



ANNUAL REPORT 2024



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Nature Manitoba (Manitoba Naturists Society Inc.)
102nd Annual General Meeting
March 26, 2024, at 7:00 pm

Minutes

1. Welcome

Sandy HayGlass offered a land acknowledgement and brought greetings as the President of the Board. About 30 members participated in person. This exceeded the quorum required.

2. Minutes of the preceding Annual General Meeting March 2023

The minutes of the last AGM were approved at April 2023 Board meeting.

3. Annual Report of the President and Committee reports

Sandy reviewed the 2023 Nature Manitoba annual report which was made publicly available in advance of the meeting. For more information, see the President's letter and the details in the Annual Report.

4. Treasurer's Report

Andre Laberge, Treasurer, reviewed the 2023 Financial Report as written in the Annual Report.

- No questions were put forward
- Andre proposed that the Treasurer's Report for 2023 be accepted as submitted.

Motion: Andre Laberge

Seconded: James Whitelaw

Passed

5. Appointment of Auditors for 2024

- Andre proposed the appointment of Heartland Chartered Professional Accountants for year ending December 2024.

Motion: Andre Laberge

Seconded: Denise Levesque

Passed

6. Election of Board Members and Executive Members

- Jack Dubois introduced the current Executive and Board Members as posted on the Nature Manitoba website.
- Two new Board Members were acclaimed to fill positions and introduced. Jack invited any members interested in Board positions to contact him. Nature Manitoba bylaws permit the filling of positions between AGMs.
- Jack declared the Board Members and Executive Members as printed and elected by acclamation.

7. Announcement of Awards

- Sandy announced that Charles Burchill was presented with the Service Award. He has served the Mantario Summer Program for decades as a trip and canoe instructor. Katrina Froese accepted the award in his absence.
- Sandy announced President's Award recipients:
 - John Schulz for volunteer service and leadership IT Project Manager since 2021 and Grey Hares leader.
 - Andre Laberge for volunteer service and leadership as Board treasurer, and for leading organizational financial review and bridging office staffing.

8. Adjournment

AGM Meeting adjourned at 7:24 PM. Feature speaker Paula Grief.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Sandy HayGlass

Dear Members,

It's been a great year for Nature Manitoba. I wanted to start by thanking all of you- members, volunteers, employees and Board members. Together we all make Nature Manitoba the great organization it is.

Our finances are healthy. We thank everyone who became a member or renewed their membership. Thank you to all our donors. The time spent by all our volunteers is very much appreciated.

Many activities had an increase in participation. For example, the Garden tour increased revenue by 34 percent and the Mantario summer program participation increased by 35 percent. Outdoor hikes, Indoor programs and Grey Hares weekly activities continue to be popular. Beginner Birding introduced changes to limit participation to ensure a proper birding experience. The Important Bird Areas and Chimney Swifts have been very active.

The Habitat Committee and the Bluebird Committee awarded grants for habitats and birds respectively. Results of the grants awarded are regularly published in the newsletter. Bridging the Gap has started offering winter programs at the Living Prairie Museum. If you go to Brandon this year, check out Eleanor Kidd Park to see Bee City Brandon's bee friendly garden.

We welcomed new board member Gillian Brennan, a NM Mantario lover. Membership automation is under way and a dog policy was implemented. We outsourced our bookkeeping activities to Zach Laberge. Tami Bradford implemented an NM advertising and promotion plan.

The Board recently met to review all the programs of Nature Manitoba. Plans for 2025 were developed.

I hope you take the time to read all about Nature Manitoba's successful programs in this annual report.

Sandy HayGlass
President Nature Manitoba

TREASURER'S REPORT

Andre Laberge

Nature Manitoba's general operations concluded the year 2024 with a surplus of revenue over expenses of \$60,023 (2023: \$47,952).

Compared to the year ending December 31, 2023, our membership revenue increased by \$2,240, and the administration fees decreased by \$3,874. Due to interest rate increases, our interest-bearing investments earned \$7,620 more than in 2023, and the market value of our investment with The Winnipeg Foundation increased by \$9,983. Our general donations reported \$13,077 (2023: \$8,770) and the garden tour was another success, raising \$11,540 (2023: \$7,960). The general operations received an annual disbursement from the Manitoba Naturalists Endowment Fund, held at The Winnipeg Foundation, in the amount of \$7,158 (2023: \$6,798).

