

MEEWASIN EXPLORER

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2016

VOLUME 23 - NUMBER 6



Young scientists helping Meewasin Senior Interpreter Kenton Lysak monitor different species in the Meewasin Northeast Swale at the TD Friends of the Environment Bioblitz held on September 17, 2016. Photo Copyright Betty Calvert.

Meewasin Northeast Swale Bioblitz

Consider it an introduction into your own backyard. Meewasin's Bioblitz on September 17, 2016 provided the opportunity to see firsthand the biodiversity found across the Northeast Swale.

"This event was to get the public engaged in the Meewasin Northeast Swale and biodiversity and science," said Renny Grilz, Resource Management Officer with Meewasin. "A bioblitz engages volunteers and citizen scientists to spend one day collecting as much biological information from a site as possible."

About 125 people from the general public played a significant role –collecting samples from wetlands and identifying flora, fauna, and insects. The bioblitz also involved more than a dozen scientists and biologists, some of whom help collect inventories and measurements at nine permanent plots measuring 200 metres in diameter. "We're going to use these plots for permanent monitoring for everything from soil microbes to grassland birds to light pollution," Grilz said.

Meewasin is monitoring the swale over the long term. The initial bioblitz in 2011 established a baseline and helped identify critical areas that were important for biodiversity.

"As the city grows around the swale, we can come back and see if there are new things that weren't here before or things that are missing," Grilz explained. "We want to find where the significant areas are where we don't want trails developed to try to reduce human impact."

Grilz said they are finding new species every day, such as a rare white prairie crocus, as well as a sharp-tailed grouse

breeding ground, known as a lek. Grilz said the lek was a rare find due to the number of birds and the proximity to the city.

A dozen amateur and professional biologists helped collect observations on 123 species (more to be confirmed in the following month). The species information collected will be housed in international databases including eBird and iNaturalist. Volunteers included people from Environment and Climate Change Canada, University of Saskatchewan, Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan, members of the Saskatoon Nature Society, and students from the University of Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan Polytechnic in Prince Albert. Birds, plants, mammals and dragonflies/butterflies were recorded. Volunteers also assisted with the collection of vegetation data at the long-term monitoring plots.

The count is 138 observed species so far, with confirmation of additional species being made over the next two months, mainly water invertebrates. Results will be shared through an internationally accessible database. Grilz said sharing helps research, but can also provide an overall feel for the significance and the richness in species of the site.

The Meewasin Northeast Swale is a diverse network of rare native prairie and wetlands covering 26 kilometres long and 2,800 hectares. The 300 hectares that fall within Saskatoon city limits are bordered on the east and south by the communities of Aspen Ridge and Evergreen.

Meewasin would like to acknowledge TD Friends of the Environment for funding the event. The funding covered some of the costs for the event and field equipment that can be used for long-term monitoring in the Swale. Plans are underway to do a mini-EcoBlitz this winter. The objective will be to record winter mammals (tracks) and birds.



TD Friends of the
Environment
Foundation

MEEWASIN VALLEY AUTHORITY - 402 THIRD AVENUE SOUTH, SASKATOON, SK S7K 3G5

PHONE: 306-665-6887 FAX: 306-665-6117 E-MAIL: MEEWASIN@MEEWASIN.COM

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WHAT'S HAPPENING AT MEEWASIN

Invasive Plant Spotlight – What do you have growing in your yard?



Purple Loosestrife growing in the Meewasin Valley

Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*)

Purple Loosestrife is an invasive plant and designated as noxious in Saskatchewan by the Ministry of Agriculture. Being designated as noxious means that landowners, both urban and rural, have a duty to control these plants on their property (Statutes of Saskatchewan, 2010). Purple Loosestrife is a perennial plant that grows up to 3 m tall and was introduced from Europe as an ornamental escapee, potentially, from ship ballasts to North America. Its popularity as a garden ornamental plant has increased its spread across Canada. A successful campaign in the 1990s against its spread helped to reduce its numbers, but due to the highly invasive nature of Purple Loosestrife, it continues to spread throughout wetlands, rivers, and other bodies of water. Once it begins its spread, it will choke out the native plants (even cattails!) to form a dense monoculture, reducing habitat for wetland species and increasing cover for predators.

Purple Loosestrife forms a taproot that sends up new shoots annually. Its stems are squarish in shape. Its leaves are green, 3-10 cm long, lance shaped and may have fine hairs. On the stem, leaves are typically opposite from each other. Flowers are usually pink to purple with 5-7 petals and clustered to form a spike that flowers from the bottom up. Plants can produce up to 1 million seeds per year. If you find Purple Loosestrife, please notify your local weed inspector who can provide guidance in management. To control this plant you can repeatedly hand-pull or dig small young plants, cut back repeatedly to reduce seed production, release a biocontrol (there are two defoliators and a root mining weevil available), or use a recommended herbicide that is suitable for the task (use of herbicides near water require special precautions and permits). It is important when cutting or pulling the stems and flower heads to properly dispose of the plant parts by burning or bagging, and taking to your local landfill to reduce further spread of the plant.

