

MEEWASIN EXPLORER

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Meewasin Valley Update



Interim Chief Executive Officer
Doug Porteous

Created 38 years ago by the Meewasin Valley Authority Act (1979), by wise people with great vision, 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. They agreed that each would support the organization by providing a percentage of the Meewasin annual budget with "statutory funding". The mandate was to conserve the river valley, to develop it for free public access, to let the people have a say in how it was developed, and to educate people about it so that they knew the value of what they had. By all measures, after 38 years, the concept has been a tremendous success when one sees what has been accomplished in the now 67 square km of the Meewasin Conservation Zone. However, the Meewasin concept is one that has continued to be fraught with concern.

A long term decline in funding from our three participating parties (the City of Saskatoon, Government of Saskatchewan and University of Saskatchewan) led to a decision to close the Meewasin Valley Interpretive Centre July 1, 2016. Further to that, a March 22, 2017, reduction of \$409,000 by the Government of Saskatchewan to Meewasin. A reduction of another \$34,000 by the University of Saskatchewan, coupled with an amendment to the Meewasin Valley Authority Act (1979) removing the statutory funding requirements of the Government of Saskatchewan and University of Saskatchewan to Meewasin, resulted in Meewasin tabling its most difficult budget in 38 years.

At this time, the three partners are working together to determine a plan for long term predictable funding so that Meewasin can continue with the next 60 years of the Moriyama 100 Year Conceptual Master Plan. As that funding model unfolds, Meewasin will engage the public for input and support.

In the meantime, Meewasin encourages everyone to walk, run, roll and paddle on the Meewasin Trail. And Meewasin wants everyone to remember that we of Saskatoon and area consider Meewasin to be the single biggest contributor to our quality of life. Meewasin is a unique resource, rare in North America. We are all the guardians, and we must never become complacent.

The sheep are back in town!



Sue Michalsky, M.Sc. is a co-owner of Quarter Circle L Ranch located near Eastend, SK. Quarter Circle L is primarily a cow-calf operation, but also includes a flock of sheep. Sue was raised on a ranch in southwestern Alberta, and has been ranching most of her life. In addition to ranching, she has over 30 years experience in forest and rangeland management, conservation planning and agri-environmental policy development. Her current focus is on conservation projects that enhance the compatibility of agriculture and grassland conservation.

Sue's technical expertise includes range inventories, range and riparian health assessments and management planning for public lands, conservation areas and private ranches; invasive plant species management experience throughout Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba and B.C.; and conservation planning for grassland biodiversity in the Northern Great Plains with an emphasis on species at risk.

The Quarter Circle L flock have participated in leafy spurge grazing projects in Alberta. In addition to the flock, the 2017 grazing team will consist of Sue, Meghan Johnston and Jake, the sheep herding dog.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING AT MEEWASIN

Meewasin Northeast Swale BioBlitz 2017

The Meewasin Northeast Swale was host to a BioBlitz on July 26, 2017 and was part of BioBlitz Canada 150 events across Canada. TD Friends of the Environment Foundation sponsored this citizen science volunteer event at the Swale.

Over 145 people attended the event with several youth and children's groups attending including University of Saskatchewan's Ecology Camp for Kids and professional and amateur naturalists from the Saskatoon Nature Society, Environment and Climate Change Canada, City of Saskatoon, Living Sky Wildlife Rehabilitation Society, and the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan. CTV Saskatoon Morning Live (4 live segments), CBC Radio Saskatoon Morning, Shaw Cable, the Star Phoenix provided media coverage throughout the day while Meewasin was live tweeting and posting to Facebook throughout the day.

The day started at 5 a.m. with a grassland bird surveys and ended at 9 p.m. after a public hike of the Swale. Activities throughout the day also included native prairie health assessments, vegetation surveys, dragonfly and damselfly surveys, water quality monitoring, macroinvertebrate identification, and live traps for minnows and small mammals. Over 200 species were recorded during the day, with species information data will be housed in the iNaturalist Canada database and will be shared with the Saskatchewan Conservation Data Center, Environment and Climate Change Canada and with BioBlitz Canada to assist with the creation of an inventory of species across Canada during Canada 150 celebrations.



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT MEEWASIN

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

Wild Parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*) a.k.a Poison Parsnip



Photo Courtesy of Glen Lee of Saskatchewan Wildflowers

Wild Parsnip is an invasive plant and designated as noxious in Saskatchewan by the Ministry of Agriculture. Being designated as a noxious means that landowners, both urban and rural, have a duty to control these plants on their property due to the economic, health, and environmental damage the plant may cause (Statutes of Saskatchewan, 2010). Wild Parsnip is usually a biennial plant, dying upon producing seeds after flowering once. It grows up to 2 m tall on hollow, sparsely hairy stems and was introduced from Europe as a cultivated plant. The tap root of this plant is edible, however its leaves and above ground plant parts are poisonous; the sap causes photosensitivity resulting in burns, rashes and blisters that can scar or pigment skin. Its leaves are green, can be smooth or hairy, mitten shaped, and have sharply toothed edges. Leaves are typically alternating. Flowers are yellow in colour and grow in a flat topped umbel. To control this plant you can repeatedly hand-pull or dig plants (including as much of the roots as possible) before seed production, mowing repeatedly before full flower to reduce seed production, or use a recommended herbicide that is suitable for the task. Hand-pulling may be effective for small patches, but mowing is unlikely to be effective in removing the plant as it will re-sprout. If hand pulling or digging plant, it is necessary to wear gloves and long sleeves to protect your skin. Bag dead plants to take to the landfill and to prevent spread avoid composting and minimize soil disturbance.