The wages and professional fees for bookkeeping services increased by \$4,827 and \$3,400. We also invested in advertising (\$2,580), office equipment and repairs (\$1,786). With the new location for the Discovery Evenings, our rental expenses have decreased by \$3,311.

With the Winnipeg Foundation, the Paul Guyot Endowment Fund for Habitat received a disbursement of \$5,493 (2023: \$6,517) and the account increased by \$9,488. The Manitoba Bluebird Endowment Fund received a disbursement of \$40,070 (2023: \$29,221), and the account increased by \$99,955.

During the year, the organization received donations totaling \$4,000 (2023: \$36,000), which the board allocated to the Nature Fund. The board also approved a \$30,000 transfer to the Nature Fund and a \$5,000 transfer to the Reserve Fund from the General Fund.

Although our financial planning involves maintaining a balanced budget each year, it is typical for our year-end position to fluctuate between surpluses and deficits. The board continues to explore ways to increase revenue, reduce costs, and enhance office efficiency through technology while also ensuring that the money we spend is effective and provides value to our members. I want to thank our volunteers, donors, and grantors for their support throughout the past year.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

GREY HARES

Kevin & Anita Miller



Grey Hares is a group of retired, partly retired, and flexible-work-hours people within Nature Manitoba who enjoy nature, new experiences, making friends, being physically active, doing meaningful things, and sharing time with like-minded people. Grey Hares has an activity every Wednesday during the day. More info: <https://naturemanitoba.ca/grey-hares>.

We began administration of Grey Hares 4 years ago. Grey Hares administrative tasks fall into five categories:

- Coordinating the weekly activities.
- Communication.
- Membership.
- Financial.
- Liaison with Nature Manitoba's staff, Board, and other volunteers.

Activity statistics for 2024

Grey Hares had 80 activities in 2024. Every Wednesday except Christmas Day had an activity scheduled; 17 weeks had two, plus the Tuesday Breakfast once a month. 4 activities were cancelled because of weather or other reasons. There were 2 multi-day activities. These numbers are very similar to 2023.

Attendance was very good at most activities. Many activities had a participation limit.

There were 30 leaders in 2024. 17 led 1 activity, 5 led 2, 2 led 3, 2 led 4, 1 led 6, 1 led 8, 1 led 12, and 1 led 13. A number of these were co-leaders.

Communication

We post all activities on the Nature Manitoba website.

We also use MailChimp to send weekly email messages to Grey Hares members. We sent 56 messages in 2024, usually on Wednesday evening. Topics include information about upcoming weeks activities, requests for leaders/activities for upcoming weeks, photos from past weeks activities, announcement of new members, and misc. news.

Membership

Grey Hares members must be current members of Nature Manitoba, and they must pay a one-time lifetime \$5 fee to join our membership list and email list. We started 2024 with 271 members and ended the year with 287.

Financial

Grey Hares started 2024 with a balance of \$1087 and ended with \$1225. Most income was from \$5 membership fees.

Liaison with Nature Manitoba

We continue to have a good working relationship with Nature Manitoba's staff, Board, and other volunteers.

Gardens of Distinction

GARDEN TOUR

Tim Evans



2024! An even more successful garden tour than the year before. The garden tour on Saturday July 6th went incredibly well, twelve gardens located in Osborne Village, St. Boniface and St. Vital. All gardens varied but were all revered for their distinctive qualities. Eight of the twelve gardens were brand new, never on a garden tour and the four gardens that had been on tour in the past were all incredibly unique and well worth seeing again. Two of the twelve gardens were dedicated seniors whose gardens were notably remarkable!

This past year we increased our sales by approx. 40% over 2023. We sold 538 tickets out of a possible 600. On average each home had 450 people touring their gardens. One thing to note is not all who purchase a ticket will show up at each garden. The idea is to view as many as you like between 9am and 4pm on the day of the tour.

I really like how the garden tour is organized! We are keeping in line with the other major garden tours in the city who chose 12 and 15 gardens respectively, so I believe this is the right number of gardens. The average ticket price is also in line with our \$20 ticket cost which will remain the same for 2025.

The combo plant sale/last minute ticket sale has worked out very well every year and will continue for 2025. Communication and promotional posters advertise the last-minute option and continue to work well.

As for the 2025 Gardens of Distinction there will be 13 home gardens along with 1 community garden located at Fort Whyt Alive. All the gardens will be in and around the South area of Winnipeg.