Meewasin has Purple Loosestrife on a number of its river valley sites due to the very invasive nature of this plant and the spread of seed from upstream. Meewasin's Resource Conservation crew is actively working to control this plant through various integrated invasive species management methods such as: repeated cutting, stem pulling for young plants, herbicide, monitoring and awareness. This year Meewasin controlled Purple Loosestrife at seven sites in partnership with the City of Saskatoon and the RM of Corman Park. The use of a variety of integrated management methods help to increase overall effectiveness in the removal of this plant both within Meewasin's jurisdiction and across the province.

For more information, visit the following resources:

- Saskatchewan Invasive Species Council Fact Sheets "Purple Loosestrife" at http://www.saskinvasives.ca/file/Purple%20Loosestrife%20Fact%20Sheet_2010.pdf

- The Weed Control Act, Statutes of Saskatchewan (2010, c. W-11.1). Retrieved from Saskatchewan's Queen's Printer: <http://www.qp.gov.sk.ca/documents/English/Statutes/Statutes/W11-1.pdf>

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Employment Opportunity

Meewasin is now hiring rink attendants for the 2016-2017 skating season. If you have excellent communication skills and the ability to perform strenuous manual labour in all weather conditions, check out our job posting! <http://meewasin.com/jobs>



Rotary International Peace Plaza Brick Dedication

The Rotary Club of Saskatoon Nutana, in partnership with Meewasin, offers the opportunity to sponsor a brick in honour of past recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize. Bricks are dedicated annually on or near September 21 at a ceremony in Saskatoon's Rotary Park to mark the International Day of Peace.

The red granite bricks recognize the contribution of the peace laureates and promote the Rotary International Peace Plaza as a Saskatoon destination for citizens and tourists. To date, the Peace Plaza recognizes Mother Teresa, Lester B. Pearson, Desmond Tutu, the Red Cross of 1917, the UN Commission for Refugees, Nelson Mandela and F W de Klerk, and in 2015 Norman Borlaug was recognized for the central role he played in the Green Revolution.

This year's peace laureate brick is sponsored by the EcoJustice class at St. Edward School, recognizing Nobel Peace Laureate Malala Yousafzai in recognition of her work in the area of children's rights and education for girls. The ceremony held September 27 included a presentation by the EcoJustice class and greetings from Meewasin (Doug Porteous) and the Rotary Club of Saskatoon Nutana.



St. Edward School EcoJustice Class, Rotary Club of Saskatoon Nutana members, Meewasin staff, and public attended the brick dedication on September 27.

Conserve
Our River Valley

With a gift for those you love

- Shrub \$50 • Deciduous Tree \$150
- Bur Oak or Conifer Tree \$500 • Brick \$250
- Bench \$3000 • Seating Block \$5000

Tax receipts issued. For more information contact Betty at Meewasin at 306-665-6887

A world-class corridor:
naturally beautiful, uniquely ours!

meewasin.com

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Meewasin Releases Promotional Video

After the announcement that Meewasin was closing the Meewasin Valley (Interpretive) Centre (MVC) on July 1, a number of organizations were concerned and asked what they could do to help raise awareness of the work of Meewasin. As a result, there have been public rallies, queries as to what can be done, and a number of promotional videos created by concerned individuals and organizations. One provided to Meewasin is titled "Naturally Beautiful, Uniquely Ours".

Meewasin launched it on October 17 via social media and website meewasin.com



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OPEN 9:00 TO 5:00 WEEKDAYS - NOON TO 5:00 HOLIDAYS

BEAVER CREEK CONSERVATION AREA

INTERPRETING SASKATOON'S NATURAL HISTORY

Beaver Creek Programming

November & December - Open Monday to Friday 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Bring friends and family to discover Beaver Creek Conservation Area. Enjoy the outdoors as nature winds down into winter at the creek by taking a self-guided hike along one of four nature trails. Inside the Interpretive Centre, take time to visit our interpretive displays and the SaskEnergy Beaver Pond room.



Note: At this time the site is closed for the weekends until our Holiday Week in December.

Holiday Hours at the Creek - December 26 to January 1 - Open 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. Daily

Winter Wildlife

During the holiday week enjoy an interpretive program and discover how some of our wild friends are able to stay active and warm throughout the winter season. The program is available each day throughout the holiday week at 2:30 p.m.



Get Tracking

Become a track detective as you search for signs of wild wanderings along one of our nature trails. Track and scat keys are available at the interpretive desk for use on this self-guided hike throughout the holiday week.

Did you know?

Project Feederwatch is a winter-long survey of birds that you can do in your backyard! Information you collect will help scientists track populations and better understand trends in bird distribution.

Go to feederwatch.org to find out more!

Eye Spy with My Nature Eye

Take time to slow down and build your skill of observation as you hike the Yellow Trail to look for animal silhouettes hidden along the way. Ask an interpreter for an Eye Spy clue sheet before you head out on the trail. The program is available each day throughout the holiday week.



Nature Craft

Discover another way to appreciate nature by creating a nature-inspired craft at the Beaver Creek craft table. Available each day throughout the holiday week.

About Beaver Creek Conservation Area



Beaver Creek Conservation Area offers the general public and schools opportunities to discover the wonders of nature year-round.

Weekday daytime group bookings are available throughout November and December by arrangement. Interpretive programs are \$35.00/hour/interpreter.

Call 306-374-2474 for information on program details.

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

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