Meewasin has Wild Parsnip on a small number of its sites and is working to eradicate this plant in the Meewasin Valley through Early Detection Rapid Response. Meewasin's Resource Management crew is actively working to control this plant through various integrated invasive species management methods such as: repeated cutting, digging, herbicide, monitoring and awareness. 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.

Bench Program Renewals in the Meewasin Valley



Once again, 10-year Bench sponsorships are due for renewal. If you are bench donor in the Meewasin Valley, you have a special opportunity to continue your sponsorship for \$3,000 for 10-years. You now have an option to renew your bench for an In Perpetuity sponsorship for \$10,000. Or you may opt not to renew, but to purchase your bronze plaque from your bench for \$500.

Contact Meewasin to indicate your desire to renew or decline your sponsorship. Unsponsored benches will be made available to other interested donors.

New bench sponsorships are also available.

**Thank you for your support
and for including the Meewasin Valley
in celebrating your memories!**

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Meewasin's RBC Blue Water Monitoring Project

Through funding provided by the RBC Blue Water Project, the Meewasin Valley Authority provided the opportunity for students to visit natural areas within the South Saskatchewan River Valley in order to examine the importance of water and biodiversity for our environment. The goal of the project was to encourage scientific inquiry by exploring natural areas with students, collecting valuable data through student-led projects, and provide stewardship opportunities that promote conservation.

Over the course of the program just over 1,000 students participated in either the water quality monitoring or biodiversity citizen science projects. Students worked alongside Meewasin interpreters, becoming citizen scientists by measuring the abundance of species in wetland environments and measuring the water quality within the South Saskatchewan River Valley. A variety of environmental variables were collected at each site including: water chemistry, nutrient concentrations, water flow, temperature, presence of plant or animal species, surrounding soil chemistry, and salinity. Although the students found a variety of interesting flora and fauna, highlights included dragonfly nymphs, endangered northern leopard frogs, prairie crocuses, white-tail deer, northern harriers, and endangered tiger salamanders. The data collected by these students has created a better understanding of the ecological health of these fragile ecosystems and will provide a basis for comparison for future hydrological and biodiversity monitoring efforts. Overall, this project was a unique opportunity to examine critical habitats with citizen science and to educate students on the direct/indirect effects humans have on their neighboring environments.

The Meewasin Valley Authority would like to thank RBC for providing the opportunity to develop the monitoring programs. Without sponsorship from the RBC Blue Water Grant the program would not have been a possibility. Due to the success of the project we intend to continue monitoring water quality and local biodiversity within the Meewasin Valley in future years to come.

SEPTEMBER HOURS: 9 A.M. - 5 P.M. WEEKDAYS, 12 A.M. - 5 P.M. WEEKENDS AND HOLIDAYS

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

BEAVER CREEK CONSERVATION AREA

INTERPRETING SASKATOON'S NATURAL HISTORY

Grade 5 Environmental Education School Program

Throughout September, October and November students from the Saskatoon Public, Saskatoon Catholic and Prairie Spirit School Division will enjoy a day of outdoor exploration as they learn about Beaver Creek Conservation Area's resident and migrating species and how they adapt and prepare for the upcoming change of season's.

BCCA Closed Weekends & Holidays in October

As announced in Meewasin's April 7, 2017 budget, beginning October 2017 through to March 2018, BCCA will be closed weekends and holidays, including Christmas Week. The modification to visitation hours are due to Meewasin budget constraints. Guests are encourage to visit other sites in the valley, including Cranberry Flats and Gabriel Dumont Park. For more information please contact Meewasin at 306 665 6887.

Community Initiatives Fund Saskatoon and Beaver Creek Conservation Area

The Community Initiatives Fund Saskatoon has provided Meewasin Valley Authority a grant to provide opportunities for organizations who support youth and have transportation barriers to access Meewasin's Beaver Creek Conservation Area. During the week in September and October youth groups will visit BCCA as an after school program to enjoy a trail hike and watchable wildlife sightings.



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



September 16th - Bioblitz at the Swale - Learn about what Meewasin is doing to help conserve this important natural environment within our city through interpretive hikes, and citizen science projects. Come to a meet-and-greet with our resident sheep that help to promote a more healthy ecosystem. Please visit our website for more information. Thank you to TD Friends of the Environment and Bioblitz Canada 150 for all of their support with this program.

September 19th - EcoConnexions Planting - Meewasin will be partnering with EcoConnexions for the purpose of planting 1,458 trees and shrubs in Chief Whitecap Park. The formal program will begin at 10:00 a.m. and will include representatives from Tree Canada, CN, Meewasin, and the different levels of government. The short formal program will be followed by volunteers from the local schools and community planting the donated trees and shrubs while under the supervision of Meewasin staff.

September 24th - World River Day - A celebratory event will be held at some point during that week inviting all Saskatonians to learn about ways we can all create a healthy river, date TBA. Stay tuned to our website and our social media accounts for more details on this event and how YOU can help protect our local waters.

October 28th - Dark Skies at the Creek - In honour of the International Observe the Moon Day, Meewasin and the Saskatoon Nature Society invite you to our annual Dark Skies event at Beaver Creek Conservation Area. Come and experience Beaver Creek at night as we look for nocturnal animals on interpretive hikes, listen to local astronomers give public talks about our night sky, and join members of the Royal Astronomical Society with their telescopes to see the moon up close and personal! Visit our website for more details closer to the event.

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

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