Thanks so much to Tami Bradford for her incredible work at creating great brochures, posters, and signage! She has also increased the amount of advertising, which I believe was beneficial for our tour including a contest in the Winnipeg Free Press that received close to 100 entries.



The 2024 Discovery Evening season was planned and executed with help from Sandy, Nelson, John, Katharine, and Tami. Sandy, and Nelson found and scheduled presenters in addition to hosting events. Once again, John was invaluable as an IT and audio/visual technician. Katharine managed admittance with help from Christa, and Tami assisted the group with the marketing effort for Discovery Evenings.

There are typically 6 Discovery evenings per year (3 in the winter and 3 in the fall) along with a bonus presentation at the AGM each year (all are welcome to attend at no charge). Unfortunately, our Discovery Evening scheduled for February 13, 2024, was cancelled which brought down the total attendance when compared to 2023.

Overall, we saw an average ticket sale of 60 people per discovery evening, and 81% of were members. The Wild Pig presentation proved to be very popular with 82 people in attendance, the topic captured and maintained everyone's interest with people continuing to ask about the discovery evening months later. A great variety of topics were covered, including plants, mammals, birds, and more!

It was our second year using Westworth United Church, the venue continued to be great to work with; coordination and communication with the venue is easy and the set up and sound system work well for our needs at a reasonable cost.

Eventbrite continued to be used in tandem with ticket sales at the door; Eventbrite accounted for 68% percent of tickets purchased and was a useful tool for estimating attendance and seating required.

2024 Discovery Evening Presentations:

1. **Classifying underwater pictures of beluga whales for research and monitoring**, Dr. Stephen Petersen
2. **Conserving a Boreal Icon – Manitoba's Shadows of the Forest**, Dennis Brannen
*****Progress in Agricultural Practices – Cancelled******
3. **A Natural Legacy: What's New at Living Prairie**, Marika Olynyk and Josh Pearlman
4. **Wild Pigs a Manitoba Threat**, Dr. Wayne Lees
5. **Grassland Birds and Biodiversity Recovery**, Ian Cook



We were pleased to be offering our Nature Workshops once again in 2024.

The goal of the Workshop Series is to increase our understanding and appreciation of the wonders of the nature world under the guidance of experts.

The fees charged to workshop participants are: \$10 for Nature Manitoba members (or students), \$15 for non-members, bringing in much needed funding for Nature Manitoba programs. Attendance continues to be high and response to the workshops remains enthusiastic. We had around 208 registrants, with the majority being members. In 2024, we continued to offer our presenters an honorarium.

We had 8 workshops in total that ran from January through to May. Many of the workshops reached their capacity and were sold out. There were approximately 178 participants in the workshops with majority being members.

We would like to thank the Earl Grey Community Centre for providing Nature Manitoba with a venue for the workshops.

The following is a list of the 2024 workshops along with the presenters who we would like to thank for sharing their knowledge with us:

1. **Mushrooms** – Donna Kurt
2. **Bees & Wasps** – Jason Gibbs
3. **Bison** – Randy Mooi
4. **Garden Birds** – James Whitelaw
5. **Gardening with Native Plants** – Marilyn Latta
6. **Ticks** – Kateryn Rochon
7. **Flycatchers** – Ward Christianson & Marlene Waldron
8. **Chimney Swifts** – Marissa Berard

Our 2025 Workshop series is currently in progress, and we will be working on the 2026 program in the fall. We are always open to suggestions for future workshops.

Mantario Summer Program

The Mantario Summer Program was offered in July and August. Summer Program trips are by canoe and consist of 4 or 5 days in length at the cabin. The experience is marketed and targeted at adults and promoted on the Nature Manitoba website. In 2024, Nature Manitoba staff also utilized paid social media posts and newspaper ads.

Fees for programming include meals, canoe equipment, and programming, and a T-shirt, and are set at \$390/week for Nature Manitoba members and \$415/week for non-members. The Mantario Living week welcomes children/youth under 17 with parents at a cost of \$145/week. The automated online registration form and electronic payment process using PayPal or e-transfer reduced admin needs from the Office and made it possible for Mantario Committee volunteers to assist in monitoring registrations, including payment reminders and sharing information with trip leaders.

