COM

UPCOMING EVENTS



PotashCorp Wintershines Skating Party Sunday, January 28, 2018: Join us at the Cameco Meewasin Skating Rink @ *PotashCorp Plaza* from 12-4 p.m. for a skating party as part of the Wintershines Festival! Enjoy music with a DJ, win prizes and warm up with Tim Hortons hot chocolate! The rink will close when windchill exceeds -31C.

Cameco Family Day Skating Party Monday, February 19, 2018: Bring the whole family for a holiday Monday full of skating, winter fun, and hot beverages! Don't miss this chance to make the best of your Family Day. Join us at the Cameco Meewasin Skating Rink @ *PotashCorp Plaza* from 12-4 p.m.



For more information on all Meewasin events, visit our website at meewasin.com/events.

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