Summer Program trips and activities continue to be guided by experienced volunteer trip leaders – 2 leaders per trip, a total of 10 leaders for 5 trips throughout the summer. Trip leaders receive financial support to receive Remote Wilderness First Aid training as a perk for volunteering as well as supporting the need for risk management and emergency preparedness for the wilderness. Trips are set to fill at a group size of 10 participants, with flexibility to trip leader preferences. Trips tended to fill or have wait-lists, but last-minute cancellations can result in unfilled spaces.

Overall, the Summer Program trips had a total of 42 participants, up 8 from 2023.

Mantario Summer Program 2024

Trip	Dates	Participants	Change from 2023
Boreal Explorations	July 8-12	8	+10 (canceled due to insurance gap)
Mantari-Yoga Weekend	July 19-22	8	-2
Mantario Living (family friendly, 8+)	August 5-9	11 (4 were youth)	+2
Astronomy	August 12-16	9	+4
Mantario Mushrooms and Plants	August 19-23	6	-3

The Mantario Committee held the Mantario Potluck on September 26. Many trip participants and volunteers shared food and memories of their trips.

Mantario Cabin Rentals and Usage

The Mantario Cabin is available for booking throughout the year by approved cabin users. The Mantario Committee Chair administers the cabin bookings calendar and communicates with renters. Individuals pay a nightly rental fee via PayPal or cheque. Rental fees are \$25/night for Nature Manitoba members, \$40/night for non-members, and \$15/night for students and youth. An additional option on Paypal allows for Mantario Cabin Donations outside of the regular nightly fee.

Approved cabin users are Nature Manitoba members who have been led to the cabin by experienced individuals who are trained in cabin upkeep and have wilderness leadership skills. In 2024, 7 new cabin users were approved.

Overall, 2024 saw a total of 216 people renting or completing work parties and 82 nights of use at the Mantario Cabin. In addition, the Summer Program participants and leaders totaled 50 people over 19 nights. Of cabin visitors, 130 were Nature Manitoba members, 86 non-members and 50 were students/children/youth.

- Cabin rentals were up in winter 2024 from 2023, with 104 visitors recorded between January and end of March. We offered 2 public ski trips led by Mantario volunteers which were advertised in the newsletter and posted on the Nature Manitoba website (19 people), and two Westgate Collegiate teacher-led trips for high school students on snowshoes involving 20 youth (26 participants).
- In May – June, spring work party (9 people) accepted plane delivery and completed essential projects. College Louis Riel completed a high school canoe trip in June, with 12 students (16 participants).
- In summer, 37 people visited the cabin on private bookings, as well as with the Summer Program. (up from 2023)
- In September - December, 24 visitors made it in on private trips, and there were 3 fall work parties (23 people).

Cabin Maintenance

Volunteer maintenance groups visited the cabin in spring and fall to ensure the cabin and its amenities were well kept, and repairs are made when needed. Volunteers do not pay cabin fees and access Summer Program food stores that are nearing expiry.

Due to the lack of snow, Manitoba Conservation was unable to access the cabin to drop off supplies for cabin maintenance and Summer Program. The Mantario Committee coordinated a float plane shipment for food and materials in May 2024.

A major project was taken on to re-insulate the sauna floor. Spring trip involved cleanup under the sauna and installation of screen doors as well as accepting the float plane delivery. Three work trips in fall finished the sauna project and ensured the cabin was stocked with firewood for the winter season.



MANITOBA IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

Marissa Berard

The Manitoba Important Bird Areas (IBAs) Program was led by program coordinator, Marissa Berard. The IBA Steering Committee in 2024 was comprised of Tim Poole (Chair), Christian Artuso, Paula Grief, Bonnie Chartier, Gillian Richards, Marika Olynyk and Meredith Stoesz.

A big thank you to our incredible volunteers, who are a key part of everything we do!

Events and Activities

We continued our work of connecting people and nature to protect essential bird habitat in Manitoba through a combination of monitoring, habitat stewardship, and outreach activities.

We held several community birding and outreach events, including a birding walk at Oak Hammock Marsh on June 22 and a birding walk on Assiniboine Park on July 31. We also held a set of birding workshops at the Boyne Library in Carman on September 19. At Oak Hammock Marsh's Migration Fest on September 29, our program delivered a presentation and a birding walk.

We organized a variety of citizen science bird counts ("blitzes"), including a grassland bird count in the Southwestern Manitoba Mixed Grass Prairie IBA on June 9, an Eastern Whip-poor-will survey workshop in the North, East and West Shoal Lakes IBA on July 2, a swallow count in Delta Marsh IBA on July 20, a shorebird count in Whitewater Lake IBA on September 29. We held a Red-headed Woodpecker count in the Oak Lake/Plum Lakes IBA on July 6, during which we counted a record number of 45 Red-headed Woodpeckers! We also organized a two-part shorebird identification workshop with the Westman Naturalists. The first part was a hybrid talk on May 17, and the second part was a field workshop which was set for May 25 but had to be cancelled due to weather.

IBA program staff conducted a variety of targeted surveys, Red-headed Woodpecker survey routes and Eastern Whip-poor-will survey routes in the North, East and West Shoal Lakes IBA. Program staff also conducted breeding bird surveys on different properties for the Souris River Watershed District and for the Manitoba Forage and Grassland Association. With the help of dedicated volunteers, we conducted International Shorebird Surveys (ISS) in the spring and in the fall, at Oak Lake/Plum Lakes IBA, Whitewater Lake IBA, Oak Hammock Marsh IBA, and North, East and West Shoal Lakes IBA.

We held three habitat stewardship events. Our first event was a weed pull to restore Piping Plover habitat at the Riverton Sandy Bar on August 18. We also organized two shoreline clean-ups. The first one was at Delta Beach in the Delta Marsh IBA on September 22, and the second one was at Lockport on October 16.

We've continued to develop our Conservation Champions program, which is a voluntary habitat stewardship program geared towards landowners with suitable habitat for species at risk. The original program focused on Eastern Whip-poor-will and Red-headed Woodpecker habitat. We are currently working on expanding the program to focus on grassland bird species at risk.

Funding

Our main source of funding this year was Environment and Climate Change Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program grant. We also received funding from the Province of Manitoba's Green Team grant and Nature Manitoba's Bluebird Fund. We received donations from several individuals. Nature Manitoba's in-kind support has also been invaluable for us. A big thank you goes out to our funders and donors in 2024.



MANITOBA CHIMNEY SWIFT INITIATIVE

Marissa Berard

General

The Manitoba Chimney Swift Initiative (MCSI) was led by program coordinator, Marissa Berard. The MCSI Steering Committee in 2024 was comprised of Christian Artuso (co-chair), Tim Poole (co-chair), Rob and Barb Stewart, Ron Bazin, Nicole Firlotte, Frank Machovec, Joanne Tuckwell, Laura Burns, Ken de Smet, Meredith Stoesz, Lewis Cocks, and Pauline Bloom. Kristin Mozel also joined the committee in October 2024 to replace Pauline Bloom. Laura Burns went on maternity leave in the fall of 2024, and Stephen Peterson will be filling in for her until she returns. Once again, a big thank you to Frank Machovec for his continued work on managing our website and keeping our blog readers informed online.

Thank you also to our wonderful volunteers - we could not do any of this without them!

Events and Activities

This year, we organized a range of monitoring, habitat stewardship, and outreach activities. In May, we held our first ever season kick-off/volunteer appreciation event. The event, which took place at the Assiniboine Park Zoo, was an opportunity to meet and visit with volunteers, share resources, distribute supplies, get excited for the upcoming season, and do a group swift watch. This event was a great success, and we hope to hold an event like this again in the future!

We continued to coordinate our Chimney Swift monitoring program, which aims to collect important data on roosting and nesting swifts across Manitoba. We continued our participation in the National Chimney Swift Roost Survey Protocol (generally referred to as NRMP), which is a nationwide effort to monitor roosting swifts. This year, the four official NRMP monitoring nights were on May 22, May 26, May 30, and June 3. This year, we also held monthly MCSI "blitz" nights, which took place on June 19, July 17, and August 7. The point of these monthly monitoring nights was to get a snapshot idea of swift activity at different times throughout the summer. Volunteers were also able to monitor whenever it worked for them.

In addition to our usual chimneys, we also focused on 'priority sites': sites that were priority for confirming/reaffirming 'residence' status. Based on the federal Chimney Swift Recovery Strategy, a site is considered a 'residence' if it has been used by Chimney Swifts at least once in the last three years. Sites that qualify as 'residences' are legally protected.

Our priority site category referred to sites that were in danger of losing their 'residence' status if use by swifts was not confirmed this year. These sites were monitored whenever possible, and we released an updated weekly list of which sites had been 'confirmed' and thus, checked off our list.

Overall, we monitored around 155 sites, in 30 communities across Manitoba. We were able to confirm the presence of swifts at 14 sites on our priority site list. We also confirmed 6 new swift sites. Over 90 volunteers were involved in our monitoring efforts this year!

Habitat stewardship remained an important part of our program. In 2024, we organized and funded the repair of two swift chimneys at Providence University College in Otterburne.

We continued to conduct outreach activities including presentations and workshops. Outreach in 2024 includes a talk at the Friends of the Bluebird meeting in Brandon on April 21, a presentation as part of Nature MB's workshop series on May 6, webinar for Creative Retirement on May 30, and a talk during a luncheon for the museum network. We also collaborated with the Manitoba Metis Federation to host a two-part Chimney Swift info session and monitoring workshop for Metis citizens.

We named three Swift Champions, based on their contributions to swift conservation. Our 2024 Swift Champions were three dedicated volunteers who contributed much of their time and energy to monitoring Chimney Swifts: Katharine Schulz, Blair Reid, and Gerald Machnee. A massive thank you to Katharine, Blair and Gerald for their incredible contributions to the Manitoba Chimney Swift Initiative!

Funding

Our main source of funding this year came from Environment and Climate Change Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP) grant. We also had funding from Nature Manitoba's Bluebird Fund and the TD Friends of the Environment Fund. We received several donations from individuals. Nature Manitoba's in-kind support has also been invaluable for us. A big thank you goes out to our funders and donors in 2024.



MANITOBA BLUEBIRD FUND

Jack Dubois

The objective of the Manitoba Bluebird Fund Committee (MBFC) is to stop and reverse the decline in Manitoba songbird populations. It encourages the efforts to do so of individuals and other non-profit organizations by subsidizing the purchase of fruit trees, bird-friendly shrubs and perennials and the purchase of window-strike prevention materials. The Committee also supports the efforts of non-profit organizations through the Salzmänn Songbird Grant Program. For more information on the origin of the MBFC and details of its subsidy and grant programs visit the Nature Manitoba website.

In 2024 the MBFC subsidized the purchase of 100 fruit trees and 50 packages of shrubs and perennials by individual households. It also subsidized the purchase of 100 window-strike prevention materials packages. Salzmänn Songbird Grants were awarded to The Friends of the Bluebirds, Brandon; The Assiniboine Park Conservancy, Winnipeg; The Delta Marsh Bird Observatory, Oak Hammock; The Important Bird Areas Program, Winnipeg and The Manitoba Chimney Swift Inventory Project, Winnipeg.

We would like to thank our local partners Ron Paul Garden Centre, Wild Birds Unlimited Winnipeg, The Preferred Perch and Prairie Originals for their enthusiastic participation in 2024 and we very much look forward to working with them again in 2025 with an expanded program.

I would also like to thank my fellow committee members for their enthusiastic participation (it would be hard to find a more dedicated group of folks to our cause) – Meredith Stoesz, Tim Poole, Don Himbeault, Paula Grief and Christian Artuso.



BRIDGING the GAP

Marika Olynyk



Bridging the Gap (BtG) provides low-barrier, experiential nature-based and land-based education for youth ages 8-10 in Winnipeg's inner city. In a non-formal, exploratory setting, BtG offers students complementary ways to view, appreciate, connect with and root themselves in the land they are a part of. We aim to develop not only increased environmental awareness but also a sense of empowerment in our learners.

2024 saw the renewal of Bridging the Gap (BtG) programming after a hiatus for planning and updating the program. In 2024 BtG engaged over 700 children and youth from over 30 different classrooms or youth organizations. Field trip outings took place at a variety of locations, including Fort Whyte, Living Prairie Museum, and Assiniboine Forest, with bussing provided by BtG's funders. Programs also took place on school grounds and local greenspaces, allowing participants to connect with nature in their own neighbourhoods.

In 2024 we were thrilled to hire two part-time staff: Britt Ross and Jamie Vann. Together these co-coordinators facilitate programming by coordinating with teachers, arranging activities and trips, and handling the day-to-day management of the program. BtG continues to be overseen and guided by a wonderful steering committee that includes Elders, educators, and researchers. We are very grateful for the volunteer hours this group puts in year-round, and for the thoughtful approach to programming undertaken by our coordinators.

In 2024, following guidance provided by Elders and educators, all BtG programs approached environmental education through a two-eyed seeing approach, where Indigenous worldviews of relationality are paired with Western science using Forest and Nature School philosophy.

Sessions were non-formal, exploratory, and co-facilitated by Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators. Each session was inspired by Forest and Nature School philosophy that centres First Nation and Métis ways of knowing and being on the land. Elders and Knowledge Keepers shared their lived experiences, songs, stories and teachings.

After every session with a school, coordinators provided a follow-up report to teachers evaluating the activities and child-led learning that occurred, identifying links to Manitoba curriculum we organized as well as the impromptu child-led learning that emerged. Teachers have told us they appreciate this customized resource, and it provides BtG with an opportunity for continuous reflection and refinement of the activities we offer.

Funders:

At this time, BTG extends a big thank you to our donors and grantors: The Winnipeg Foundation, Province of Manitoba's Heritage Grant, Canada Post Foundation, Webster/Lyons Garden Fund, Telus, and The Red River Co-op.

For more information about our program and what we offer, please visit our website at: www.btgwinnipeg.ca



BEE CITY BRANDON

Sherry Punak-Murphy

Bee City Brandon was established in May 2018 in the City of Brandon with unanimous backing from the City Council. We currently are still the only Bee City in Manitoba designated by Bee City Canada and Pollinators Partnership.

Our mandate, as an Official Bee City, has three pillars:

1. To educate the public on the importance of native pollinators and plants to our ecosystem.
2. To promote the creation of native prairie gardens.
3. To celebrate our native pollinators in all their beauty during Pollinator Week, which runs the third week of June.

We, however, try to celebrate native pollinators and plants all year round, through our educational posts on Facebook and Instagram. Follow us @beecitybrandon and learn about Manitoba's pollinators and what you, individually can do to help these little creatures and provide them with food in our urban areas.

Many activities happened in 2024 even though we are a small committee. In 2023, the City of Brandon along with volunteers cleaned up Eleanor Kidd Park located just south of Assiniboine River and a little east of 18th Street near the Riverbank Discovery Centre in Brandon. Everything was all prepped and ready for the planting of native prairie plants we obtained from Skinner Native Seeds from a grant we were awarded from Central Assiniboine Watershed District. John Skinner provided us with plugs and seeds and shared his knowledge of native plantings with us. We were able to plant a variety of native plants in the space in late Spring. Our hard-working volunteers weeded and watered these tender little plugs, and we hope we have given them enough water and space to survive the winter. In late 2024, we were successful in obtaining a grant from the Brandon Area Community Foundation and have already put in our order for plants from Skinner Native Seeds and Prairie Originals.

In 2024, we participated in a few activities around Brandon. We had a booth at Arbor Day, Seedy Sunday, Riverbank Discovery Centre, Stanley Park for Year of Garden and Brandon Shopper's Mall. We also did presentations at various locations and for the first time, presented to future teachers at Brandon University Education Department.

We have found that most people do not realize that Manitoba has more than 390 different species of bees. They think there are only two types of bees, honey, and bumble. It is great to see their faces when they are presented with the diversity of bee species in the province. Of course, we also mention other insects that pollinate our plants, because all pollinators are important to our native plants.

We were asked to have a booth at a local greenhouse, Alternative Landscaping for their yearly Spring mixer. Much to our shock and surprise they gave us a substantial donation which will be used for various educational materials.

We currently have almost 900 Facebook followers and over 1000 Instagram followers. We had a little contest called #bdnbeesighting where people can submit their photos of pollinators they photograph. We were able to give out prizes of Nature Manitoba's Naturescape Manitoba book to a randomly chosen winner.

A local photographer, Cynthia Korman, created for us a branding for Bee City Brandon, with a more workable logo and templates for social media. I personally am putting together, with the use of iNaturalist, a pamphlet of local pollinators that can be found within City Limits. Also, with the use of iNaturalist we encourage participation in City Nature Challenge as well as CWF Bioblitzes.

We have recently joined forces with Bee Better Manitoba, as we discovered our mandates on educating about pollinators are quite similar. We have a member on their committee, and we share ideas and thoughts on all things native pollinators and plants. We are excited about the future workings with Bee Better Manitoba.

As we plan for the 2025 year, we are excited about what the future holds for our small, committed group of volunteers and what Brandonites can do to make a difference in terms of biodiversity. We are hoping to develop some new partnerships with the Art Gallery of Southwest Manitoba, The Westman Regional Library, Brandon School Division, Brandon University and any others who are interested. With a lot of education, enthusiasm and help from Community members, businesses, and government, we know we will be successful for the little ones that rule the world.

OPERATIONS

Tami Bradford, Sandy HayGlass , John Schulz

Information Technology, Communications, Administration, and Advertising and Promotion programs focused on modernization to streamline processes, improve service to members and support Nature Manitoba and its programs.

In administration, bookkeeping was outsourced to Zach Laberge at no additional cost.

In 2024, Nature Manitoba undertook a project to modernize its membership management system. An evaluation of the software marketplace was conducted. Communal, a cloud-based platform for non-profits developed and supported in Canada was chosen. Following board approval, we migrated from our old membership management system to Communal. With the core in place, further member-facing changes are being rolled out in 2025, resulting in an improved and more efficient process.

We continued to utilize Microsoft 365 to support new and existing programs with the addition of Bridging the Gap email and file storage for staff and volunteers. The platform continues to provide reliable email services with a central, easily searchable store of Nature Manitoba information.

The Nature Manitoba website is the primary location for information and delivery of programs. It is used for online contests (new in 2024), Outdoor Activities throughout the year, Discovery Evening and Workshop details over the winter, and program information for grant and subsidy programs alongside Mantario Summer Program registration in spring.

A registration process using Eventbrite was added to Birding for Beginners to provide Nature Manitoba members priority access and create manageable group sizes which resulted in a better learning environment for both leaders and attendees.

Tami Bradford, our Program Coordinator, developed an advertising plan to promote various aspects of Nature Manitoba, including Mantario, the Garden Tour, Discovery Evenings, and more. After receiving board approval, the plan was put into action with a set schedule of print advertisements in the Winnipeg Free Press, along with social media campaigns. As a result, we've seen a noticeable increase in participation across our programs, including a substantial boost in Garden Tour ticket sales.

A Dog Policy was implemented ensure NM trips are environmentally friendly. Pet friendly activities are advertised as such. Contact the trip leader if you want to bring your pet. Birding activities, the Garden Tour, the Mantario summer and Mantario member lead public trips do not permit pet dogs under any circumstances.

A full-time employee policy was developed, and the part-time employee policy was updated.

Moving forward we will continue to modernize operations to ensure effective program support and operation of Nature Manitoba.

The second set of recipients for the Native Habitat Grants were announced in 2024. The Habitat Conservation Committee had spearheaded development of this grant as a way to recognize and support the work being done to conserve native habitat in Manitoba. This builds on the many years of effort by Nature Manitoba to identify and preserve native tall grass prairie.

Funding for the grants is provided by the Paul Guyot Endowment Fund for Habitat Conservation, a fund which is managed by The Winnipeg Foundation for Nature Manitoba and provides about \$5000 in interest to the Habitat Committee each year.

All year one projects were successfully completed and final reports received. Three of the Year 1 projects provided information that was developed by committee member, Diane Kunec, into articles for the newsletter. Additionally, two of the projects generated speakers for the Discovery Evenings.

Nine applications were received in 2024, and the following three projects were awarded funding. The total funding awarded was \$9,000.

- **Debbie Kilfoyle** - to help establish native prairie permanent cover on approximately 70 acres near Riding Mountain National Park. The project will return cultivated land to native cover, enhance wildlife habitat, improve soil quality and water retention, and increase wildlife habitat connectivity to other natural areas.
- **Manitoba Museum** - to support the publication of the new Manitoba Flora, to replace the highly out-of-date Flora of Manitoba by Homer J. Scoggan (published in 1957). The project leader is Dr. Diana Bizecki Robson, Curator of Botany at the Museum. The book will be used to educate people about the botanical diversity in Manitoba and provide a useful tool for identifying plant species.
- **Tracy Peters** - to create a video project and installation for the Living Prairie Museum to demonstrate the process, and importance, of managed fires in the prairie ecosystem.

Habitat Conservation Committee members are Lewis Cocks, Donna Danyluk, Diane Kunec, John Morgan, Linda Pearn and Marilyn Latta (chair)

NOMINATIONS

2024/2025 Proposed Slate of Officers

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Executive Vice President	Don Himbeault
Vice President	James Whitelaw
Treasurer	Andre Laberge
Secretary	Katrina Froese
Past President	Jack Dubois

BOARD MEMBERS (3-year term)	
Term ending Mar/2026	
	Meredith Stoesz
	Marika Olynyk
	John Schulz
Term ending Mar/2027	
	Nelson Chubey
	George Derwin
Term ending Mar/2028	
	Gillian Brennan

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